

The transformation I underwent was pretty incredible, from learning how to “do” science to learning how to start conversations with people I barely knew. The feelings of reward that came after were unlike almost any other I’d had before. - SEP High School Intern

The Program

SEP’s High School Intern Program brings 20 rising high school seniors from San Francisco public schools for 8 weeks during the summer to engage in research at UCSF under the guidance of a mentor. Students carry out a short-term research project during the summer program. Students come from a wide variety of schools and backgrounds, and are carefully chosen for their keen interest in science and the impact the experience of working in a research lab closely with a mentor is likely to have on them, significantly shaping their future college and career plans.



Selection of Interns

Students are initially nominated for the program by a science teacher at their high school and go through an extensive application and selection process. We select interns who are excited about learning, curious about science, and motivated by the opportunity to work in a UCSF lab. Additionally, we look for evidence of maturity and responsibility – students who we feel will interact well with all members of a laboratory. Most importantly, we want this program to make a critical difference in the lives of students – giving them the opportunity to work on a research project, explore career options, experience a university environment, and learn from a mentor. The great majority of students come from families in which they would be the first to attend college.

What is expected of Interns?

Interns complete at least 180 hours during the summer program, an average of 22.5 hours per week over the eight weeks; approximately 40 hours come from group activities outside of lab. The program is flexible - mentors and interns work together to determine the schedule that is best suited to their labs and lives. Under the guidance of their mentors, interns become familiar with the work of the lab, learn basic lab techniques as well as the skills and background required to carry out an individual project that the mentor has designed for them. At the end of the program, interns present their summer research projects in a 10-minute research talk (July 22nd and 23rd) and a poster presentation (July 30th).

In addition to the work in the lab with their mentors, interns participate in a regular Wednesday afternoon series of meetings serving two purposes: helping interns understand scientific communication (writing abstracts, preparing a short research talk) and as a forum to receive intensive college counseling and preparation for the college application process. Interns will also visit a nearby undergraduate college campus.

The role of the Mentor

The role of the mentor is vital to the experience of the intern. The mentor works closely with the intern to identify his/her needs, to teach the necessary background so the intern can carry out an independent project, and to help them integrate into the lab setting. The lab group becomes an important set of individuals who act as guides and role models, particularly in helping the intern understand the diversity of pathways toward college and a career in science. The mentor is the day-to-day guide and teacher for the intern, and supports the intern in all aspects of the lab experience, as well as with the preparation for their talk and final poster presentation.



Frequently Asked Questions:

What kind of science background will interns have?

All of the students accepted into the program are juniors. The students come from a wide diversity of public high schools all across the city, large or small, comprehensive or with a specialized focus. The students also have diverse science backgrounds – some have taken AP courses, others attend schools that offer limited opportunities for advanced coursework. For most, this is their first opportunity to pursue real scientific inquiry and to work in a lab.

How are accepted interns assigned to labs?

We have developed an extensive matching procedure in order to maximize the success of the mentor-intern relationship. We make initial pairings of mentors and interns by matching laboratory research topics and interns' interests, sending each mentor a brief profile of two interns and each intern the research profile of two prospective mentors. Interns and mentors arrange in-person meetings. After these meetings, both interns and mentors let us know their lab/student preferences. Using this feedback, SEP staff make final laboratory assignments. This process helps to ensure success in laboratory matches for both the interns and the mentors.

What supports will I have as a mentor?

Mentors in the High School Intern Program will participate in a Mentoring Workshop Series facilitated by SEP staff. The Mentoring Workshop Series is a forum designed to foster discussion among participating mentors so that mentors can support each other through the mentoring experience, address common challenges mentors face with their interns, and share best practices for mentoring. In addition, SEP staff are actively involved to support both interns and mentors through weekly meetings with interns and lab visits throughout the summer.

Important Dates:

June 8th – Interns start in labs

July 22nd, 23rd - Intern Ten-Minute Research Talks

July 30th - Intern Poster Presentation

Mentoring Workshop Series - May, June, July, August

You can also read about last year's program online at:

<http://graduate.ucsf.edu/news/sep-program-puts-high-school-students-path-grad-school>

<http://www.ucsf.edu/news/2013/06/107141/high-school-interns-push-science-forward-ucsf>

<http://www.ucsf.edu/news/2012/08/12461/summer-internships-encourage-high-school-students-pursue-careers-science>

If you are interested in becoming a mentor, or want more information, please contact:

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This program has been great! By working in the lab I was able to see how much science brings to this world. It gave me an opportunity to work with amazing scientists and to use machines I never saw before. I also learned a lot about college and how to get there. - SEP High School Intern