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Transformational Opportunities, YOU CAN DO IT! [1]

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[2]

Mi first summer experience

When talking to scientists in industry and academia, I always ask: “How is it that you got involved in Research? What inspired you to follow a path as a Scientist? When did you decide that you would continue a PhD?” While an interest in Science and Math typically starts early on in school and prior to college, the passion that propels many of these individuals to pursue a PhD stems from transformational research opportunities. Many times, the answers to all my questions converge into: “it was that summer research opportunity that inspired me to dream higher”. My life as an engineer and scientist and my motivation were not different. I was inspired to pursue a PhD in Chemical Engineering after participating in a Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU) program. Take notes NSF Program Managers, your REUs actually work and they are inspiring Latinos all across the US.

However, I am not writing this article for the Program Managers, I am writing this article for YOU, the student. This is my strategic way to say, YOU NEED TO SEND YOUR APPLICATIONS FOR SUMMER PROGRAMS NOW, DEADLINES ARE TYPICALLY BETWEEN DECEMBER AND JANUARY! By the way, YES, THEY WILL PAY FOR YOUR WORK. And, regardless if you are planning to pursue graduate school or not, summer research or internship experiences are strategic jobs that can later help you to be considered for interviews and more permanent positions.

Lost? Here are some tips for you.

There are many ways you can look for information on available programs in different fields. To find programs funded by NSF in your field go to:

http://www.nsf.gov/crssprgm/reu/reu_search.cfm [3]

This link will take you to REUs funded by NSF and you can search the field of your choice in the website.

Once you have found which universities are funded, you can follow the virtual path to the University and find the application forms.

Let's say, you have no clue on where to apply, well, if you would like to know the University rankings to get a better idea, go to:

http://grad-schools.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-graduate-schools [4]

This link will show for free the best 10 schools within a discipline (for the full list a subscription to US News is required, but it is possible that your school library carries the subscription). The reason why the search in the provided link above is focused on best graduate schools instead of College is because for a research focus you want to see how universities are ranked based on their graduate programs. Why to focus on great schools? Remember your summer experience will be in your resume, it will help you to get into graduate school and it will help you to find a job in the future, you want to maximize the impact of that summer research experience in your professional life.

For REU Opportunities in Engineering, you can look in the NSF website under Engineering. For Engineering Internships a useful link is:

http://www.internmatch.com/s/engineering-internship [5]

The link offers the positions description along with the organization or companies' name.

Other ways to find research opportunities is through foundations. An example is the Amgen Scholars Program. In this particular application you will select the site/university of your choice. Universities including MIT, Stanford, CalTech, among several others, are participants in Amgen Scholars.

If you are interested in working with a particular company for the summer the time to apply for these opportunities is in THE FALL. Go to the Careers website within your company of interest

and search for internship programs, requisitions or job postings.

For those of you who are thinking about graduate school in STEM here are my very simple* tips:

*simple might include long hours of study and work to ensure a reasonably high GPA, GRE and great recommendations from professors and employers.

Tips for College and to Apply to Grad School:

- Focus on your studies and get the best grades you can, but ALSO,

- Discover the research in your field, search who is working what in your school

- Find out which professors are taking undergraduates, find if they can pay for your research or if you can get scholarships that will pay you while you work on extracurricular research or get credit for it

in the fall, start searching for summer research and internship opportunities in other institutions and/or companies

- As you complete your courses, while maintaining a high GPA, build your resume with research experiences and also internships if possible

- Build a professional social media profile

If interested in graduate school, the **last year of college in the FALL**:

- Check on USNews for rankings:

http://grad-schools.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-graduate-schools [4]

- Checkout the University programs online, what do they have to offer?

- Use programs like Project 1000 [6] to apply to as many schools as possible, waiving your application fees if you are eligible

- Select those universities you wish to apply and apply to those programs with full fellowships, tuition and stipend

- My personal recommendation is to apply to at least 10 programs in a wide range of rakings to ensure that you will get into a school

- Challenge yourself, apply to GREAT schools, you never know

The application materials will require letters of recommendation; this is why it is so important to have research experiences and to do really well on courses.

AND APPLY TO SUMMER RESEARCH PROGRAMS OR INTERNSHIPS!

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