Introducing the LEarning And Professional Skills (LEAPS) Program

November 6th, 2024

Markus Min, SAFS Ph.D. Candidate (mmin@uw.edu)

Support provided by the School of Aquatic and Fishery Sciences, the School of Oceanography, and the Marine Biology Program

Outline for today

What is LEAPS and why did we create it? (15 min)

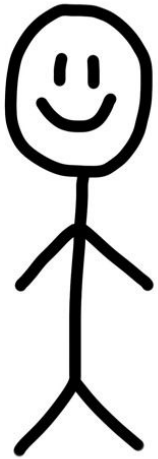
Introductions (10 min)

The upcoming LEAPS schedule (10 min)

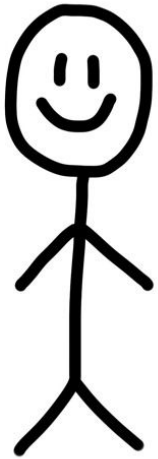
Your feedback on what you'd like to see covered by LEAPS (5 min)

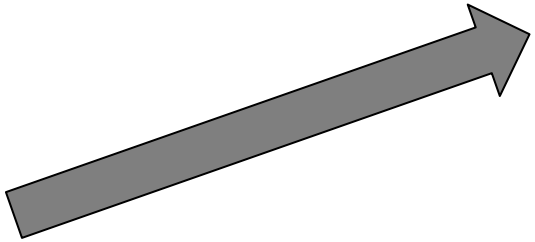
Open discussion and Q&A (10 min)

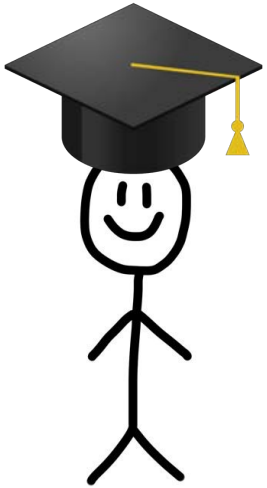
You today!



You today!

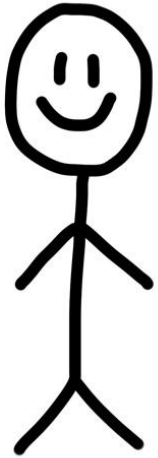


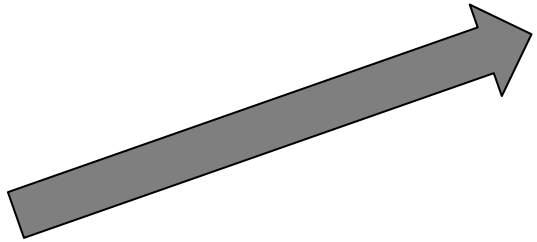


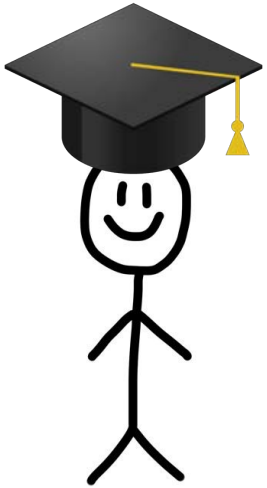


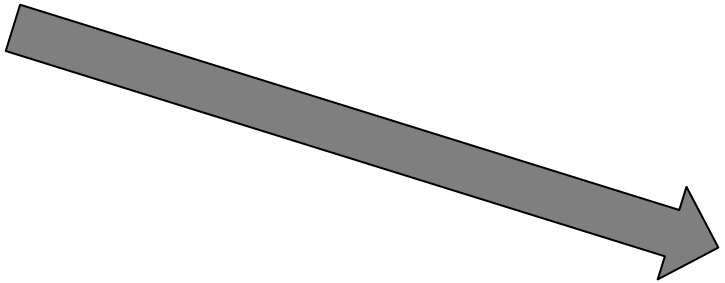
You in the near future!

You today!

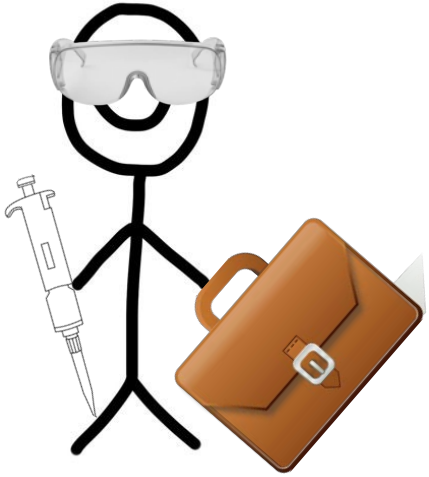




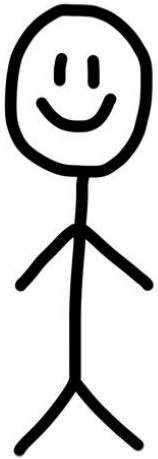


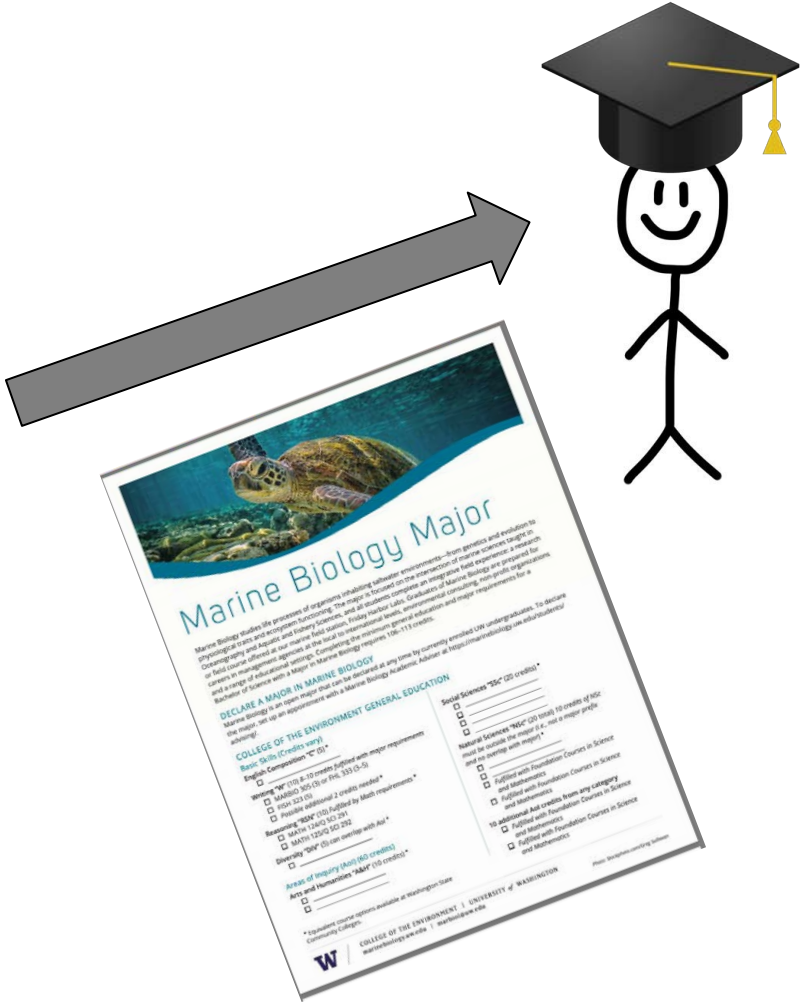


You in the near future!



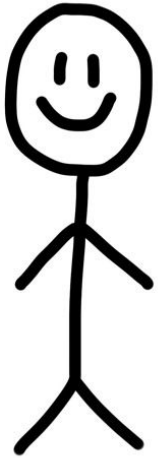
You today!

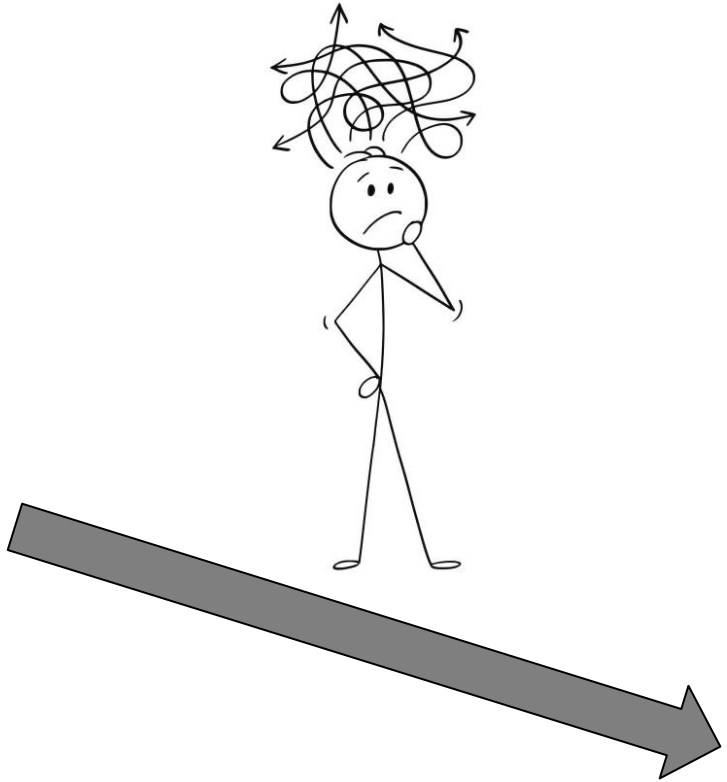




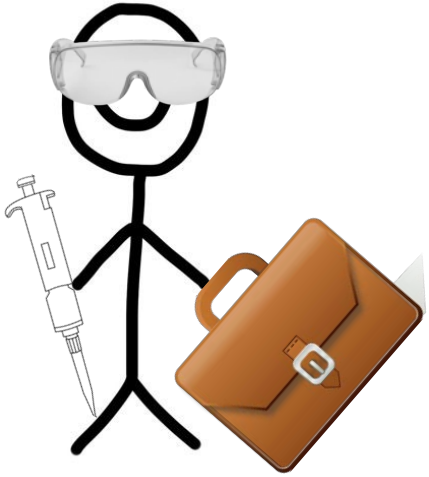
You in the near future!

You today!

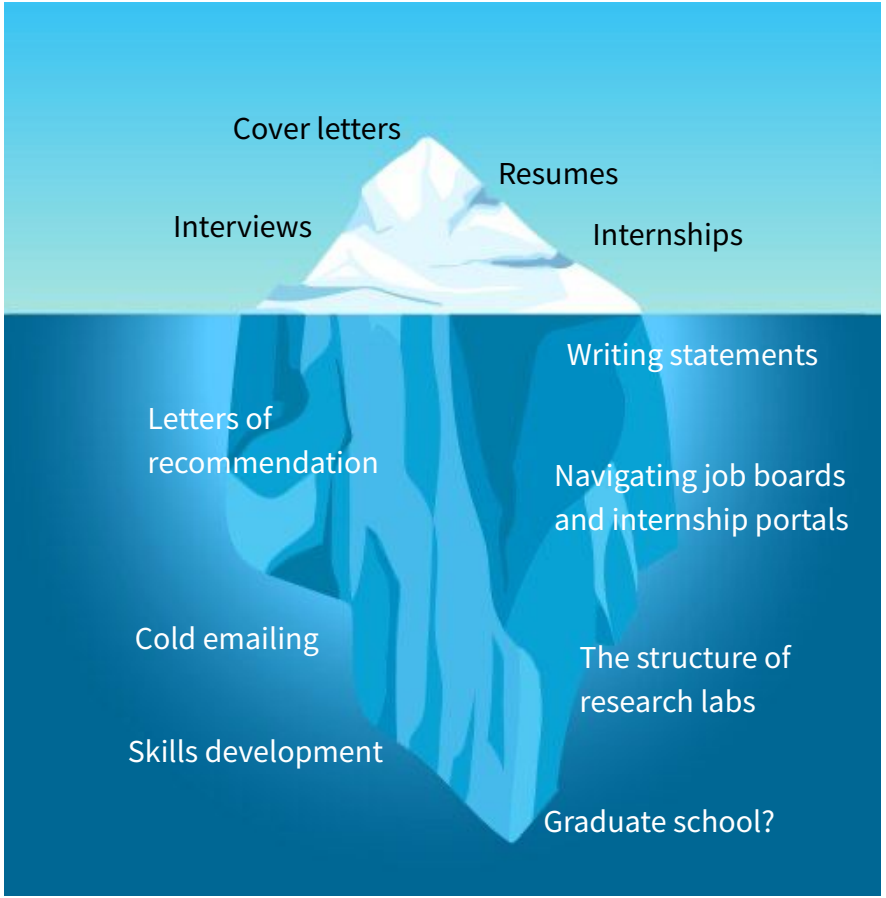




You in the near future!



The marine sciences have a “hidden curriculum” for professional development



The goal of our program is to help you navigate your undergraduate education outside of class time. Jobs, internships, and research opportunities do not wait until after graduation!

- How do you find opportunities?
- How do you apply for opportunities?
- What can you do as an undergraduate to build your CV/resumé?
- What are the next steps after graduation?

LEAPS Background

- Last year: Piloted workshops, collected feedback
- This year: Content as a comprehensive program

Summer internships and research experiences workshop, January 2024

LEAPS Development Team

Mikelle Nuwer, Oceanography

Luke Tornabene, Aquatic and Fishery Sciences

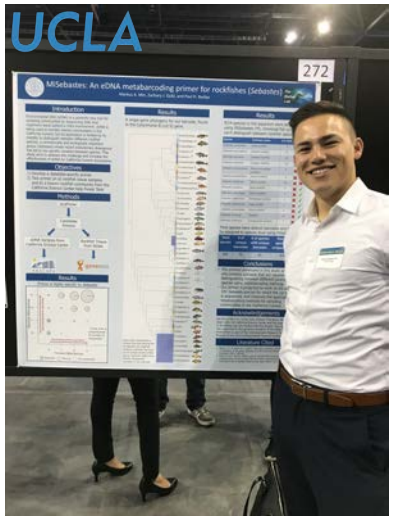
Samantha Scherer, Aquatic and Fishery Sciences

Joe Kobayashi, Marine Biology

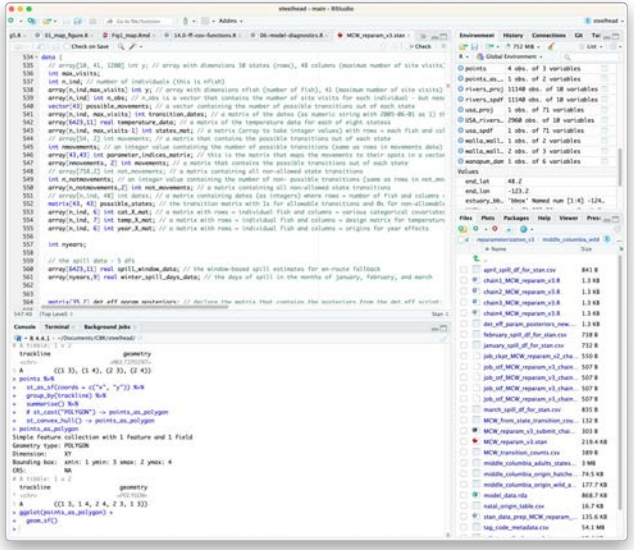
Michael Martinez, Aquatic and Fishery Sciences

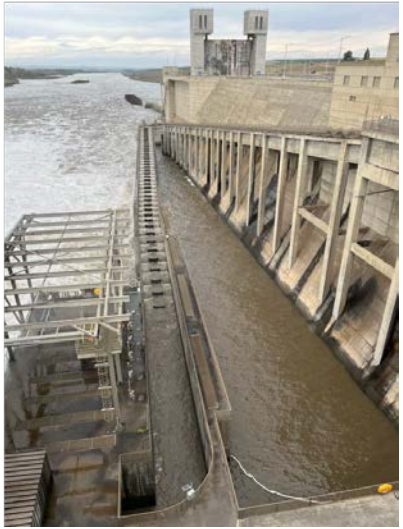
Michelle Townsend, Oceanography

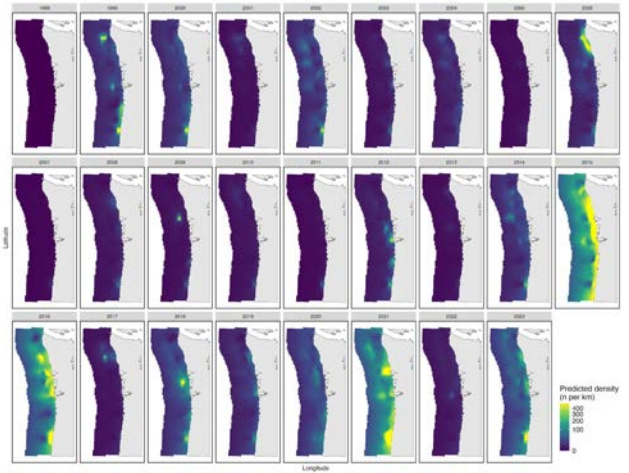
About Markus



About Markus







Icebreaker

Introduce yourself to someone you don’t already know! (name, pronouns, major, year)

What has been your favorite class so far at UW?

Join by Web **PollEv.com/leaps**

What are your career aspirations? To any level of detail that you would like!

The LEAPS Schedule

Module	**Time**
Introducing LEAPS	3:30 pm on Wednesday, November 6, FSH 107
Application tips I: Letters of Recommendation	**12:30 pm on Tuesday November 19, FSH 108**
Application tips II: Writing Statements	January 2025
Application tips III: Finding summer internships and research experiences	January 2025
Developing transferable skills I: What skills are employers looking for?	April 2025
Developing transferable skills II: How do you develop desirable skills as an undergraduate?	April 2025
Looking ahead: Graduate School and first jobs after graduation	May 2025

Application tips I-III series overview

Most applications have the following components:

1. Transcript
2. A CV or resume
3. 2-3 letters of recommendation
4. A written statement, or answers to multiple shorter prompts

Application tips I: Cultivating references and securing letters of recommendation

Most applications for internships, research experiences, etc. require you to provide references or letters of recommendation.

This module covers:

1) How to develop relationships with potential references
2) How to ask for letters of recommendation

W COLLEGE OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Letters of Recommendation

Photo: iStockphoto.com/FluxFactory

Most applications (including all of these) require letters of recommendation.

NSF *Research Experiences for Undergraduates*

NOAA *Hollings Scholarship*

MBARI *Summer Internship*

Mary Gates Leadership and Research Scholarships

What is a letter of recommendation?

A letter of recommendation is a document that is submitted on your behalf by someone who you have engaged with in your professional or academic life that attests to why you should be selected for a given opportunity. **You will typically need 2–3 letters of recommendation for any application.**

Who is a good reference?

- **Read the specific guidelines on references provided by the application and make a list of appropriate people to contact.** Generally speaking, good references are people who are senior to you and are from your academic and/or professional circles. Your academic adviser is typically NOT a good reference.
- **Good references are those that know you the best.** Earning a high grade in a course may not offer sufficient context for a letter writer to provide a strong letter of recommendation.
- **People that you have worked with more recently typically (but not always) are better references.** The longer it has been since you last interacted with someone, the greater justification is needed for choosing them as a reference.
- **Good references are those who you put your best foot forward with.** If you weren't an active participant in a course or earned a low grade, that professor won't be a good reference.

Cultivating references

It's hard to build relationships with potential references, especially in your first year or two at UW. Here are some strategies that might help you overcome that barrier and make your first connections with references:

- Get to know your instructors so they can get to know you
- Introduce yourself before or after class in the first weeks of the quarter
- Attend office hours or schedule a time to meet with course instructors
- Actively participate during course sessions
- Find ways to interact informally, e.g., before or after class
- Be motivated, enthusiastic, and dependable

School of Aquatic and Fishery Sciences
School of Oceanography
Marine Biology

You will all need references eventually, so start planning ahead and developing relationships with faculty early. I know it can feel daunting. No matter what stage of your career you are in, "imposter syndrome" can make you hesitant to reach out. This is normal, but you need to make that leap! If it's easier to reach out in email first, do that!

—Luke Tornabene
Associate Professor, UW SAFS

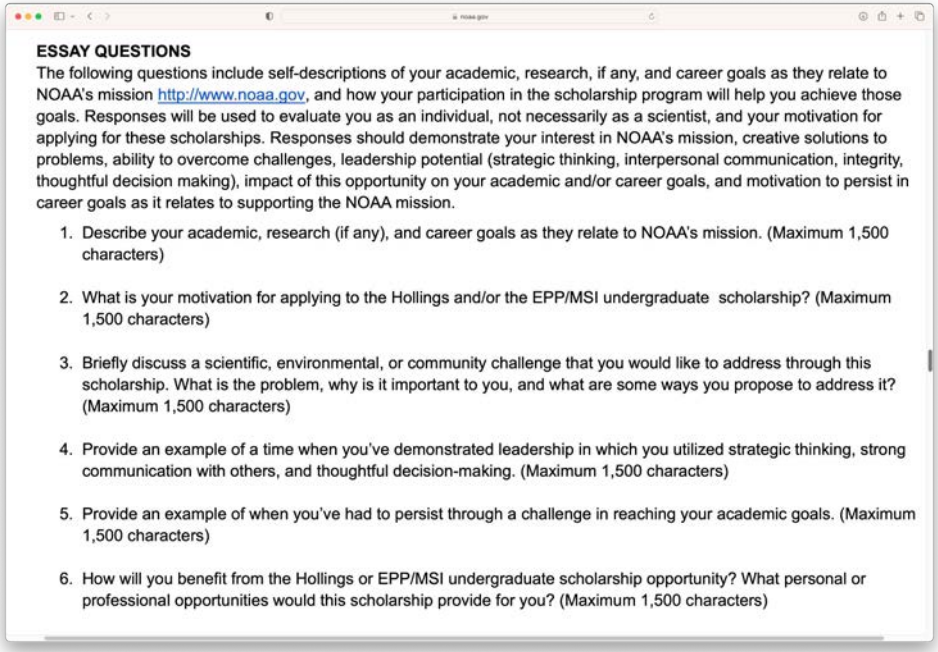
"Maintain a can-do attitude and go out of your way to be helpful where you're able. First (and second and third)—impressions matter. Work to make sure that you are conveying professionalism, enthusiasm, and respect for others."

—Chelsea Wood
Associate Professor, UW SAFS

Application tips II: Writing Statements

Almost every application has a written component.

This module covers the fundamentals for writing compelling statements.

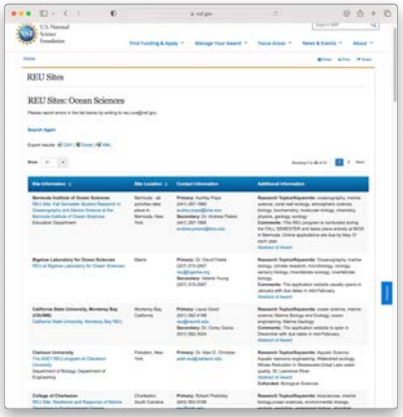


ESSAY QUESTIONS

The following questions include self-descriptions of your academic, research, if any, and career goals as they relate to NOAA's mission http://www.noaa.gov, and how your participation in the scholarship program will help you achieve those goals. Responses will be used to evaluate you as an individual, not necessarily as a scientist, and your motivation for applying for these scholarships. Responses should demonstrate your interest in NOAA's mission, creative solutions to problems, ability to overcome challenges, leadership potential (strategic thinking, interpersonal communication, integrity, thoughtful decision making), impact of this opportunity on your academic and/or career goals, and motivation to persist in career goals as it relates to supporting the NOAA mission.

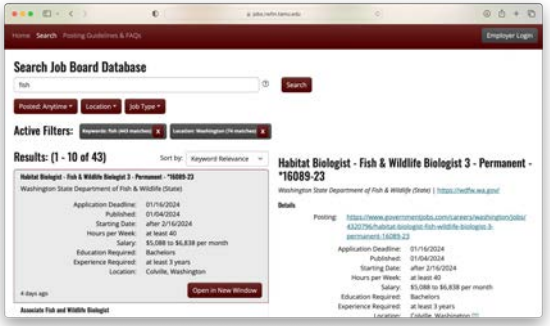
1. Describe your academic, research (if any), and career goals as they relate to NOAA's mission. (Maximum 1,500 characters)
2. What is your motivation for applying to the Hollings and/or the EPP/MSI undergraduate scholarship? (Maximum 1,500 characters)
3. Briefly discuss a scientific, environmental, or community challenge that you would like to address through this scholarship. What is the problem, why is it important to you, and what are some ways you propose to address it? (Maximum 1,500 characters)
4. Provide an example of a time when you've demonstrated leadership in which you utilized strategic thinking, strong communication with others, and thoughtful decision-making. (Maximum 1,500 characters)
5. Provide an example of when you've had to persist through a challenge in reaching your academic goals. (Maximum 1,500 characters)
6. How will you benefit from the Hollings or EPP/MSI undergraduate scholarship opportunity? What personal or professional opportunities would this scholarship provide for you? (Maximum 1,500 characters)

Application tips III: Finding summer internships and research experiences



This module covers:

1) The landscape of undergraduate summer opportunities
2) The differences between the major categories of opportunities (internships, seasonal jobs, and research experiences)
3) How to effectively search for opportunities
4) Application timelines



Developing transferable skills I: What skills are employers looking for?

This module covers:

1) Dissecting job ads to understand what employers are looking for
2) Assessing your existing strengths and weaknesses
3) How to develop transferable skills

Developing transferable skills II: How do you develop desirable skills as an undergraduate?

This module covers:

1) The different ways to build up your resume as an undergraduate
2) Tips for professional communication to secure opportunities
3) How to get involved with undergraduate research

W COLLEGE OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Email and interview tips

Photo: iStockphoto.com/FluxFactory

If you are looking for experiences in the aquatic sciences, you will likely be contacting lots of people—usually via email. Your first email will determine if they are interested in working with you, whether they will keep you in mind for future opportunities (should none be available at the time of your email), and whether you will even receive a response. In short, your email is your chance to make a good first impression, and it matters immensely.

This handout covers how to write good emails and gives a few tips for interviews. While we give tips for contacting faculty members, these guidelines are highly applicable to reaching out to anyone about a potential opportunity!

Email guidelines

- **Be specific.** If your email looks generic, and it could have been sent to any faculty member in the department, it will be very obvious to the recipient. Your goal is to convey your specific interest in their work.
- **Do your homework on the person/organization you're contacting.** Avoid asking questions that can be easily answered with a Google search and convey that you understand the type of work that they do in your email.
- **Follow instructions, if provided.** For example, many faculty lab websites have information specifically for prospective undergraduate researchers. Ignoring instructions is the quickest way for someone to disregard your email.
- **Use an informative yet succinct subject line.** "Interested in undergraduate research opportunities" usually suffices.
- **Use your UW email.** This will prevent your email from ending up in the junk folder, and also immediately conveys your affiliation.
- **Start with a professional salutation.** "Dear Dr. Guzmán" is always safe. "Hey José" is not.
- **Keep your emails to 1–2 paragraphs.** Longer than that and a faculty member might not want to read it. Shorter than a paragraph usually indicates that you didn't do your homework.
- **Avoid flowery language.** Get to the point. Here's an example of what to avoid: "I am extremely passionate about marine conservation and your vitally important research would be a perfect fit for my profound interest and deep fascination in this extremely critical topic at this time of unprecedented anthropogenic impacts to our marine ecosystems."
- **Proofread your emails.** Those hiring undergraduates are looking for students who are detail-oriented. Typos, run-on sentences, and misspelled names convey the opposite.
- **Beware of font changes when copying and pasting.** It is fine to have a template for your emails. However, if someone's name or the sentence about why you're interested in their work specifically is the only part of the email that is in a different font, it will be obvious that you're using a shotgun approach to contacting people.

"When reaching out to faculty, be specific about what you're hoping to gain—are you interested in particular skills, volunteer experience, course credit, pay, or capstone project mentoring (or multiple of the above)? "

—Sarah Converse
Associate Professor, UW SAFS

"Be knowledgeable about the faculty's research program and explain why this particular program or lab will support you and your career goals. The less it sounds like a spam email, the more attention I give it."

—Tim Essington
Professor, UW SAFS

School of Aquatic and Fishery Sciences
School of Oceanography
Marine Biology

Looking ahead: Graduate school and first jobs after graduation

This module covers:

1) Your first jobs out of undergrad: How to find them and what to expect
2) Breaking down the pros and cons of grad school. Is it right for you?
3) The grad school application process
4) Panel with current UW grad students

What does LEAPS not cover?

LEAPS is designed to cover topics related to the “hidden curriculum” - i.e., those topics not typically covered by professional development resources

What does LEAPS not cover?

LEAPS is designed to cover topics related to the “hidden curriculum” - i.e., those topics not typically covered by professional development resources

“Classic” professional development resources that complement LEAPS:

- UW Career and Internship Center
  - Resumes, CVs, interviews
- Workshops hosted by other units in the College of the Environment
  - Wednesday November 20th, 3-5 pm: CV Workshop hosted by UW Chapter of the American Fisheries Society

Join by Web **PollEv.com/leaps**

What topics would you like to see covered by LEAPS?

LEAPS FAQ

1) Do I have to attend every session?
    a) No! But I would try to attend as many as possible :)
2) Will the workshops be posted online?
    a) Recordings likely will not, but materials (including slides) will be on the LEAPS page: **fish.uw.edu/leaps-program**

Open Q&A

What questions do you have about the LEAPS program?

What questions do you have generally about professional development or the hidden curriculum?

Please take three minutes to fill out this survey and help us improve this workshop!