

Wolenski strategy for finding a research lab.

For undergraduate students interested in biomedical research, there are a number of options for finding a lab in which to work. One method is to send out a large number of Emails to Principal Investigators (PIs) at Yale in a variety of departments (MCDB should always be on this list). This method occasionally work, but it is not ideal.

A preferred method is outlined below. I call this the Wolenski four stage approach for finding a lab in which to hang your hat:

1. Identify a research topic that you are passionate about pursuing. Most students haven't yet identified their research passion, so I've come up with an unbiased strategy to find yours! Read the Editors' Choice in *Science* and/or *Nature* journals. These journals can be viewed online for free from any university server. Of course you can search any biological journal, but these journals are published weekly and have pertinent updates on a broad range of scientific topics.

Identify a topic that truly gets you excited about biomedical research. e.g., diabetes, epigenetics, photosynthesis, Alzheimer's disease, membrane trafficking, neuronal pathfinding, etc. This may require days (possibly weeks), and involve reading hundreds of abstracts-- but when you find something that excites you, pursue it with passion.

I routinely go to the *Science* Web site and read the abstracts to stay in touch with pertinent scientific topics. At the very least, the Editors' Choices of scientific publications provide unbiased insight into broadly appealing and timely science at the highest levels.



<http://www.sciencemag.org/content/current#EditorsChoice>

In an ideal situation, you will find a topic that grabs you with a visceral phenotype. You should find yourself saying: "I can't put this article down," and "No one can stop me from pursuing this area of science investigation."

2. Find someone at Yale that does research compatible with your passion. Do a Google search cross-referencing the topic in *Science* that you want to pursue with principle investigators (PI) at Yale.

3. Become knowledgeable on the topic before you contact the professor. Read ~3-4 papers published by the PI of the potential laboratory you want to join. Take notes and write down questions you have on the key take home messages of the papers.

4. Write to the PI and make clear you understand what is happening in the lab.

Write an Email to the PI of the lab indicating: a) you have read his/her papers, b) you are interested in the topic, and, c) you can make a contribution to the lab.

Don't be discouraged if you don't receive an immediate response. If you don't hear a response in 3-4 days, send a follow-up email that emphasize your scientific acumen and continued interest.