

Marine Biological Laboratory



NSF-REU Biological Discovery in Woods Hole Summer Opportunity for Undergraduate Research

Marine Biological Laboratory
Department of Education
7 MBL Street
Woods Hole MA 02543

Email Address: NSFREU@mbledu

Program Dates: June 9 – August 20, 2021

Application Deadline: Priority deadline – February 15, 2021; Final deadline – March 10, 2021

Please read the entire *Program Details* and the below *Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)* before contacting MBL with questions. Any questions not covered in the Program Details and/or FAQs must be sent to NSFREU@MBL.EDU. Please do not contact the education office at MBL as that will only delay any response. Please Note: All application materials must be uploaded electronically.

MBL-REU Frequently Asked Questions:

Q. Do I have to be at the MBL for the full duration of the program? For example, I have a week vacation scheduled during the program or I need to arrive late or depart early from the scheduled dates...

Yes, students must plan to be at the MBL for the full length of the program, mid-June through mid-August. Unfortunately, if you are unable to commit to be in residence at MBL for the entire duration of the program, we will be unable to accept you into the program. If your undergraduate institution prevents you from arriving on time or you need to leave early, we will be unable to accept you.

Q. Will there be time to take summer school classes?

No. The program is designed as an intensive, hands-on research experience, and students are expected to focus their efforts on these activities for the duration of the program, mid-June through mid-August.



Q. How much time do I have to commit each week?

Although there are weekly seminars, meetings, and discussion for the programs, the vast majority of the time is spent in the research laboratory of the mentor and therefore an individual's hours can vary tremendously during each week depending on the nature of the research and the student and mentor expectations. Almost all students can expect to work a full day, Monday through Friday, with evening meetings and/or seminars on at least two of the nights. Some labs will have Saturday hours. We have requested that no lab activities are scheduled on Sundays so the students may have the day off or participate in group field trips/activities.

Q. Is there a way to get college credits for the program?

The MBL is not currently a degree granting institution and does not offer credit for any of its summer programs. Your best option is to check with your home institution and determine if the research experience is eligible for credit. Several students have successfully received credit from their home institution.

Q. I will be graduating in the spring. Can I apply for the program?

Unfortunately, undergraduate students who have already attained their degree are not eligible for the program. It may be possible for students to delay their graduation until the end of the fall semester and be eligible for the program.

Q. How am I assigned my mentor?

After applicants are accepted, we try to pair each student with one of the three mentors that were selected. If the mentor feels there is a good match, the mentor will send additional information to the student to prepare for the summer

Q. How are students selected?

The admissions committee carefully weighs each student's application. Students' grades, statements and letters of recommendation are evaluated. Students who are highly competitive are forwarded to the course directors for final acceptance and placement.

Q. Does my mentor choice influence my selection?

No, all applications are viewed independent of mentor choice. Mentor choice is only to assign selected students.

Q. Can I change my mentor selection after I apply?

There is no need to. These are for assigning selected students only. If you have decided on a different choice, you can state that in your acceptance letter. However, mentor selection is not guaranteed. Please do not contact us to change mentor selection after you have applied.

Q. Who should I contact to check on my application status?

The program directors respectfully request that once your application is complete and you receive the confirmation email, that you do not contact us during the admissions process. Students will be contacted by March 30 with respect to acceptance into the program.



Q. My letter writers claim not to have received the link (or only one reference letter has been uploaded).

Please check the email address you provided for the letter writer. Please be assured that we will review every application that has at least one letter uploaded. It is helpful to send emails to your letter writers indicating that they will be receiving the link within 24 hours so they do not misplace it. Please do not contact us if at least one letter is uploaded. If you are a finalist, we will contact you directly if needed.

Q. What type of research experience is required? Can I have too much experience?

No experience is required and previous research experience is usually not a factor in selection. However, if you have extensive research experience, for example having received two summers of NSF-REU support, we probably will give students with less experience, greater consideration.

Q. Should I directly contact one of the mentors listed?

We strongly suggest that you DO NOT contact any of the mentors for acceptance into the BDWH-REU program. The admission committee's function is to determine the top ten students for the program independent of mentor preference. To ensure fairness for all applicants, the admission committee and program directors do not solicit individual mentors for input on any student prior to acceptance. There are other undergraduate opportunities at MBL and Woods Hole and you are welcome to contact potential mentors for these programs, but please do not contact mentors specifically for the BDWH program.

Q. What is the difference between the priority deadline and the final deadline?

The admissions committee philosophy is to examine the student's entire application, including grades, essays and letters of recommendation to ensure that our program is the optimal fit for the student. Completed applications received by February 15 allow for a full review and time to ask for additional material (if needed) or clarifications of existing material and for letters of recommendation to be reviewed. The majority (but not all) of our accepted students usually come from this pool.

Q. Why are we encouraged to submit prior to the March 10 deadline?

Again, we want to have sufficient time to review every applicant's file and contact finalists in case we need additional information. Due to the volume of applicants, we cannot guarantee that applications received after the priority deadline will be able to be completely reviewed or that sufficient time will exist to correct any issues. It is strongly encouraged that you do not wait until the last minute as we cannot respond to you or any problems you may encounter or contact letter writers during the final week of applications. Also, we reserve the right to suspend the application process any time after the priority deadline, so again, you are strongly encouraged to adhere to that deadline.

Q. I missed the priority deadline. Will my application still be reviewed?

Our goal is to assemble a strong, diverse cohort. There are often applications that come in after the priority deadline that will help us meet these goals. While the majority of our students are selected from applications received by the priority deadline, there are often a few spots that are filled by applicants after this date. Therefore, we encourage applications up to the final deadline or until the application process is closed.

Q. What type of accommodations/meal plans are available?

If accepted, you will be housed with other undergraduates in the program in one of the MBL dormitories. Three meals per day are provided in the MBL dining hall.



Q. I am quite certain that I will be applying to medical school. Is this the program for me?

This program is designed for students who are considering a graduate career (i.e. PhD) in the life sciences. The vast majority of the seminars, training and curriculum are geared for this type of career. Students who are committed to medical school are usually not interested in this type of program and we suggest that you consider NIH sponsored research opportunities.

Q. I do not know how to convert files to PDF.

Files can be easily saved in Word as a PDF or scanned as a PDF. You are responsible for converting the files and uploading them correctly. Please do not contact us on how to convert files to PDF.

Q. My school will only forward official transcripts by mail or electronically. Where should they be sent?

Please do not forward official transcripts to MBL. Transcripts need to be uploaded online with your other application materials. Our admissions committee is spread throughout the country and we can only review electronic files. Information sent directly to MBL outside of the electronic application process will not be added to your file. We do not require official transcripts during the application process. Legible, scanned copies of unofficial transcripts are fine. Once accepted we may request an official transcript.

Q. My letter writer will only send letters of recommendation by mail. Where should these be mailed to?

We are sorry, but we cannot accept information that is not sent electronically. Letter writers need to follow the instructions in the email sent to them. If they are unable to send the letter electronically, we unfortunately must suggest that you choose another person.

Q. I plan to have a never-ending stream of visitors staying with me every weekend.

Please remember this a research program and not a summer camp. Dorm space is extremely limited and you need to be considerate of your roommates. You will not have that much free time and we are not always able to accommodate visitors on our weekend field trips. Long term visits (more than 2 nights) are not permitted.

Q. Where can I find more information about the Marine Biological Laboratory?

The [MBL website](#) is the best source of information about the MBL in general, our scientists and research staff, facilities, education programs, etc.