CONTACTING A FACULTY MEMBER: FROM HELLO TO THANK YOU

1. Express interest in learning more about a faculty member’s research and ask if he or she could set up an appointment to do so. This is a conversation faculty members love to have, but usually takes 30+ minutes, so they want to be sure they have time set aside.

2. Before coming to the appointment, be sure to check whether there are posters around the department with that faculty member’s name on them, either as an author or in the acknowledgments. You not only will impress the faculty member with your initiative, but you will also have a clearer understanding of whether your interests match.

3. During the conversation, you should share with the faculty member if you have specific goals such as summer research in a particular summer, independent study during a particular semester, or writing a senior thesis. This will allow the faculty member to be open with you about his or her availability to serve in those roles.

4. Ask how long you have to make a decision. If the faculty member isn’t sure whether he or she will be taking students, ask when you should check back.

5. If you are still interested in working with the faculty member by the end of the first conversation, ask whether there are any papers, books or websites you could read to learn more.

6. Understand that faculty members want students to find a match between things that they find interesting and a particular research project, so it’s expected that students will talk with multiple faculty members.

7. To avoid misunderstandings, open and clear lines of communication are key. It’s a good idea to follow up with a note to thank the faculty member for making the time to meet with you, while also clarifying your level of continued interest and demonstrating that you understand potential next steps.