BE A STUDENT RESEARCHER
Among the many decisions you are currently facing regarding your college search may be the choice between a top-tier research university and a teaching-focused liberal arts college. At Vanderbilt, you do not have to choose.

While our faculty members are dedicated to fostering the undergraduate academic experience in and out of the classroom, our students are also afforded numerous opportunities to research in a lab, in a library, out in the field, or in a creative setting, no matter their chosen majors.

Through their innovative work, Vanderbilt faculty and students have made notable contributions to the fields of health care, education, social science, humanities, music, and much more. At Vanderbilt, you will have the chance not only to absorb and apply invaluable lessons from your professors, but also to take part in their innovations and create new avenues of knowledge for future generations.

Explore undergraduate research at Vanderbilt: vu.edu/undergrad-research
Vanderbilt students may engage in research projects that span nearly every academic field offered by the university. Most undergraduate students get involved by actively reaching out to professors, academic advisers, or graduate students whose current research projects interest them, while some faculty seek undergraduate assistance via departmental websites or classroom interactions.

Vanderbilt also offers summer research programs that include paid stipends, and the university continues to foster relationships with research programs at other institutions in the U.S. and abroad.

Each of the four undergraduate schools has honors programs that require research or independent study as part of the extended curriculum. Students can apply to have their work published in the Vanderbilt Undergraduate Research Journal or other academic journals, and students have opportunities to present on campus and at academic conferences.

Students involved in academic research join a community of collaborative scholars often engaged in research that spans traditional disciplinary lines. The combination of Vanderbilt’s low 8:1 teacher-to-student ratio and the culture of close faculty-student interactions mean that undergraduates frequently work one-on-one with faculty engaged in cutting-edge research.

Many undergraduate students receive a stipend or academic credit for their research experience.

Students conduct research across all academic disciplines regardless of their major field of study.

Recently, there have been undergraduate student researchers in American studies, anthropology, biomedical engineering, chemistry, child development, civil engineering, communication studies, elementary education, English, film, history, human and organizational development, Latin American studies, mechanical engineering, music, neuroscience, secondary education, political science, psychology, public policy, Spanish, and vocal performance, among many others.

Vanderbilt is home to more than 100 interdisciplinary centers and institutes, including the Vanderbilt Institute for Energy and the Environment, the Vanderbilt Institute for Global Health, and the National Center on School Choice.
“I first got involved with research when I asked economics professor Malcolm Getz to be my honors thesis adviser. After meeting with me regularly for a semester to discuss my thesis, which seeks to develop a socially efficient urban parking pricing mechanism, Professor Getz offered me summer employment as his research assistant. Our research is in health care economics, focusing on the cost-effectiveness of alternative screening strategies for colorectal cancer.”

—Adam Shriver ('16, Omaha, NE), an economics, mathematics, and Spanish triple major

“In the middle of my freshman year, I emailed a couple of psychology faculty members to inquire if they had space for a new undergraduate research assistant. Then I sat in on their lab meetings to better see which lab most closely matched my interests and had the best environment. I am currently working in the Emotion and Anxiety Research Lab on a project that examines how disgust sensitivity to food can lead to eating disorders.”

—Carly Stewart ('17, Libertyville, IL), a psychology and neuroscience double major
“I got involved with research as part of the Special Education Honors Program. I worked on a project to develop and test a reading intervention designed to help students with Down syndrome answer comprehension questions regarding location in text. I was involved in many aspects of the study ranging from initial brainstorming meetings about the study’s design to traveling to schools in Nashville to actually implement the planned intervention with students. I presented my findings at a poster session on the Peabody campus.”

—Kelsey Herald (‘16, Houston, TX), a special education major

“I first got involved in research during the first semester of my sophomore year. I worked in Peabody’s Language Development Lab and helped schedule and run experiments for a study on preschool children’s word learning. I also worked on an action research project at a local nonprofit, the Martha O’Bryan Center, studying some of the non-academic outcomes of their work with at-risk students. Then my senior year, I did a research project for my HOD honors thesis.”

—Felicia Hanito (‘16, Singapore and Shanghai, China), a double major in child development and human and organizational development
“I got involved in research by applying to the Vanderbilt School of Engineering Summer Research Program. The purpose of my research project has been to analyze the environmental impacts associated with wind energy—such as emissions and water use—and to quantify wind energy performance in terms of these impacts, rather than using more common metrics such as electricity production, reliability, and cost.”

–Mahalia Hyde (’16, Fort Wright, KY), a civil engineering major

“I got involved in research early in my freshman year by responding to an email from a professor who was looking for undergraduates to join his new engineering lab. I had very limited research experience prior to this opportunity, but the professor is a great mentor and made it easy to participate in the project. Early in my research, I assembled a 3D printer, and since then, I have modified its hardware and software components and have used it to produce hydrogel scaffolds for artificial tissue.”

–Matthew Richardson (’17, Brentwood, TN), a computer engineering major
“I decided to do research because I wanted to get out of the practice room and into the real world. I believe that having music in one’s life helps make each day a bit better, and I want to use music to help people in tough situations. To this end, I am performing in-depth research on the benefits of music therapy. During the first phase, I worked with a group of individuals with varying degrees of mental and physical disabilities. Then, with the help of Blair Professor Marianne Ploger, I worked alongside veterans and individuals who have suffered from PTSD, having them participate in weekly choir activities and evaluating how participation in those activities affects their self-esteem and overall happiness.”

–Olivia Gilmore (’16, Port Washington, NY), a trumpet/musical arts major with a minor in French

“I spent the summer at the European American Musical Alliance in Paris, where I analyzed music scores and completed exercises in harmony and counterpoint, which helped us develop an understanding of structure in our own music. I also worked on a contrapuntal composition of my own for organ, which was selected for presentation on a master class of organ works. The program profoundly strengthened my understanding of how music works.”

–Jasper Brey (’16, Tallahassee, FL), a music composition major
Vanderbilt undergraduate research opportunities include:

Vanderbilt Undergraduate Summer Research Program (VUSRP)
Collaborative student-faculty research
• 10 weeks • $5,000 stipend
vusrp.vanderbilt.edu

Vanderbilt Undergraduate School of Engineering Summer Research Program
Collaborative student-faculty engineering research
• 10 weeks • $5,000 stipend
engineering.vanderbilt.edu/summer-research

Littlejohn Family Undergraduate Research Program
Funding for students working with faculty members in the College of Arts and Science
as.vanderbilt.edu/academics/academicresources/researchopportunities

The Curb Scholars Program
Interdisciplinary projects centered on creativity and innovation
vanderbilt.edu/curbcenter

Departmental Honors Programs
An independent research project is central to the honors program for which students apply in their junior year. See individual department websites for information.

Learn about undergraduate research at Vanderbilt: vu.edu/undergrad-research
Explore your next steps: admissions.vanderbilt.edu

MORE THAN
50%
of Vanderbilt undergraduates participate in research