

## Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

**Question:** Are international students eligible to participate in the Lehigh REU Program in Physics?

**Answer:** Most of our financial support comes from the National Science Foundation (NSF), and NSF requires that its funds can only be used to support U.S. citizens and Permanent Residents. However, we do have some unrestricted funding from other sources that can be used to support a very limited number of international students (typically 2 or 3) each year. Therefore, we are happy to consider applications from international students who are already in the United States and are currently enrolled as an undergraduate in an American university. Unfortunately, we are not able to consider applications from international students attending colleges or universities in other countries.

**Question:** Are students enrolled in masters degree programs or other graduate programs eligible to participate in REU?

**Answer:** No.

**Question:** I am graduating in May 2011. Am I eligible to participate in the REU program?

**Answer:** If you are enrolled in a dual degree program such that you will still be enrolled in a college or university as an undergraduate during the Fall 2011 semester, you are eligible to participate in REU. If you are finishing your undergraduate career this May, you are not eligible. Note that, according to NSF, the relevant factor is whether you will be enrolled as an undergraduate during the Fall 2011 semester. It is not sufficient that you have plans to continue your undergraduate career at some future date. If you are graduating in December 2011, please make sure you let us know by checking the appropriate box. In this case, you are eligible.

**Question:** Are freshmen (defined to be students graduating in May 2014) eligible to participate in the Lehigh REU Program?

**Answer:** Our program is designed primarily for students finishing their junior (or in some cases sophomore) year of college. Under extremely rare circumstances, we have accepted a student finishing his or her freshman year. Over the years, only 2 or 3 freshmen have been selected to participate out of more than 480 total REU participants. So the answer is that freshmen are eligible, but the chance of being selected is very low.

**Question:** What is the situation regarding sophomores (i.e. students graduating in May 2013)?

**Answer:** Sophomores are certainly eligible and are considered for all positions. However, in general, sophomores will be given lower priority than juniors because they usually do not have the same level of advanced course work under their belts, and because students finishing their junior year (i.e. those graduating in May 2012) are in their last summer of eligibility for REU (and therefore we believe should receive higher priority). Despite this, a large number of our positions (probably around 25%) are, in fact, awarded to sophomores each year. Note that if you are graduating in 2013 because you are enrolled in a 5 year or dual degree program, and you will have completed three years of college by summer, you should let us know in the “comments” box of the application.

**Question:** Can my professors send their letters of recommendation by email? What about my resume?

**Answer:** All application materials (including recommendations and resumes) can be sent via email to [jph7@lehigh.edu](mailto:jph7@lehigh.edu), or via fax to 610-758-5730. Materials can also be submitted by regular mail to the address given on our website.

**Question:** Are any special forms required for recommendations?

**Answer:** No.

**Question:** Do my recommendations have to be sent by professors of courses I have taken?

**Answer:** No. You are welcome to have your recommendations sent by anyone who you feel can make the best case in support of your application. In general, it is more important to choose someone who knows you well and can provide a good picture of your abilities, than to choose someone who doesn't know you but has an impressive sounding title. However, since we are hiring students to participate in physics and engineering research projects, it is obvious that your physics, math, and engineering professors are more likely to be able to address relevant criteria than can your English professor or your supervisor at the restaurant where you worked.

**Question:** Is an unofficial transcript acceptable?

**Answer:** We only need an unofficial transcript for the application process (which can be sent via email to [jph7@lehigh.edu](mailto:jph7@lehigh.edu) if you wish). However, if you are selected for the program, and if you choose to attend, then we would need an official transcript at that time in order to get you officially enrolled in the program.

**Question:** I attend a college that uses the quarter system, and my final exams don't finish before the start date of the Lehigh REU program. Am I still eligible for the program?

**Answer:** We have had a number of participants who face this situation. If you are accepted for our program and choose to participate, we will give you a later start date that fits with your college schedule. Unfortunately, we cannot extend your program at the end of the summer since we must turn the dormitory back to the university after 10 weeks so they can get it ready for the return of the students in the fall. So if, for example, your final exam schedule requires you to arrive at our program 2 weeks late, we will try to design an 8 week project for you. Your stipend will be adjusted to reflect the time you actually participate in the program (i.e. if you are here for 8 weeks, you will receive 80% of the standard stipend).

**Question:** What are the criteria used in the selection process.

**Answer:** This is a difficult question since each participant is selected by the individual faculty advisor with whom he or she will work. Obviously good grades and strong recommendations are important. Individual advisors may also look for particular things such as a good grade in a particular course (such as differential equations), computer programming skills, or experience with the use of LabView for interfacing experiments to computers. However, many advisors simply look for someone who is bright, hardworking, and enthusiastic. Some advisors specifically select students from colleges or universities that cannot provide more than very limited exposure to research since this is a particularly important target group of the NSF REU program.

**Question:** I didn't receive a confirmation from a real person that my application was received or that my file was complete. How do I know whether you have received all my materials?

**Answer:** With more than 500 applications arriving over a relatively short time period, we simply cannot send confirmations to each student letting him or her know what has been received and what is missing. It is your responsibility to make sure your professors get their recommendations in on time and to be sure your application, resume, and transcript also arrive on time. You should have received an electronic message of "success" when you filed your electronic application, and that system has proven to be fairly reliable over the years. You are certainly welcome to call or email to ask whether your materials have all arrived. But again, with so many applicants, we ask that you only do that if you suspect there has been a specific problem with part or all of your file. We also request that you don't make multiple requests for updates on the status of your application as we are dealing with an extremely large volume of incoming materials.

**Question:** Are travel funds provided by the program? How about a food allowance?

**Answer:** Each REU site offers its own separate compensation package. Here at Lehigh we offer a relatively high stipend (\$5100 for 10 weeks) and free housing in the REU dormitory. Because of this, we generally don't provide board expenses. We do try to provide some travel funds for students who must travel considerable distances (i.e. those who are traveling by air or who are driving such a distance that more than one travel day is required).

**Question:** What are the chances that I will be accepted into the program?

**Answer:** Again, that is a difficult question to answer. In general this program is extremely competitive (as are all of the REU programs). Last year, we received 563 applications for 28 positions, and approximately half of those applicants have GPA's above 3.5. (GPA is not the only criterion we use, but it gives a sense of the level of competition.) For this reason, we tell our own undergraduates that they should apply to a number of REU programs to try to improve their chances of receiving an offer from at least one.

**Question:** When will I be notified as to whether I have been accepted into the program?

**Answer:** We use a rolling admissions program and treat each position separately. Each individual faculty member looks at those applications that indicate an interest in that faculty member's research area, and he or she makes a decision based upon his or her own criteria. At that point, an offer is made to the student selected and that student has some period of time to decide whether to accept or decline the offer. If the student declines, the professor selects another applicant and the process is repeated. Although our application deadline is March 7<sup>th</sup>, some faculty begin reviewing applications as early as mid-February since we know that many other programs make offers well before early March. Thus, a few of our positions may already be filled before our application deadline of March 7<sup>th</sup>, and therefore if you want your application to receive full consideration for all positions, you should have your file completed by mid-February. However, most offers will not be made until on or after March 7<sup>th</sup>, and second offers on some positions will follow at later times. In addition, because we receive funding from multiple sources, and because we don't find out until later whether some of the funding has been approved, we often don't make first offers on some positions until late March or even early April. We try to send out notices by email as soon as possible to all students who will not be receiving offers of support. However, many of these notices are not sent until mid-April or even late-April since we don't send them as long as the student is in the running for at least one unfilled position. We do guarantee that you will definitely eventually get a response from us, one way or the other.

**Question:** I have an offer from another program and I haven't yet heard from Lehigh. What should I do?

**Answer:** Congratulations! The competition for these programs is sufficiently tough that getting an offer from even one REU program is a significant achievement. If you prefer the program into which you were accepted over the Lehigh program, then you should, of course, go ahead and accept your other offer. And then I would greatly appreciate if you could drop me a quick note at [jph7@lehigh.edu](mailto:jph7@lehigh.edu) to let me know that you have accepted another offer and that we should remove your application from consideration at Lehigh. If you would prefer to come to Lehigh for the summer, then please write to me and let me know that you have another offer and when your deadline is. Often we cannot respond in time, and I may simply need to tell you that you should go ahead and accept the other offer. However, sometimes this information can speed up the process.