

Home-Campus Mentor: Purpose and Possibilities

Keck Geology Consortium Gateway REU

Congratulations! Your selection to the Keck Geology Consortium Gateway REU reflects your promise as an emerging scientist and your potential to benefit from an intensive research experience. This REU is designed not only to engage students in geoscience research, but also to support growth in confidence, independence, professional skills, and awareness of future pathways in science. Students work closely with project directors and teammates in field- and lab-based research and later present their work in a professional setting. Because this experience is both intensive and developmental, we invite each participant to identify a mentor on their home campus who can help them prepare, reflect, and connect the experience to their broader academic and professional growth.

For Students

As part of your Keck REU experience, we invite you to identify a mentor on your home campus. This person might be a faculty or staff member who knows you well, is familiar with scientific research, and is willing to serve as a local resource before and after the summer experience.

Your home-campus mentor is not being asked to supervise your REU research project. Your Keck REU Project Directors will provide the science mentoring. Instead, your home-campus mentor can help you prepare for the experience, reflect on what you are learning, and think about how the REU connects to your education, growth, and future plans.

We imagine this relationship as flexible and supportive. Conversations may be especially helpful before the summer field and lab experience, after the summer as you prepare for your conference presentation, and after the conference as you reflect on the experiences and what comes next. These conversations do not need to be formal. Often the most valuable mentoring begins with thoughtful questions, honest reflection, and space to make sense of uncertainty, challenge, growth, and possibility.

Possible conversation starters for students

- What feels exciting, and what feels uncertain, as I prepare for the summer?
- What am I learning about research, teamwork, and myself?
- How can I talk about this experience in future applications, interviews, or conversations?
- What did this experience help me see about my future in science or related fields?

For Home-Campus Mentors

Thank you for considering this role. In the Keck Gateway REU, students receive science mentoring from their Project Directors during the research experience itself. The purpose of the home-campus mentor is different: to be a local, trusted guide who helps the student prepare for the experience, reflect on it, and connect it to their broader academic, professional, and personal development.

We hope mentors will be familiar enough with scientific research to understand the kinds of experiences students may encounter, including uncertainty, setbacks, teamwork, professional communication, and growth in confidence and independence.

This is intended to be a light-touch, high-value mentoring relationship. We do not mean to prescribe a rigid structure, but we expect that a few conversations may be especially helpful before the summer experience begins, after the summer experience, and after the conference, when the student can reflect on the experience as a whole. There is no single correct way to do this well. In many cases, simply asking thoughtful questions, listening carefully, and helping the student make meaning of the experience will be enormously valuable.

Possible conversation starters for mentors

- What are you hoping to gain from this experience, beyond the research project itself?
- What are you noticing about how research works in practice?
- Where do you see growth in your confidence, skills, or perspective?
- What did this experience help you learn about yourself?
- How did presenting at the conference shape your understanding of the work?
- How might this experience influence your next steps academically or professionally?