Planetary Makerspace Policies for
Academic Year Research Assistants

During the academic year, the Planetary Makerspace routinely appoints undergraduate research assistants. The position may be for academic credit (e.g. enrolled in GLG 499), an hourly stipend, part of an academic programmatic element (e.g. professorial assistantship), or on a volunteer basis. Despite the title research assistant, we do not intake undergraduates into "assistant" roles. Instead, undergraduate students are given independent research projects to be completed under the mentorship of the Planetary Makerspace PI Seth Jacobson and other group members.

These research positions require weekly dedication to the agreed upon strategic goals of the research project. Typical weekly commitments are: 2-4 hours (1 credit), 5-7 hours (2 credits), or 8-10 hours (3 credits). Newly appointed research assistants typically start at lower commitments, while more advanced research assistants may request a larger commitment. Undergraduate research assistants are encouraged to set ambitious goals, dedicate effort to their projects, and have fun. Student success in the Planetary Makerspace is principally a function of student commitment.

In the Planetary Makerspace, we follow an established Mentoring Philosophy built on long-term strategic planning and scrumming. At each scrum, the student will be ready to report on their progress, identify obstacles, and make new SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) goals for the next scrum. Dynamically scheduling meetings with PI Seth Jacobson or another Planetary Makerspace member as needed is the last part of all scrums. The scrum is the ideal time for the student to describe uncertainty and ask questions regarding their project. Ideally, at the end of each scrum, the student should feel confident that they know what they need to do next or a meeting has been scheduled to determine that. Some feedback will be provided during scrums, however if more extended feedback between mentee and mentor is needed, then a private meeting will be scheduled. Continued membership in the Planetary Makerspace is contingent on sufficient progress and effort with respect to the student's strategic plan as assessed by PI Seth Jacobson.

Students should attend 1, 2, or all 3 scrums each week according to their time commitment above. Longer absences (> 1 week) from attending scrum are allowed but should also be agreed to in advance. Undergraduate research assistants are not expected to work during MSU holidays such as the winter holiday or spring break.

The student is responsible for documenting their research, keeping their research materials well-organized, and creating high-quality final work products. This means using git or another tool to version control and back up their code with adequate comments throughout. They should also be backing up their computational data. They should keep their files organized and easily navigable. They should be keeping notes in a tool such as Overleaf and writing up their work as they proceed. If the student needs help with these tasks, it is their responsibility to ask for it and it will be gladly given. Lastly, the student is responsible for submitting their timesheets or tracking any other requirements stemming from enrollment in GLG 499 or other independent research course.

For increased communication about their research project, the student can always email PI Seth Jacobson, call his office phone: 517-355-1941, or schedule appointments with him during scrum or using his Calendly. The scrum schedule for Fall 2022 is 2 pm ET on Mondays and Wednesdays and 11 am on Fridays over Zoom: https://msu.zoom.us/j/94038885513.

Last updated: August 16, 2022. These policies may be updated throughout the academic year.