What I Wish I Knew as a First Year

- Don’t stress! You have 4 years of college and any amount of research during that period is impressive.
- FE-R does not guarantee you the position in a research lab, but rather they just connect you to a researcher
- Don’t research something that you study at school. Graduate schools and Med Schools love diversity, especially when it comes to learning
- Make sure you have the time. 1 credit research is usually about 5 hours a week and 2 credit research is about 10 hours a week NOT including the weekends. If you can’t make this commitment you should probably thinking about doing research when you are able to do so.
- What is the commute like? Is it on campus or somewhere else? Will you be able to get there in a timely manner? This is something important to think about.
- Ask Questions! Come to the OUR and ask Patrick (pjm57@pitt.edu)/ Caily (c.grube@pitt.edu)/ Perrin (perrin.jackson@pitt.edu) or one of the undergraduate mentors! They’re open, friendly, and the job is to help and answer questions.
- Is your PI approachable? You want to be able to learn from this person and possibly get to know the well enough for a letter of recommendation. If you can’t even talk to them, it is going to make it hard to work with/for them
- Don’t do research because that’s what everyone else is doing. Pitt is a great research university so it is an option that many students take advantage of, but don’t feel pressured if it’s something you don’t think you’d enjoy or gain from.
- There are several summer research positions. Some of the are just for the summer, and some go into the school year. If you have a busy semester schedule but know that you’ll be in Pittsburgh over the summer, think about doing research then.
- Don’t limit yourself! Email all the PIs whose projects you are interested in. It can be 1 or it can be 20. The worst thing that could happen is you find work on your dream project and 19 other PIs will have to find a different student researcher.