Help yourself and others: Participate in student research projects

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Photo by David Jakacky

Leah Savage
We all know the drill: everyday we open our university email to find an abundance of irrelevant requests and notices. Maybe there’s some noteworthy anxiety-inducing or serotonin-boosting message from a professor about grades, rescheduling, or the all-hailed cancellation. My inbox remains clouded by a mess of announcements that I don’t even bother to open before I hit delete (mostly credited to an online shopping addiction, but that’s besides the point). However, there might be a diamond in the rough that you’re missing: student research.

Referring to student research as a “diamond” might seem like a bit of a stretch, but one must consider that while it only takes one second to archive a request for student participants in a research study, somebody has devoted hours of their time and energy to developing, designing, and carrying out their project. To them, it’s a diamond, or at least a really pretty rock that they are still quite proud of.

On top of the satisfaction of giving a fellow University of Maine student a little bit of relief, you have the opportunity to become involved with interesting and innovative projects. For example, the discovery of a connection between social equity and gut health, innovative environmental proposals, or the link between selfies and national park deaths.

UMaine supports a diverse range of projects across many disciplines, and the university’s research center continues to grow — this year, research and development funding reached an all-time high of $125.2 million. The growth and development of UMaine’s research funding, and the projects that it produces, does nothing but improve its educational reputation, which is then reflected back on everyone at the university.

If supporting your peers and university isn’t your thing, that’s okay! But you should know that participating in research is also a good way to make some money. The majority of research projects at UMaine offer monetary incentives. Getting people to participate is not an easy task. Researchers lure participants in with the possibility of receiving a reward for their time, usually in the form of gift cards to Amazon or local businesses. I can tell you from personal experience that it’s not hard to get drawn to receive one of these bad boys. Sometimes researchers are desperate enough to give participants’ money just for showing up; a project that I saw recently paid each participant $10 for an hour of their time.

Research is a crucial part of the development of new ways of thinking, it produces medical advancements, methods of climate control, therapy techniques; it uncovers some of the great mysteries and wrong-doings of our society. By devoting a small chunk of your time to filling out a survey or, if you’re feeling ambitious, even participating in an experiment, you are not only cutting your fellow students a break, but bettering your community.

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