NOTES: We have compiled this suggested list of topics for your first discussions with a mentor. This is meant only as a guide and suggestions to make sure you are able to have conversations that will lead to you choosing the right mentor and project for you and build a good foundation for future work together.

Suggestions from previous students:

#1: Meet with multiple potential mentors. Hear what different mentors have to offer, what you're role will be with their team, and, perhaps most importantly, how your personalities get along together.

#2: Make sure the mentor has a specific project in mind for you to work on. Simply joining the study as another research assistant is not the point of the course and will prevent you from being able to complete course assignments as they are all project-based. To the best of your abilities, try to ensure your mentor has a project in mind that is realistic for you to complete in the number of months you'll be spending on the project.

#3: It's critical that students discuss the 40-hour commitment with their mentors. Some folks, particularly those working in labs, won't have a problem fulfilling that commitment. Others must take on co-curricular activities to ensure optimal learning. Having a forthright conversation up front about time and expectations is thus very helpful.

First mentor meeting topics:

The Inquiry Curriculum – some mentors will be well versed on Curriculum 2.0 and the changes to the Research Curriculum that have been incorporated. Others may not have mentored a student since the change from the old Emphasis program. We are providing materials that may help you to answer questions about your experience and expectations of a Research Mentor. The additional documents referenced below and included on the VSTAR course page for Discovery and the OMSR website will provide them a way of accessing the materials and contact information for The Office of Medical Student Research where we can help them further. Mentor resources including the following can be found on the OMSR website [here](https://medschool.vanderbilt.edu/student-research/mentor-expectations-information):

- OMSR Handbook & Curriculum Graphic
- Research Mentor Role and Responsibilities doc
- Mentor agreement document (to be submitted with Step 3 Pathway to PLAN)
- Mentors can always email [vms.research@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:vms.research@vanderbilt.edu) with questions.

In particular, you are meeting with them to discuss the possibility of their serving as your mentor through PLAN and Research Immersion. (specific info on role and responsibility is in the attached doc)
**Project details**

Is there a piece of an existing project you can make your own (develop specific aims, join existing IRB)?
What is the research environment like for the project... where will you spend your time? With whom? Doing what?
Level of statistics involved in the project, who is responsible for running statistics, what are student responsibilities?
Who will supervise you day to day?
Co-curricular activities that will be important for you to attend (grand rounds, journal clubs, etc.)

**Mentee expectations**

When you plan to enroll in PLAN (mentor has to be available to give you feedback on your project plan during this month)
Your plan for Research Immersion months (when, contiguous or spread out, how many blocks – 3-6 possible)... does your curriculum plan for Immersion meet the needs of the project? If not, you need to find another project.
Make sure mentor is aware that during Research Immersion blocks you will be working on your project full time. The expectation is that you will be working a normal work week (40 hours) on your project, realizing that each project is unique. VUSM expects you to be immersed in the research experience in the environment, on campus or at the research site.
What kind of mentor are they? Will they be involved on a daily basis with your work, will you be working with a resident/grad student/fellow, etc. Will they be available?
How often do you see us meeting? As a lab and one on one? Who will I work with the most?

**Mentor expectations**

What are your expectations of mentee?
How should I prepare for this project? Are there skills I need to work on before beginning?
The Office of Medical Student Research provides a direct cost center transfer of support funds to the mentor to support their work with you. They can contact vms.research@vanderbilt.edu for more information. We will reach out to them once you have formalized the mentoring relationship.