>> Welcome to “Going Online” with Oregon State University Ecampus. A podcast series highlighting resources and tools for online learners across the globe. I'm Eddie Rodriguez, the Student Engagement Program Manager at Oregon State University Ecampus, which serves more than 13,000 online learners annually through the delivery of 100-plus online degrees and programs.

In this series, I'm joined by my colleague Rachael Guenthner, Entry and Transition Advisor at South Seattle College, and former OSU Ecampus Student Success Coach. We're glad you're here. In this episode, we're joined by Stephanie Ramos, Associate Director and STEM Leaders Program Coordinator at Oregon State University. We'll discuss the value of engaging in research projects as a student and the various research experiences available to online learners.

Let's get into it. Welcome, everybody, Eddie Rodriguez here. Welcome to going online with Oregon State University Ecampus. Today we have a really exciting episode for you all. We have a very special guest, someone who has done a lot of work around research, which is like our big topic today.

So yeah, we're really excited to get this going. Rachael, do you have any thoughts about our guests today?

>> I'm really excited that they're here. And yeah, it's going to be a really informative, exciting episode, so I'm excited. In the meantime, let's introduce our guest.

>> I can go ahead and jump in.

Thanks, Eddie and Rachael for having me. My name is Stephanie Ramos, I'm the associate director for undergraduate research here at Oregon State University main campus in Corvallis, and just a little bit about myself. And today we're talking about getting involved in undergraduate research, and I feel qualified to talk about this topic because I'm a first gen college graduate and also did undergraduate research as a community college transfer student back in Texas.

And am a product of good programming strong programming, and I get to do that work now with students, so helping students get involved in research as a passion and something I'm familiar with and I'm just excited to talk with you all about getting involved.

>> We're super excited that you're here.

And for the listeners at home, I'm very curious, what part of Texas you're from.

>> Yeah, Lubbock, Texas, for those of you that are familiar.

>> And there will be.

>> A lot of Ecampus students from Texas.

>> But yeah.

>> Awesome, yeah, that's really great. And Stephanie, it sounds like you've obviously gone through a really incredible journey yourself in terms of just all the different experiences you've had and the knowledge you bring with you today.

So again, can't thank you enough. And yeah, to kick things off, do you mind again, you mentioned your role, so I'm curious, can you talk to us a little bit more about that? What exactly is it that you do? What sort of office? What's the office called? And just, yeah, a little bit more about that work that you're doing with students.

>> Yeah, so, as I mentioned, I am the Associate Director for Undergraduate Research, and I oversee the office of Undergraduate Research Scholarship in the Arts, also known as URSA, I'll refer to it as that. And just on a day to day, I have an amazing team of undergraduate research ambassadors who are students who've conducted research.

I have a graduate assistant who's also done research and is working on their graduate degree but also passionate about helping students who are really good team that is doing this work. On a day to day, I always tell students the best part of my job is when I get to meet one on one with them to be able to give some guided support and help each individual unique student find their path because sometimes general information doesn't translate across all boards.

Ecampus students might know I do a lot of recruitment, so I'm out on campus outside of the university meetings potential and future beavers. And I do classroom presentations, talking to students about how to get involved at different levels. So we really are here to support students from their first year, all the way to their senior year, and thinking about and how undergraduate research is one pool on this campus that can help students reach their goals.

>> That's really exciting. And with URSA kind of being an umbrella type office and the type of research, we at Ecampus serve a pretty wide array of student majors and types of research that folks are able to get involved with, whether that's lab-based research or kind of article development and publication type research and surveying.

Does URSA cover all of those kind of different types of research available?

>> Yeah, so I could go on and on about different research opportunities, I'm just being general. Most faculty and even professional faculty on campus can do research projects or creative projects in which students can get involved.

That includes feeding the fishes in the morning all the way through to publication and presenting at national conferences and everything in between, which is a more traditional, if we thinking about more it kind of STEM or science related. There is also non-STEM research which happens in the social sciences.

So, I like to example of kind of cancer research and so just to give students an idea, you can do cancer research probably the first thing that comes to mind is biology lab so being in a lab coat, right? Like I said, feeding those fishes might be part of that biology doing research and experiments on them.

You can do research in vet med, so veterinary medicine they have animals and might be working on cancer research. You can do this in the College of Agricultural Sciences. You can be working on PCOS and guinea pigs out in the wild, right? Different types of animals. You can also do social science research.

They could ask questions, research questions, and interview cancer survivors, what is it that they eat in their diet that helped them survive cancer? So just thinking about research more broadly and how it can span across different fields and just have an idea that it can look different by discipline by field and just by faculty in their interest in the projects that they're working on.

>> Wow, okay. So yeah, you can do a little bit of everything which is exciting to hear as someone who was a history major back in the day hearing that there's these different opportunities for folks from all different kinds of programs and backgrounds and disciplines is really exciting because I don't mean I don't know about you Rachael.

But sometimes I feel like when I hear the term research, my mind immediately goes to kind of those like in those STEM fields and stuff like that. So hearing from Stephanie that this is something for everybody and in the sense, it's pretty exciting

>> Yeah, and I always forget that you and I both have history degrees and somehow are hosting this podcast together.

But I think that it's really important that you talk about that difference which is research as a verb and noun of kind of experiential learning that experience part can look and feel entirely different for every student, every project that they might be on discipline and also the end results for that product might be entirely different based on what the needs are and the discipline are.

Since we're both history majors, Stephanie, I'm curious what your background is in like educationally.

>> Yeah, so I have a bachelor's and master's degree in chemistry. So coming straight out of the STEM field, so far away from history as possible because just didn't know, didn't understand it very much.

>> You didn't want to do the right.

>> Didn't want to do, I still struggle. But I mean, there's something for me when I think about research and I think about my STEM background and how it informs the work that I do. Again, I go back to the creative part, the social science, and letting students know that's an option.

And when we define undergraduate research, I think it's important for students to know that creative projects count. So when we're doing research, the scientific research process which is, what's the question? What do you think is going to happen? How do you get there? Those are the skills that you can take away and be applicable in your future.

And so it's more about using that method scientific method as a tool to be able to answer questions. And so again yeah you're right it looks different for everyone but taking that step back and getting an idea of, okay, what is it that I'm interested in, and how can I ask a question or help contribute to answering a question on this campus?

Because if we could cure cancer, there'd be a lot of faculty without jobs. And so I just want students to know that there's different ways to ask questions. And that's why having folks with different backgrounds and experiences helps move that research agenda forward for all.

>> And speaking of faculty, you were mentioning that it sounds like they obviously play or can play a role in helping students with their own research projects and that sort of thing.

You know, sometimes what we've heard from our Ecampus students is often how can we connect with faculty or how can we build relationships? And it almost sounds, or at least maybe as an outsider looking in, it seems that research could potentially maybe be one way for Ecampus students to build those relationships with faculty.

Would you say research is an opportunity to connect with faculty for students?

>> Yes, a 100% both professional and academic faculty, which is one way, and I have to stub my toe on the door here, but when I say that I am the associate director for undergraduate research, I also believe that there are other ways in which students can make these connections.

So it's not just this is the only pathway, and if you're listening, I have to do this or theirs, I'm not going to succeed or move to the next step know that there are many ways in which to get connected and I can give a few examples. The CEL, C-E-L, the Center for Civic Engagement and Learning, there's the folks at the that do the ropes course there are different career, not career, accelerator advantage.

So coming up with a business plan, a model idea, taking that idea to market. So, those are also ways to connect with faculty right? You're not limited to this one area but yes if you want to connect with faculty, and you're looking for future letter of recommendation writers or you're looking for reference when you apply for jobs.

Getting involved with the work that they do can and will help.

>> That's honestly with working with Ecampus students. That's often the biggest question is like how do I connect with faculty since they're like possibly across the country and like in three different time zones and I think it's important stuff.

Neither, there's many passwords and we encourage students every day to just reach out to faculty like they are interested in dedicated for students success and they want to connect with Ecampus students. But especially if you're working with faculty members that you enjoy their work, or if you're curious about the work that they do it's such a great opportunity to help them in their work and be a part of that process.

And just for a clarifying point Stephanie is going to continue to mention that there's professional faculty, and academic faculty at Oregon State. Key distinction there is that academic faculty teach classes, and professional faculty can teach classes but they're often in staffing roles but they both are able to conduct research and ask these questions.

And so you might be working with both types of faculty, but that's the key distinction there for the folks listening at home.

>> Thanks, Rachael, I appreciate the clarification. And this kind of what it makes me think about as you were talking and speaking. So you said Ecampus students can reach out directly to faculty.

And so just my pin insertion into this as a lot of times students may not feel comfortable or confident in emailing faculty and just the tips that I have and I can go through an example script off the top of my head of what an Ecampus student might include in an email.

But I always just give the advice that if you're not familiar or haven't been exposed to email etiquette or sending professional emails, I don't encourage you to say hey, I'm interested let me know what's going on holler at me when you get a chance call me on my cell kind of thing.

So what my recommendation for students if you're an Ecampus student if I was an Ecampus student, hi Dr Joe, Dr Johnson I am a second year Ecampus student majoring in political science. I have worked in the public sector for seven years and have an array of experiences. I find your research on aquatic life and animals interesting.

And something I would like to know more about to write a potential story few have space in your research lab we're looking for an additional pair of hands. I'm working remotely from Connecticut, there is a time difference, but I'm committed to working or volunteering ten hours a week here, and looking forward to hearing from you, potentially meeting.

Here are some times Monday through Friday, 8:00 to 5:00, 9:00 to 5:00 Pacific Standard. If you're on a different time zone, I understand if you don't have space in your research lab right now or your research group, if you know of anyone who could use my skill set, please let me know.

I've attached my resume, right? And you may not have all of that but I just want to give you an idea of what I said like, hey, what's up, holler at me versus putting something together that shows you've looked at their work, that you have an interest and that you're excited you're committed.

One thing I didn't mention is payment, so if you're everybody's different some can volunteer some need to get paid, some have families right that's on an individual basis. I always tell students to be upfront about that just so that you are honest you put your best foot forward.

And if you hear back, see where things go.

>> Yeah, absolutely honesty is the best policy in emails, I just want to say that out loud. But I think stuffy with that example I like a lot of folds to this but it's important I think to know, as Ecampus students like, we want you to email please reach out.

I know that there's a lot of anxiety around emailing faculty members they can be very scary with Doctor and the title. But just remember that they are people, but especially when making efforts for kind of includement on research opportunities. Access to their materials these are things that often these faculty members have worked very hard to get whether that's securing their own funding coming up with their own project proposals.

And so with that example that you gave really giving the like showing your motivation identifying what your skills might be or benefit to the project or if you're just sending in like a hey I'm very curious about this work. Can you please send me some more information or answer these questions like being mindful and respectful always.

But really kind of showing up and ensuring that you're able to give as much information as possible in that email is best to rule of thumb for an email for getting into research. But also any email you're sending to faculty members is just thinking through like what information am I able to give to make sure that they have the most information to work with.

>> Yeah, exactly and I think I'll add in because I what you said too is resonating with me that it can be scary and intimidating to send an email cold email someone you don't know. But the beauty of our office and what I do in our staff is that if you have an email draft and you're unsure send it our way.

>> Send it to Stephanie.

>> Send it to Stephanie directly to me I literally just got a student email and this is frequent and I get student emails I say send it to me they sent it to me. The emails that I help them craft when they send get higher response rates.

Faculty have told me I can tell when a student has worked with someone versus when they haven't. And so those little nuggets are there and something that you said, I will say we're in the library right now recording this if you are familiar with the campus. But each student including Ecampus has their own library, each college has their own librarian view.

Don't know yet, how to look up research articles or find out about what faculty are doing your librarian on campus, will help you do that. There's a lot of guys also with that that saves you an email in asking them it shows you've done your work and sometimes faculty have websites life advice here if you don't take anything away you're like how is this going to help me later?

If you're applying for a job at HP after you graduate, and you go to interview. And you haven't looked at their website or their YouTube or their Twitter or their LinkedIn account, and you go in blind, they may ask you a question about that. So I always tell students, prepare for that ahead of time to show your interest.

>> Yeah, and as a side note for our Ecampus listeners out there, definitely go to the Ecampus Library website. We have tons of information about how you can contact the Ecampus librarian. But also just some information about how you can even begin the process if you are maybe in a course or you are interested in starting your research.

There's some information about how you go through some of the databases that we have online. And I see your eyes Rachael, it looks like you got some thoughts.

>> I always have thoughts especially when it comes to working with faculty, they really are what make, I think, the Ecampus experience really special is that folks are able to work directly with our faculty that our on campus students do.

And these are the folks that are doing the cutting-edge research that might be curing cancer or studying the fish in the Pacific Ocean. And along with faculty websites, pro tip for all Ecampus students or anybody listening is that faculty members have more often than not their most recent publications on their bios that are on the department websites available through the main OSU website.

So if you're like, I want to work more with this botany professor, what are they doing? You can search the botany department to do staff directory and find that person. And more often than not, their most recent publications are there. And so you're able to get self-serve without having to ask any questions.

Any of that material if you're curious, but also you can kind of get a bit more about their background and what kind of work they've done, especially if you're looking for opportunities for graduate programs and are looking to see how folks got to where they were. They often have a really great simplistic roadmap for where they start, what programs were they in, what kind of extracurricular or internship opportunities they might have completed.

And so it's a great way to get a sense of, one, who you're working with, but also what opportunities might present themselves.

>> Yeah Stephanie, yeah, you've said some great things and I think you have a lot of excitement over here in terms of, yeah, all the different tips and tricks that we want our students to know.

And yeah, just reiterating again, the importance of, yeah, doing your homework, right? In any situation where you can show that intentionality of, I am very much interested in doing research. And if you're wanting to work with a particular faculty member, being able to speak to some of the stuff that they are already doing.

Just is always someone who would maybe be reading that, it's just exciting, right, to be able to see, wow, they're genuinely interested in what I wrote. So definitely some really good tips. But one thing I wanted to follow up with you, Stephanie, is you were mentioning, yeah, that sort of the process for students that maybe are wanting to get involved with research.

One way it sounds like is just emailing an instructor. But is that the only way or is there other ways for students to go about getting involved with undergraduate research?

>> Yeah, so this is a great question Eddie. There are two main ways, right, and we talked about sending an email is one way, that's on your own.

So you can do that at any time as an Ecampus student. That's one, the second one is that there are organized research programs on campus. Almost every college has one research program that maybe goes in the summer or goes during the academic E. And so we have that information on our website.

We've compiled that list and those contacts. So you can always start there by reaching out to folks. This program has ended, are there still faculty needing student support where all the positions filled? The worst they can tell you is no. I also oversee the URSA Engage program where that happens throughout the academic year.

But the reason that I bring that up is because something that I think is helpful for Ecampus students who may not be located in Corvallis. And may be across the country or even the world sometimes, are there are still faculty who are working with students remotely. And so just even knowing that is empowering because I think sometimes students may feel, if I'm not on campus, I can't do the work.

But faculty have adapted to create online projects so that students who are Ecampus can get involved and our distance students can get involved. So yeah, multiple ways. There's one other that I always like to throw out to students. So I didn't tell you this when I first started but I did two summer undergraduate research experiences.

One was at Pacific Northwest National Laboratory in Eastern Washington. And the other was at Washington University in St. Louis. And there's a website, the National Science Foundation, NSF, REUs, Research Experiences for Undergrads. And every institution across the country has some sort of RU that they do in the summer.

And so it's important the students know about that and can look it up, look into it. A lot of these are more STEM focused. So if there's more STEM listeners, then that's for you. There's also some that do history. There's another website that's not coming to my mind right now.

We have this all listed on our main URSA page. But just to be aware, I guess the other way that students don't think about research, I'll just add this one in, is I spoke with a student the other day. And I said, you want to do an internship this summer, did you google Boeing, google Amazon and just type the word internship after it?

Because they are also doing research at those companies and they need student interns. So it's not just an intern, there's a research component in why they hire students. There's national labs that do this. So many ways, and it's really going to come down to what the students' interests and future career goals are.

And if you're just trying to figure out if this is something that's good for you, that's great. But yeah, just, Eddie, so many ways.

>> I think that's a really great. And especially talking about undergraduate research and internship opportunities, I think that there's a lot of just narratives and scripts around that this is solely for 19-year-olds that are in their kind of quote-unquote traditional college experience that, You talking about all those options, reminded me how accessible these opportunities are should you want them.

And that those larger corporations, because we do get a lot of CS students, computer science students looking for internship opportunities as they gain more experience in the field if they're not already in the field. And that's something that very commonly myself and academic advisor says, it's like, if there's a large company in your local area that you want to work for or want entrances.

Sometimes they have their own internship programs that just require looking on their website and filling out an application. And especially if you're already a current student with a large program like the post bacc program in the Computer Science department. They are sometimes happy to take folks on outside of kind of the other channels that they might be in.

I think really thinking through what those opportunities might look like. And just know that there probably is one in your backyard that you haven't thought about or haven't been able to find that is separate from Oregon State altogether. Or something that might be better suited for your end goals.

>> Yeah and I think one thing I will add to what you're saying right now that is standing out to me is, I said in the beginning that you can do research at any time. Although there is a sweet spot window when you should do this if you're doing those internships for those companies.

If you're looking to do a summer REU that I spoke about earlier or some of these programs. In the fall there is the hotspot and I'll tell you why. So you have just an understanding of why fall is a good time to do it. A because projects are starting up, faculty are coming back to campus ignited about their work, they find out if they've received grants.

For companies, sometimes when I think about Amazon, they have to do background check. Those background checks can take up to six months to complete. So they can't wait until February or March to try to hire a student for the summer. And so oftentimes students may not know that, but the reason that I tell you is so that you can plan ahead.

And so the tip that I like to give students is that if you look online and that your dream internship research opportunity has closed, mark that date in your mind. And know that those dates rarely change dramatically and to come back to it so that you could be competitive and qualified the next year.

You can also email and say, I saw this, I wasn't aware, I would like to apply next year. Do you send an email out when this becomes open? You never know what can happen. But those emails and learning how to craft those emails and ask good questions and being professional, again, they're going to continue to come up as you're moving forward.

Because I always tell students as much as I want every student to do research and to be connected with faculty, I can't take those steps for you. But I can give you the skills you need and the training that you need to be able to do that on your own and do it well.

>> Great, that's awesome, Stephanie. One of the things that sounds like you're sharing is both internships, excuse me, can be focused, it sounds like. But there's also other internships that aren't necessarily research-focused as well. Because I guess what I'm getting asked, sometimes what I've heard from some Ecampus students before is that there's a time commitment, right?

And that can sometimes be challenging for folks. I guess what I'm trying to ask is, what would you say to those students that maybe are afraid of committing to a long research project or a long internship project? Are there any tips or tricks about making those things work? Because I know sometimes students want to do it, but there's this fear because maybe they're already working full time or?

>> Yeah, that's a really great question, Eddie. And so I will give you because I have the faculty kind of hat when I think about how faculty are responding and then I have the student, what's realistic, what students are trying to do and accomplish. So it's going to be two-fold, but one is from the faculty side.

So I will say faculty, a student who will stay long term, because they have to train you, they want someone who's committed so they don't have to. It takes time to get someone on boarded and a lot of change. The example I like to give, I don't have a better one, so if y'all have one, let me know, but it's like dating.

Imagine if you had to date someone every single term, and every single term, it was something new, relearning, relearning, how much progress would you make with that relationship? So when you think about working in a lab, if a faculty has to take on a student each term or to train someone, it can be exhausting for them to want to do that.

That being said, if you can't commit to a long time because you have all of these things, I think it's worthwhile to sit down and ask yourself, what is realistic? What are you hoping to accomplish, and what can you actually give? Because again, I think students want to do undergraduate research, they hear about it, but then they may not have the time or capacity.

And so it's an honest conversation with yourself and recognizing the faculty side and then also just communicating that. So we talked about how you communicate that honestly and effectively to faculty. I'm interested, I can commit five hours a week, and if I can't make it, I will give you a two or three day notice as best as I can, right?

That's going to show up better than you ghosting them, not responding, just letting the ball fall because you have 16 midterms, right? It happens, stuff happens, life happens. So yeah, I think it's more about if you know that this is something you want to do, research is a powerful tool to help you in the future, right?

So you may do research and want to go to graduate school. That's great. You may do research and use it as a tool to get yourself a job like I did, right? Just different outcomes. But I also strongly believe that you can get those skills by working at Fred Meyer.

You're going to get some experience working with personnel, you're going to get communication, you're going to get maybe some budgeting in there, your time management. Those things count. So I don't want to discount what students are doing and how they're making their lives work. But just knowing that if you are going to commit or plan to commit, I think it's good to start with yourself and knowing what you can do first before moving forward.

>> Yeah, I think that's a really great point, Stephanie, in just thinking about what the value of these varied experiences, whether they are internships, whether they are research projects, maybe they are one and the same. That Ecampus students are often participating in a wide variety of activities, employment, caregiving.

Now, those experiences as you think about more traditional academic paths, if they're wanting to go to graduate school, if they're wanting to get into hard sciences or do laboratory work as the field that they're pivoting into. That they are gaining these skills in different and new environments that maybe don't feel like they have direct applicability but are 100% transferable in the kind of work that they may want to do if they're going into a kind of more traditional academic field.

Or if they're wanting to get more hands-on experience in the fields that they're in. And especially for folks that are working in kind of more traditional science fields like chemistry, there's not a chemistry degree available at Ecampus. But especially our College of Ag Science majors, our zoology, our fisheries and wildlife folks, there are opportunities to incorporate that into their study schedule through keeping things as realistic as possible with where you might be at timewise.

But also, don't be afraid to recognize that you are gaining these skills elsewhere, no matter what. It's just thinking through, how am I packaging them and how am I communicating about that experience, which is why you should email Stephanie to talk about those things.

>> Yeah, and I will put a plug in here because what I took away from your question too was there's a little bit of time management there, right?

Maybe the underlying, how do I manage my time? How do I fit all of these wonderful opportunities in? And I never recommend something I don't use myself. So I'm gonna recommend the Academic Success Center, which academic coaching, one-on-one coaching with students, so you could set an appointment. Meet with the coach and ask these sort of questions to get the tips and tricks.

That's exactly what they do to be able to help students manage their time. And I say this because I have my own academic coach, so I work with the director, Claire Creighton, and it's a benefit and it's helpful. And to get an outside perspective to make sure that you're on track and having the most recent tools and technology to be able to make yourself, but can help you build in and do research if that is your ultimate goal, right?

So I just want to encourage students that if it's something to do with time, always ask questions for the students. What is it that's hindering you? Where can you build in more time? What can you let go of? What can you delegate? What can you say this is good enough and let go?

What can you just delete from your list? Maybe you don't really need to do that thing that you had written down. And so the Academic Success Center helps with that, and I do believe that if undergraduate research is something you want to do, that if it's a priority, you will make it work.

>> Yeah, and especially with the remote opportunities that might be available in these projects. Oftentimes, that might translate into asynchronous work, which will mirror the kind of flexibility that can often come with Ecampus courses. I think upfront, present communication is always important with what those obligations might look like, and also gaining more understanding about what's being asked of you as you engage in this work.

Because sometimes it is just doing data input into a spreadsheet, and that can be done at any time, but you just got your due dates. Or if it's something that you need to be synchronous for and present for, that often can be stressful for Ecampus students. Again, these are opportunities that are here for you if you want them and to pursue them.

There is flexibility there, but it's about kind of collaboration and transparency and communication.

>> Yeah, absolutely, Rachael. I think too, just at least my kind of own take away from all this too, especially, again, thinking about our online students and sometimes the complicated lives that they have. I think I would also say, not necessarily a right or wrong way to kind of go about any of this, and I think regardless, it can be challenging and complicated.

But I think, as some of you all are saying, I think if you're willing to make some of this stuff, either a priority or make some changes within your life to make room, there's definitely a space with you to pursue undergraduate research. And you have the support and resources here to help guide you, even during those moments where it can be really challenging, just given everything that's going on and possibly in your life.

>> Yeah, and I encourage folks as we talk about this thing about time management as well as incorporating in this sometimes seen and spoken about as extracurricular. It is important to note that this is something that you could definitely view as coursework and thinking about your course schedule and what you're able to take on and tinkering with those obligations, because this is a tough thing to incorporate if you're taking 16 credits a term.

But maybe the term you decide to engage in a research project is the term that you take 12 credits, thinking about where you're able to flux your time and give your time. There's a lot of opportunities there and thinking through what you have control over and what you may not.

And if you're hoping to pursue some of these opportunities, definitely consider that as a part of your schoolwork, as a part of your course schedule. And think about your time in those quantities, especially as this may feel more extracurricular. If this is something you really want to do, the intentionality in the way that you take on additionals can help make this feel as real as taking another class.

>> Yeah, and I'll add because what you reminded me of is I took five years to get my chemistry degree, and that fifth year really allowed for me to do that additional research. So by taking those 12 credits each term, I actually allowed myself to do research and be involved, a choice that I had made and knowing that I was playing the long game there.

And once you graduate, it's harder to make these research connections if that is something that you want to do. Not impossible, just a little bit more work on your end to secure those opportunities.

>> Yeah, and I think that's a really great point. Stephanie, thank you so much for sharing.

That will be exciting what we're all getting at Oregon State with Ecampus. It really is a curated experience for what you want out of your degree and what you want out of your experience with Ecampus. And again, these are all avenues that are open to you, but it's like you have the option in the way that you think about your course schedule.

As well as how you engage with internships and research opportunities that can be what you wanted to be in whatever length of time makes the most sense for you and what your overall goals are, especially as a lot of Ecampus students are thinking about graduate school. And getting into more, again, lab-based sciences that are wanting to get as prepared as possible for entrances into that, yeah.

>> I love talking about research.

>> One question out of curiosity because I feel like we've had a really good kind of conversation about the different ways students can get involved with research and reaching out to faculty. But one thing that's popping into my head is how do you even decide what you want to do research?

Because sometimes I feel you want to get involved, but you don't know what the research might be or in what kind of area. Is there a process the students get? Do you ever get students that come to you, like I want to do research, but I just don't know what to do?

>> Eddie, I get that a lot, a lot and not in a bad way. I think the first thing is if you have a desire and drive, I want to work with you. Because finding students that are motivated, inspired and willing to reach out and ask questions and put themselves out there is super impressive to me.

So that's what we're here for is to help students figure out and ask those questions. So some of the things that as I'm thinking of what would I say when a student comes to my office? I say, what are you hoping to learn and what excites you? Because if you're not excited about this work or you don't know what you're willing or wanting to learn yet, that might put us at a little bit of a disadvantage.

That being said, I haven't yet to meet a student who hasn't said, I'm actually interested in this related to my major or I'm majoring in ag sci. And I'm like, great, I know a lot about ag sci, right? I can tell you here are some cool things that are going on, but also how is this undergraduate research experience going to help you post-graduation?

Because if you're just doing it to fill a checkbox and because it's cool, you're just going to go into lab and you may not take it as seriously, right? But I'm hoping to get a letter of rec, I'm hoping to go to graduate school. I'm hoping to build connections, so I can study or go to the Arctic.

That's my dream, right? How do I do that? And by asking those questions and just thinking about them, I think that students start to think of, okay, how can I get involved? We've also created so many polls online, if a student emails me, do you have this tool, send it to me.

We totally do that, so some of the links that we put together are like, how to search for faculty by college, the different programs on campus. How to interview? You sent an email, they got back to you. Okay, what do you do during that meeting, right? How do you prepare for that?

So we have some of that. So the questions that you might be thinking about asking, again, there's so many things we could cover, but it's really going to depend on where the student is at. And the first thing that we're doing when I'm meeting with students who don't have an idea is just figuring out what excites them.

Because if I say, are you excited about feeding the fish? And they're like, no, they don't smell good. It's not going to be exciting, I'd rather not. Then that might not be the way we go. I also know a lot of faculty that come to me and they're like, I'm looking for a student in ag.

If no students come to talk to me, then I won't be able to refer them. So a lot of this too is relationship, referral, and just asking questions.

>> I feel inspired just by those questions. Eddie was like, how do you determine? I have no idea how I would determine what to work on, but I think that's the exciting thing about working with Ecampus students, that it's very untapped.

In a lot of ways, it's like Ecampus students are highly motivated at times. They are very excited and very interesting, because a lot of them have made a very conscious decision. Listeners, you've made a very conscious decision to come back or to pursue your education for the first time, and that motivation and excitement and passion where it's like, I'm majoring in this because I want to, because this interests me.

Those are great foundations and baseline that make great researchers that ask good questions. That can really help propel you through internship or a long-term research project or publication and presentation, and then the work that's required for those things. And so a great segue into the question, is research and internships something for me?

It probably is. It's going to take different routes to get there, but Ecampus students on the whole have the right stuff to become researchers and get involved in these areas if they want to and if they're able to.

>> Yeah, this leads me to one of my life tips, and I think that for Ecampus students that may be more have some work experience and consider themselves nontraditional.

So I did this myself and that's why I recommend it, because it works. So one of the things that students often will do when I asked these questions, like what is it that you want to get out of this? And then they be like, I don't know. The second follow-up question I ask is what kind of job would you like to do after graduation?

If I had a magic wand and could give you your dream job right now, what is it? They're like, I actually want to be the person that feeds the penguins, right? And I'm like, okay, cool. Let's go find that job description, and I will Google person who feeds penguins and then I'll see what that job description is.

And then I'll just go through that list with students and say, do you have any experience feeding fish? And they're like, I fed my fish when I was younger. Okay, check, you have some experience, right? Do you have experience swimming? They're like, I've never swam in my life.

Chances are you're going to need to know how to swim. So you should probably work with someone to get certified in swimming, but this really ridiculous example of building and knowing what skills you need for those jobs. And then going proactively and asking for them in those positions for undergraduate research, for internships, for any job that you might hold off or on campus.

So it's more of I can tell you what is needed, but only you know if you have that skill or not.

>> Yeah, so it's a real collaboration of reverse engineering a position description. So pie in the sky ideal, since every dream job takes a certain set of skills, how do we find you those skills or those experiences to get you those skills, which may be research or internship opportunities.

>> Exactly.

>> Wow, I'm excited, is it too late for me to do a little research project on the side or?

>> I feel like I need to rewrite all of my undergraduate thesis work and like-

>> Makes two of us.

>> Back into that work.

>> So Eddie and Rachael, undergraduate research can be done by professional faculty and staff.

So if you have creative ideas that you're wanting to get off the ground working directly with students, asking a tough question, right? I give this example, some of the faculty that I work with, they're like, I don't have capacity and I'm like, if some student came up to me right now and was like, I will work for you for free, I'm like, don't worry, I have plenty of ideas, plenty of projects going on.

Let's just get you started on it. And so what are some things that you have that could become a creative question for students? How do we outreach effectively to Ecampus students to get involved in undergraduate research? I don't know, I'm not an Ecampus student. That might be a survey, that might be a student doing interview saying, what is it that you need from your faculty in your classes from your staff?

And that informs your work, that gives students the opportunity to be able to contribute to build that relationship which is the most important. And also get some of those practical skills that will help them beyond graduation. So the opportunities are out there and even as professional staff, we can think about our work and how can we create something or help a student create something so that it's a little bit more low stakes, but they get that experience.

They get that connection and we help retain them.

>> Great, yeah.

>> An excellent plug to remind any Ecampus students listening, please fill out surveys that you are sent. We do want to hear from you. We send out a wide variety of annual students surveys where we garner some of that feedback on how you want to be engaged.

How you want to be spoken to, what communication works best for you, not to pitch throwing out the annual survey but it is something that we do read and we do take highly as part of our work here at Ecampus. But yeah, Eddie, I'm curious what your undergraduate research project was in.

>> My undergraduate research, yeah, so I had the opportunity, so history again folks if we already forgot history. I forget the specific type of thesis, but essentially it was a thesis looking at the Oregon migrant community within the state, the historical implications of the farmworkers movement within Oregon.

And it went as far back as a program called the Bracero program from the early 1940s I want to say. Anyways I can go on but essentially yeah, it was around migrant labor in Oregon. And specifically looking at the Latino community during that time and their role within the farm workers movement.

>> Wow, I feel like I've never asked you that question and I'm wildly impressed by that answer.

>> Yeah, took me back, that's for sure, I was like, yeah, that's right, I wrote about that.

>> I know it's been some years since we graduated but yeah, I'm always curious to hear what folks' graduate research was.

>> Stephanie, thank you so much, we've already probably taken up a lot of your time, we don't want to take up much more. And as we come to a close here, at least one final question I have on my end is what would be three things you would tell an Ecampus student as they begin their research process?

>> Only three Eddie? Come on now. I have so many things, I could go on and on, what were you going to say Rachael?

>> Half of five.

>> Okay, yeah, I can keep it to a minimum maybe. Students get excited about research. For me, number one, find a good mentor, I always say the projects can be super interesting and exciting.

But if you don't have a mentor that supports you and understands the kind of challenges that Ecampus students or folks who have outside lives, essentially, if they're not supportive, then that's not going to be helpful. So I tell students, what I've learned throughout life is people don't leave jobs because they're not capable or willing to do the work, it usually comes down to who's supervising or the management because they don't feel supported, life skill.

But that being said if you can find a good mentor, that's going to help you. You want someone who can write a good letter of rec for you, be an amazing reference for you, talk about you and your contributions. And put the word out if you're searching for a job post grad so those connections help.

Number two, find what it is that you like. And the only way that you're going to be able to do that is by getting out there, by asking questions. I can guarantee you that whichever student makes it through this podcast and is, I want to talk to Stephanie, if you email me, I will respond.

I'm happy to meet one on one, I'm happy to adjust my schedule. But again, I can't do that without you. So you guide this process and I think that's true to all of your undergraduate and postgraduate experiences. My other life lesson is learn how to communicate effectively. And this is something that takes a lifetime, so I'm not by any means an expert on this.

I read a lot of books, a lot of articles, a lot of LinkedIn learning, YouTube videos, you name it, but communication comes in many forms. And again, we talked a lot about email, but verbal communication, how do you express yourself when you are experiencing setbacks that are impacting research once you get involved, how do you communicate?

I don't feel confident in doing this task, can we work together? That is a form of communication that if you don't practice in undergrad, it's going to be a little bit tougher when you get out into the real world. And yeah, there's so much I could teach you.

I could go on and on about all of the things but I think again, you have Eddie, you have Rachael who are both fantastic and I just thank them for having me here today. But most importantly reach out, I can stephanie.ramos@oregonstate.edu. I'm happy to help and support and I look forward to meeting all of the amazing Ecampus students that we have on campus and beyond.

>> Nuff said.

>> Yeah, end scene.

>> End scene.