

Provost's Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity (URCA) Summer Fellowship GUIDELINES

Criteria for Granting Distinguished Undergraduate Research Awards

The Summer Fellowship is intended to provide support to enable students to perform undergraduate research and creative activity over a ten-week period during the summer. The Summer Fellowships are open to all students in any discipline supervised by a faculty mentor. The research and creative activity performed over the summer should result in a thesis, journal article, presentation, show or performance that contributes to the creation and dissemination of knowledge and creative works.

The Summer Fellowship provides a \$5,000 stipend for the student and \$1,000 to the faculty mentor to help support the student research and creative activity. This \$1,000 is only for the faculty to use on the student for their supplies, travel, etc.

Although previous research or creative activity with a faculty mentor may be beneficial, prior research or creative activity is not necessary for applying. A well-thought project, attainable outcomes, and a willing faculty mentor that can support the student is **essential** to being competitive for the Summer Fellowship, but prior experience is not required.

It is important that students and faculty mentors contemplating submission of projects become familiar with the procedures and requirements described below. Questions should be directed to the URCA Office (ureca@ou.edu).

The Provost's Summer UReCA Fellowship Process

Step 1a: Identify a willing faculty mentor/advisor. The faculty mentor can be in any unit, but their research and creative activity must be aligned with the project submitted to be able to support the student in achieving the outcomes of the project.

Step 1b: Outline an appropriate project with guidance from the identified faculty mentor. The project should be significant and challenging, yet doable within the allotted timeframe. The student must take ownership of the project and demonstrate a significant level of independence.

If the student has previously worked with the faculty mentor in the project area, then the project should be an extension of this area that can be defined as independent project that is completed during the summer fellowship period.

Step 2: Draft a cover letter and proposal. The cover letter that includes title, abstract (250 words), and signatures from yourself, mentor, and chair from the department. The proposal is to be no more than 4 pages (excluding references), 12-point font, single spaced with 1-inch margins, and please include page numbers. Submit as a PDF (cover letter first on the PDF, both parts together) in the Provost's UReCA Summer Fellowship Application. A formal project proposal must describe the research or creative project being considered.

Cover letter (1 page max) will include:

- A title
- An abstract (max 250 words)
- Signatures from yourself, mentor, and chair

Research project proposals (4 pages max) will include:

- A title
- A short (no more than 2-page) background section with key literature references (at least 5),
- A hypothesis, central research question, creative intervention, or outcome
- A succinct statement or list of objectives, including a plan of action or agenda
- A detailed description of the methods to be used for data collection (i.e., laboratory methods, interviews, focus groups, archival research, participant observations, etc., as appropriate) and analysis (including theoretical interpretive frameworks, statistical and bioinformatics methods)
- A statement outlining expected results or outcomes with dates and goals or benchmarks.

Step 3: If IRB or IACUC review or exemption is required prior to conducting the work, this should be noted as well. You do not have to complete IRB or IACUC before submission, but must complete before conducting research or creative activities (again, if needed).

Institutional Review Board (IRB): <https://irb.ou.edu/howto/q1.html>

Institutional Animal Care & Use Committee (IACUC): <https://www.ou.edu/acup>

Step 4: Submit the Provost's UReCA Summer Fellowship Application (link is at www.ou.edu/ureca) by **March 7th, 2025**. Please start the name of any files as "YourLastName_URCA_" at the beginning.

Step 5: Arrange for your Mentor to submit a Letter of Support for your proposal. In the letter, the mentor must outline the agreed-upon way you will conduct your research and how much involvement they will have in the summer. This will be scored, so the letter from your mentor is crucial.

Step 6: Arrange for a second faculty member to submit a Reference Letter to the UReCA Office. When selecting a faculty member to write a reference, consider faculty that could write a reference that supported your ability to complete the research in your proposal.

Step 7: Conduct or complete the proposed work over ten weeks during the summer. Students should be assured that the research/creative process is not without unexpected bumps, twists and turns. What is important is how these challenges are handled. The student should take the lead on finding or suggesting possible solutions to problems. Sometimes a new approach will succeed. Sometimes success will continue to be elusive within the available time frame, however we can often learn just as much, if not more, from unexpected or null results.

Step 8: Submit a final report (two pages minimum, single-spaced) by Friday, September 5th, that includes the research or creative activity performed over the summer, and attach the outcome(s) of the research such as a thesis, journal article, presentation, show or performance to the UReCA Canvas page at the end of the Summer Fellowship. If the project did not proceed as planned, please submit a report of the work performed, an analysis of the progress, and the future direction of the project.

Step 9: Participate at the UReCA Showcase on Friday, October 3rd at 5 PM in the OU Forum Building. You can either perform your creative activities, give presentations of research, or be a part of the poster session. Details will come during the summer for the Showcase.

Criteria for Evaluation:

The proposal will be scored in the following categories: proposal quality, methodology/timeline, and support from faculty. Each are elaborated as follows:

- a. **Proposal Quality:** Does the student articulate the full plan, and is the background literature sound in justification? Does the student explain the project for a wider audience to understand? Does the passion of the student's idea show in their writing?
- b. **Methodology/Timeline:** Can the student accomplish what they set out to do given their written-out timeline? Are the methods sound and understandable for the project?
- c. **Letters of Support:** Will the faculty support them throughout the process? Is this aligned or close to the area of the mentor? Does the mentor show a commitment to the student? Does the second faculty see potential in the student to complete the fellowship?

Checklist for submission:

- Fill out application
- Submit Cover Letter and Proposal
 - Cover Letter
 - Title
 - Abstract (250 words max)
 - Proposal
 - Title
 - Main Proposal (4 pages max)
 - 12 pt font
 - 1 inch margins
 - Single-spaced
 - Page Numbers
- Letters of Recommendation
 - Mentor
 - Second professor
- Signatures via application process
 - Yourself
 - Mentor
 - Chair of Department

Frequently Asked Questions

1. “What is the timeline for the Provost’s UReCA Summer Fellowship process?”
 - December 1 – Announcement for Summer UReCA Fellowship
 - January 24 – Zoom information session for faculty and students
 - March 7 – Due date for applications at 4 PM (www.ou.edu/ureca)
 - April 10 – Announcement of outcomes for applications
 - Summer – Conduct research
 - September 5 – Reports due to UReCA office
 - October 3 – Participation in UReCA Showcase
2. “Where do I submit my proposal, update, paper and letters of endorsement?”

Applications and Letters of endorsement are found here: www.ou.edu/ureca. Submit all materials by 5 PM of the deadline date, March 7, 2025. All communications should go through the UReCA Office (ureca@ou.edu).
3. “How independent is independent?”

Research and creative activities are never done in a vacuum. A student research project will rely on the work of past scholars and collaboration with current practitioners. The idea for your project does not have to be original (although it could be). The project idea could come from your faculty mentor and be a project they have had in mind for some time. You should develop the ideas for your project by working with your faculty mentor and other faculty and interested persons. Use these people as resources for figuring out how you will approach your project (how to hone hypotheses, develop experimental or qualitative tests, decide on data to collect, and appropriate statistical or theoretical interpretive frameworks for analysis). This project is your project, not your faculty mentor’s, so you do need to demonstrate how you led and conducted most of the effort. Questions about the appropriateness of a project or the degree of independence may be directed to the UReCA Office (ureca@ou.edu).
4. “What if I don’t complete the research I proposed?”

Quite often progress on a research project does not occur as quickly as one thought it would. This is the very nature of research; new questions are being asked, novel techniques or protocols are being developed and unforeseen problems occur. What is important is how you approach and deal with these difficulties. Since this is your research project, you should be suggesting or providing possible solutions to your mentor to surmount these problems. Also, when finished with the summer research, reflection on your research journey will be important in your final report. \

5. “Who is eligible?”

The UReCA office exists to specifically support undergraduate students. The summer fellowship is limited to undergraduate students who will be returning students in Fall 2024. Neither graduate students nor graduating seniors are eligible. However, if you are in this category, please explore our “opportunities” page for other options. There is a limit on the amount of submissions from mentees (3) from a single faculty member.

6. “What are your policies about Generative AI and the proposal process?”

We acknowledge Generative AI (GAI) is around us, so we at the UReCA office are still trying to figure out what would be best practice. When you are writing, the biggest consideration is: how is GAI leveraged? For example, are you using GAI to write the whole proposal and submit it? Then, this is a violation of academic integrity. Are you using GAI to edit some parts that you have written, or perhaps find another word to use to describe some aspect of your proposal? Then you are leveraging it as a tool. For now, we will default our policy to [University of Michigan's](#): “The default stance on using Generative AI for writing research papers should generally be NO, particularly for creative contributions, due to issues around authorship, copyright, and plagiarism.” Any proposal that GAI is used for direct writing or creative contributions will not be considered.