

UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH SCHOLAR AWARD (URSA) Guidelines for Proposal 2009-2010

To encourage and award excellence in independent student scholarship, the University has established the Undergraduate Research Scholar Award (URSA). This award is to support student work above and beyond ordinary coursework performed under the supervision of faculty members across the entire array of disciplines at our various colleges.

The award will consist of \$5,000 allocated towards a student's tuition bill, half awarded in each semester, with the spring award contingent on progress made in the fall. An interim report detailing work done on the project during the fall semester will be due to the Chair of URSA on Monday January 11, 2010. Successful completion of the project will be noted on the student's transcript.

Scholars will be expected to make at least two presentations about their work, one brief five-minute introduction at the Independent Scholarship and Creative Activities Presentations (ISCAP) Day on **May 6, 2009** and one longer presentation at the same event (ISCAP Day) the following year, after successful completion of the project. The first presentation should outline the relevance and context of the work to be done and the latter presentation should provide a more detailed account of what was done and most importantly what were the findings and how are they important. **The project should be completed in full by May 12, 2010 with a report filed with the Award Committee Chair (Dr. Nadia Ansary).**

The committee is charged with distributing at least five of these awards across academic departments and programs, with no more than two projects awarded within a given school or college. The committee judges the applications on the following criteria:

- Quality, clarity, and completeness of project description.
- Significance and originality of project, with respect to both the discipline and the student.
- Appropriateness of approach and/or method.
- Feasibility of project completion and specificity of timeline.
- Clarity and specificity of expected outcomes.

Format: An application consists of the following sections presented in the order indicated.

1. **Proposal Cover Sheet:** Include the following information on one page: Project Title, Applicant's Name, Major, School (Business Administration, Education, Liberal Arts and Sciences, Westminster Choir College, or Continuing Studies), Department(s) and Name(s) of Faculty Mentor(s), Expected Month and Year of Graduation, Contact information, Date.
2. **Project Summary:** Abstract of project (about one-half page or 100 words in length)
3. **Project Description:** Description should address the criteria above, be written clearly and concisely with a minimum of technical jargon, accessible to a multidisciplinary review committee; contain a timeline for completion, including plans for submission of an interim report, and be no more than five pages in length, including timeline and references.
4. **Project Bibliography:** References to the primary literature on the topic should be presented in a format appropriate for the discipline (e.g., MLA or APA style).
5. **Letter of Recommendation from Faculty Mentor / Advisor:** Recommendation letter should describe:
 - a. student qualifications, including ability to maintain good academic progress and complete project
 - b. project significance, both to the discipline and to the student's learning
 - c. mentor plan, including support activities such as regular meetings and assessment of progress
 - d. expected outcomes, including project presentation in discipline-specific format

- e. previous experience as a mentor for undergraduate research

Deadline: Thursday March 26th, 2009 by 3:00 pm

**** Please read below for important information regarding this deadline.****

Submissions will be accepted electronically through Blackboard only. No paper submissions will be accepted. Students intending to apply must email Dr. Alex Grushow (grushow@rider.edu) by **March 13, 2009** (and no later than March 24, 2009) of their intention to apply. This email must contain the student's name and faculty mentor's name and department. Dr. Grushow will enroll the student and faculty mentor onto URSA's Blackboard site. An email from Dr. Grushow will confirm that the student and faculty mentor have been added as users on URSA's Blackboard site. Applicants will upload their application materials electronically and the faculty mentor will also submit their letter of support via Blackboard by **no later than 3:00 pm on Thursday March 26, 2009.**

Frequently Asked Questions

What kinds of projects are eligible?

Just about anything, as long as it is original, grounded in an academic discipline and teaches both you and the world something new. The URSA committee is in its fifth year and has supported a diverse range of student work. Here are some topics from previous winners: the mating habits of oyster toadfish, a series of paintings of the human body, a study of depictions of Hester Prynne in film, and an investigation of the development of barbershop quartets.

When in my University career should I apply for this?

All full-time or College of Continuing Studies (CCS) students in good academic standing interested in pursuing research or creative activities in an independent project supervised by a faculty mentor are eligible. Successful recipients must have completed at least one year of university study and remain enrolled at Rider until completion of the project. Students will generally only be supported for one year by this award; although it is thought that it will best serve rising seniors, rising juniors and sophomores with exceptional projects and at least 24 credits at Rider are also encouraged to apply.

I'm in CCS and am not exactly a full-time student; what is my standing and am I permitted to participate?

The full-time status requirement may be waived if the applicant is enrolled in CCS at the time of the application. CCS students must be enrolled and matriculated in CCS at the time of application. You must have completed at least 12 Rider credits by the time the project is begun. Your faculty sponsor must verify your eligibility with the appropriate Dean's Office.

Who should I get to act as my mentor / advisor?

Find a faculty member who is familiar with you and your work; if the project you have in mind is multidisciplinary, you may wish to ask multiple faculty to advise you simultaneously. As long as the faculty member is not already sponsoring another URSA application and is not on the URSA committee, they are free to advise you, if they wish.

Can I get academic credit for doing this?

Generally, students receiving the awards enroll in XXX490 courses each semester within their departments. These classes carry 3 credits and appear as "Independent Study" on your transcript. You may enroll in them for both semesters.

Do I have to wait for September to get started?

By no means; in fact, you are encouraged to start as soon as you can. Summer is a spectacular time to get a lot of independent work done; you are free from class obligations and can immerse yourself in your studies; opportunities might crop up in the summer for you to intensively explore your project. You may also be able to perform work in a laboratory, conduct literature searches at the library, or travel for interviews during that time.

I'm interested in putting together a dance or vocal performance, rather than engaging in an academic research activity; can I apply?

Absolutely. As long as your project is original and fits into a demonstrable academic and historical context, we're eager to see your ideas. It may be valuable to you to produce some kind of written documentation about the creative process you undergo in assembling your work, so include that in your proposal.

What else am I obliged to do if I receive the award?

An interim report detailing work done on the project during the fall semester will be due to the URSA Committee Chair, Dr. Nadia Ansary, on **Monday January 11, 2010**. Additionally, we expect that you will appear at the Independent Scholarship and Creative Activities Presentations (ISCAP) Day on **May 6, 2009** to present the proposal for the work you intend to carry out. Additionally, at ISCAP Day the **following year**, you will be asked to present the completed product. Your final report is due on **May 12, 2010**. You may also be asked to make yourself available for programs such as Open House or Family Day.

Is your question not answered here?

Contact Dr. Nadia S. Ansary (nansary@rider.edu) with any other concerns you might have.