Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship (SURF) Proposal

Overview of the Process

The Office of Undergraduate Research & Scholarship (OURS) invites proposals from all disciplines for Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowships. The goal of the SURF program is to foster a community of undergraduate research and engaged scholarship during the summer months at Radford University. This program will fund a variety of projects where students engage in an original, intellectual or creative contribution to a discipline.

**Eligibility:**

-          All currently enrolled degree-seeking undergraduate students who will graduate after the Fall 2019 semester and who wish to engage in research, scholarship or creative activities during the summer are eligible to apply.

-          Projects must be carried out under the supervision of a Radford University faculty mentor.

-          Each student may only submit one SURF application per year.

-          Students who have previously received a SURF award are not eligible to apply.

-          Proposals must get Institutional Review Board approval when necessary.

-          If the research is taking place in the New River Valley participating students must attend at least half of the Wednesday 3 pm events during the summer.  Half of the events are aimed at professional development and the other half on social interactions between the awardees.

**The complete application must be submitted by midnight February 11, 2019.**

**Proposal:**

A professional project proposal must be submitted to OURS through this system by February 11, 2019. The proposal must be clearly written with minimal use of jargon and appropriate for a general audience. Proposals are to be written by the student with significant input and guidance from the faculty mentor(s).

Proposals are not to exceed the page limits and applicants are to use the proposal template on the OURS webpage.

- Title Page

This section does not count toward the two page limit.

- Project Summary (~1/3 of a page)

Include the same as a typical abstract: general purpose, explicit goals of the project, methods, and significance/contribution. Be specific, and confine to a single paragraph.

-     Significance and Objectives (~2/3 of a page)

Explain clearly the research question and the associated objectives. Explain why it is important and compelling.

- Background/Literature Review and Preliminary Results (~1/3 of a page)

Note that some projects have preliminary data/results and it is acceptable and to include those in the proposals, as in most grants. It is not required, however, and new projects are encouraged.

-     Methodology and the Researcher’s Experience (~1/3 of a page)

Remember to write the methodology to be understood by an educated reader who is not in your field of study. Include the relevant experience and skills you possess that will aid in carrying out the proposed methodology.

- Project Schedule and Anticipated Outcomes (~1/3 of a page)

Typical outcomes could include submission to a specific conference(s), a manuscript submission, an exhibition or a performance. We understand that many projects begin before the summer and continue after the summer. Timelines that include this additional scheduling are considered realistic and welcome.

-     References Cited/Bibliography

This does not count toward the two page limit and can be in any style consistent with the discipline of the proposed research, as long as the reference list is internally consistent.

-     Faculty Mentor letter of support form and associated letter.

Submit completed proposals here by February 11, 2019.

Students are highly encouraged to make an appointment to visit the Office of Undergraduate Research & Scholarship in Whitt 111 for feedback on their drafted proposal (ours@radford.edu). The faculty mentor should help plan the project, assist with the proposal and actively participate in the project’s implementation.

**Letter of Support from Faculty Mentor:**

The Faculty Mentor Letter of Support Form must be completed by the faculty mentor and an accompanying letter of support sent separately by the faculty mentor through Qualtrics by February 11, 2019.

**Selection Process:**

A multidisciplinary committee will review and select SURF recipients. A final decision on SURF awards will be made by March 8th.  Only projects that follow the guidelines will be considered and will be assessed on the following criteria:

-         Is the proposal written at an appropriate level so that the multidisciplinary committee can understand the proposal?

- Is the writing clear, concise, and compelling?

- Are the research question and project objectives clearly defined and significant?

-          Is the expertise of the student researcher on the topic demonstrated through the effective use of literature and preliminary results?

-          Is the project feasible in scope? Is convincing evidence provided of the likelihood of completion in time frame outlined?

-          The strength of the anticipated outcomes and dissemination plans.

-          Strong letter of support from faculty mentor indicating significance of the project and excellent student qualifications.

-          Uniqueness of project from others funded and submitted.

-          Awareness and compliance to IRB and IACUC.

**General Writing Tips:**

OURS recognizes this is the first time most students will be writing a grant and have compiled some writing tips to keep in mind.

-          Remember to talk about identified problems from the reader’s perspective, not from your more informed perspective. Your audience is reading this for the first time, whereas this may be a problem you have been working on for a long period of time.

-     Honor the old adage that people who buy shovels don’t want shovels; they want to make holes or ﬁll in holes as quickly and easily as possible. The moral being, do not focus on the tool but on the problem and result. Yes you need to build the belief you can pull off what you are proposing but methodology can be left for last and does not need minute details.

-     Make key points with devices other than text. Use illustrations showing the cycle from problem to solution. A powerful and thoughtful image can convey more than pages of writing.

- Same for graphs. Graph statistics on the problem and the beneﬁt of solving it as possible. Develop graphics in tandem with writing.

- Segment your text with subheads that make the main point of the paragraphs to follow.

-     State your idea in a way to build excitement.

- Don’t over or under promise, be realistic.

- Try to anticipate reader concerns and answer them. You can always use a focus group (classmates, friends, family) to test your idea.

- Be specific and factual, avoid assumptions.

- Use positive/strong words: will is better than would or should.

- Avoid jargon and keep the audience in mind with language choices.

- Follow guidelines – without a doubt, this is the most important rule.

- Write with a reviewer mindset: what are we going to learn from the project, why is it worth knowing, how will we know the results are valid?

- Write for an intelligent audience not an expert.

- The goal is to be clear, convincing, and compelling.

- Reveal the significance as soon as possible.

- Do not spend your opening sentences on things the reviewer already knows, or reads like it could describe every project in your field.

- Leave goals and statements without specifics to bumper stickers and politicians.