

2024

Research Experience Fellowship (REF) Application Guide

Deadline: November 8, 2024 @ 11:59pm

UCI Undergraduate Research
Opportunities Program

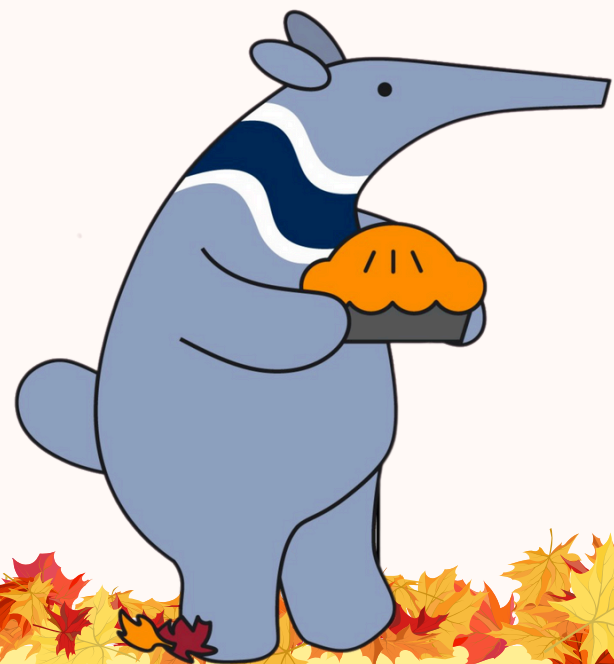



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What is the Research Experience Fellowship (REF)?


The Fall Research Experience Fellowship (REF) is an opportunity for UCI undergraduates engaged in faculty-mentored research projects or creative activities, mentored by UCI faculty, to receive recognition and potential funding as a **UROP Fellow**. 

Is Funding Available?

Funding is limited and is **intended for reimbursement of project-related expenses** within the 2024-25 academic school year.

Students can request up to \$1,000 for individual projects and up to \$2,500 for group projects, with historical average awards being around \$400 and \$1,200, respectively. Funds are transferred to the mentors' departments and support projects for up to one year or until graduation, whichever comes first.

Students who do not need funding may apply for a non-funded award. Because funds are limited, some students requesting funding may also receive a non-funded award. Students receiving non-funded awards still receive the recognition of being a UROP Fellow.



What is a UROP Fellow?

UROP Fellows conduct UCI faculty-mentored research projects and creative activities and present their projects at the annual UCI Undergraduate Research Symposium in the May after receiving their award. This special recognition can be included on your resume/CV and LinkedIn profile and will make you stand out in future job and graduate school applications

UROP Fellows develop valuable academic, personal, and career readiness skills that can be highlighted in interviews and networking opportunities, such as:

- ✓ Critical Thinking
- ✓ Communication: Public Speaking, Reading, and Writing
- ✓ Leadership
- ✓ Teamwork
- ✓ Professionalism
- ✓ Technology
- ✓ Discipline-specific technical skills and experience

UROP provides resources and programming to support to UROP Fellows throughout their research journey. We help integrate undergraduate students into UCI's vibrant research culture and diverse community, and empower you to collaborate with your peers, faculty, and industry representatives.

Who Can Participate in REF?

We welcome **all** current UCI undergraduate students who are participating in a UCI faculty-mentored research project or creative activity.

Eligibility & Requirements

- ✓ All applicants and co-applicants (if any) must be enrolled at UCI as degree-seeking undergraduate students through at least winter quarter 2025.
- ✓ Must have UCI Faculty Mentor guidance.
- ✓ Must be in good academic standing (2.0+ GPA)

How many REF applications can I submit?

Individual Submissions:

- You are allowed to submit one individual application for funding.
- Additionally, if you are involved in more than one research or creative activity, you can submit one additional individual application for recognition only, which will not be eligible for reimbursement of expenses.
- If you are part of a group project but are submitting an individual REF application, your focus of the project must have unique independent aims which you must be able to articulate in your proposal. If multiple group members are submitting the same proposal, you should submit one group application instead of individual applications.

Group Submissions:

- Instead of or in addition to individual submissions, you may participate in one or more group submissions.
- These group submissions can either receive funding or recognition, which will not affect your individual application limits.

All UROP Fellows (funded and non-funded) are required to present their research at the UCI Undergraduate Research Symposium in May 2025. You will need to apply and register separately for the Symposium later in the academic year.

How Do I Prepare My Application?

Your online application must include the following:

1 Applicant Information

- Name
- UCI email address
- Phone Number
- Major(s), Class Level, Graduation Date
- Co-applicant Names, UCI e-mail addresses, Schools, and Majors (for group projects)

2 Faculty & Graduate Student Mentor Information

- Name
- UCI email
- School
- Department

3 About Your Project

- Indicate if you are requesting funding
- Indicate UROP funding history
- Indicate if your project involves human or animal subjects

4 Required Documents

- Proposal
- Personal Statement
- Faculty Mentor Agreement Form

The Proposal

What is a proposal?

A proposal describes your project and should convince the reviewers of its significance and the need for funding, if requested.

What should I include in my proposal?

Thesis, Purpose, Objective, & Approach

Describe your purpose with a clear research question. Why is this project significant? Thoroughly discuss the significance of your project, how it advances knowledge, and its potential impact on society. Describe the work you have already completed, what you plan to accomplish, and your intended outcomes.

Responsibility

What is your role, and how is your work independent from your mentor's? Discuss your specific duties for the project. Are you working in a lab or conducting an independent project? Describe how your work is independent from that of your mentor(s). Explain how you will interact with your faculty mentor and other research personnel throughout the project.

Timeline

Create an outline of your specific research process, including what needs to be completed (e.g., data collection, analysis, trainings, meetings). Include a schedule—by week, month, or quarter—of project tasks and deadlines. Discuss the progress you have made so far, where you are in your project, and expectations that you can complete the work within this timeframe. List specific goals to ensure that the project is progressing efficiently.

References

What resources will you use? List the books, articles, and any other outside sources you used in preparing your proposal or that have contributed to your research.

Itemized Budget


If you are requesting funding, what expenses are you requesting funding for? Include an itemized budget of projected expenses for the length of your project (see page 7). Consult with your Faculty Mentor about your needs before developing your budget. Be aware that there are limits to what can and cannot be covered (refer to page 8 for allowable expenses).



Disclaimer for Group Projects: While one student submits the application, all undergraduate applicants should **collaboratively** prepare a **single proposal document**. The proposal must describe the responsibilities of **each group member**.

What Expenses Are Covered by REF?

Students applying for funding can request up to \$1,000 for individual projects and up to \$2,500 for group projects, with historical average awards being around \$400 and \$1,200, respectively. Please be aware that there are limitations on what expenses can be covered. A requirement of this application is to create an itemized budget; therefore, it's essential to be cautious about what can and cannot be covered.

Many books, software packages, and other resources are freely accessible to you through the university as a UCI student, therefore these items cannot be covered. The [UCI OIT website](#) contains information on available software, and you should check the UCI Libraries website for books and other reference materials that may be available for free. 

Below is a detailed guide on what expenses are covered, not covered, and rarely covered:

Can be covered

- ✓ Animals
- ✓ Chemicals
- ✓ Compensation for human subjects
- ✓ Copying/printing
- ✓ Facilities rental
- ✓ Mailing/postage
- ✓ Mileage (to conduct local research)
- ✓ Other critical related costs
- ✓ Presentation materials, such as a Symposium poster
- ✓ Reference materials not available for free
- ✓ Software
- ✓ Supplies

Not covered

- ✗ Travel (UROP Travel Awards can provide limited funding for qualified expenses; see the UROP website for information)
- ✗ Standard laboratory expenses
- ✗ Salaries and stipends to compensate for project-related work
- ✗ Items that can be borrowed for free or rented at a much lower cost

Rarely covered

- ? Major hardware purchases: expenditures for computers may be approved for exceptional circumstances only, and must include justification of why this is a mission critical expense.

Formatting the Itemized Budget

How do I format my itemized list of projected expenses?

Use the format in the sample below for your budget. Clearly explain any expenses that could be seen as unusual. Include the total cost of your project and specify the amount you are requesting from UROP.

Sample UROP REF Proposal Budget		
Item	Budgeted Amount	Explanation and Justification for Expense
512GB Solid State Drives	\$150	
Copying/printing	\$100	
Website builder software	\$300	Includes domain and hosting costs for 1 year. Not available via UCI.
Organic solvents for reaction and chromatography	\$200	
Proper Waste Disposal	\$200	
Poster for UROP Symposium	\$120	
Total Budget	\$1,070	
Total Requesting from UROP	\$1,000	



Need an example of a proposal? Check out the [sample proposals](#) of our past REF recipients. We've divided the proposals by school and have labeled REF recipients with "Fall."



Formatting Your Proposal

Use the information below to help you format your proposal. Content and organization varies by field of study. Talk to your faculty mentor to determine how you should organize your proposal (this includes citation styles e.g., APA, MLA, and Chicago).

Names of all undergraduate researcher(s) and mentor(s)

- ✓ At the top of the document



Page Count

- ✓ Typically 3-5 pages
 - If you need to write more that's okay, but keep it concise



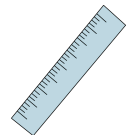
Spacing

- ✓ Double spaced



Margins

- ✓ 1" margins



Font

- ✓ 11-point or larger type
- ✓ Times New Roman, Calibri, Arial



Document

- ✓ Size: 8.5" x 11"
- ✓ File type: MS Word or PDF



Your proposal will be reviewed be evaluated by faculty reviewers. Click [here](#) to review the rubric on how your proposal will be scored. Please note that they will also consider formatting.



The Personal Statement

What is a personal statement?

A personal statement describes your relationship to the project.

What should I include in my personal statement?

Please address the following in essay format (e.g. do not include headings below in your essay):

- 1 Interest and Motivation for Research or Creative Activity:**
 - Describe your academic or professional interest in conducting research or this creative activity.
 - Explain what sparked your curiosity or passion for this specific research topic or creative activity.
- 2 Personal Connection to the Project:**
 - Share any personal experiences, values, or life events that uniquely connect you to this project.
 - Discuss any personal motivations or values driving your commitment to this project.
- 3 Alignment with Goals and Impact:**
 - Explain how pursuing this project will help you move toward your academic, career, and/or personal goals. Discuss the skills, knowledge, or experiences you aim to gain from the project.
 - Discuss the impact your project can make in your field and community.
- 4 Background and Experience:**
 - Highlight your background and experience related to this project, including any previous relevant accomplishments.
 - Include information about any previous research projects, coursework, internships, or relevant activities.



Disclaimer for Group Projects: Each group member must write their **own personal statement**. All personal statements must be combined into **one PDF or Microsoft Word file** that will be uploaded to your group's online application. Please include each student's name at the beginning of their statement.

Formatting Your Personal Statement

Use the information below to help you format your proposal.

Name

- ✓ At the top of the document



Page Count

- ✓ Typically 1-2 pages



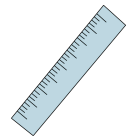
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Faculty Mentor Agreement Form

What is faculty mentor agreement form?

The Faculty Mentor Agreement Form indicates that your faculty mentor agrees to review your proposal and mentor the student researcher(s) named on the proposal. It may be worth noting that graduate students may not serve as mentors but can be designated by the faculty mentor on the form.

What steps do I need to take to complete the form?

- 1 Meet with Faculty Mentor** to review proposal.
- 2 Send the Form Electronically:**
 - Send the “Faculty Mentor Agreement Form” to your faculty mentor electronically for completion.
- 3 Faculty Mentor Completes the Form:**
 - Your faculty mentor completes the “Faculty Mentor Agreement Form” and sends the completed form back to you.
- 4 Provide Faculty Mentor’s Email:**
 - Include your faculty mentor’s email address in the “Additional Email Addresses for Notifications” field on the first page of the submission form.
- 5 Submit the Form:**
 - You submit the form along with your application.




Provide your faculty mentor with this form as soon as possible so they will be aware of the questions they need to answer. Click [here](#) to access the Faculty Mentor Agreement Form.




Conducting Ethical Research

Does your project involve human and/or animal subjects?

Projects involving human and/or animal subjects must adhere to UC's Research Protections standards.

Students should consult with their Faculty Mentor to determine if **Institutional Review Board (IRB)** or **Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC)** approval is needed. 

Does UROP have detailed guidelines to help me?

Yes. Review the **UROP Research Protections Instructions** for detailed guidelines, including instructions on how to complete the IRB Exempt Self-Determination Tool for projects involving human subjects. 

Contact UROP if you or your Faculty Mentor have questions about this process.



Click **here** to access the UROP Research Protections Instructions



Resources

We've compiled a list of resources that are meant to support your experience with the 2024 Fall REF application. Happy clicking!

Faculty Mentor Agreement Form:

- The **Faculty Mentor Agreement Form** indicates that your faculty mentor agrees to review your proposal and mentor the student researcher(s) named on the proposal.

Recorded REF Info Sessions:

- Couldn't attend our info sessions? Watch them on our **YouTube page!**

Sample Proposals by School:

- Explore **sample proposals** from various schools to see what others have done before.

UCI OIT Website:

- Visit the **UCI OIT website** to see what software is available for free.

UCI Writing Center:

- **Schedule an appointment** to get feedback on your personal statement and proposal, even if you are in the brainstorming stages.

REF Proposal Scoring Rubric:

- **Review the criteria** used to evaluate submissions and understand how your proposal will be assessed.

UROP's Research Protections Instructions:

- **Determine whether your project requires review** by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) or Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC). If needed, receive guidance on procedural details, including the use of the IRB Exempt Self-Determination Tool for projects involving human subjects.



REF Information Sessions

Research Experience Fellowship - DUE: November 8

REF Application Overview

- Wed 10/16/2024 3:00 PM - 4:00 PM (In Person)
- Tue 10/22/2024 3:00 PM - 4:00 PM (In Person)
- Wed 10/30/2024 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM (Zoom)

Learn about the REF application process, including its goal of providing recognition and reimbursement for project-related expenses during the academic year, required documents, and submission deadline.

REF & IRT Proposal & Personal Statement Walk-In Hours by UCI Writing Center

- Wed 10/23/2024 12:00 PM - 2:00 PM (In Person)
- Thu 10/24/2024 2:00 PM - 4:00 PM (In Person)

Receive feedback on your proposal and personal statement from UCI Writing Center Staff. No appointment required.

UCI Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program



Scan or click here for details & register to attend



Frequently Asked Questions

How is the funding distributed?

The funding does not go directly to the student. Instead, it is transferred to your faculty mentor's department, with funds being distributed to your Faculty Mentor's account in January 2025. You are responsible for communicating with your faculty mentor about your funds. You will be notified if you are awarded funding. If there are any issues, your faculty mentor should contact UROP.

Can I apply for REF funding for the same project if I received it last year?

Yes. Students who received REF funding last year can apply for REF funding again for the same project. However, you must demonstrate the progress made and the need for additional funding in your new application. Be sure to provide clear updates and justify why further funding is necessary to continue your research or creative activities.

Is there another opportunity to obtain funding for project-related expenses?

The Fall Research Experience Fellowship (REF) is an opportunity to get reimbursed for project-related expenses, and it is only offered in the fall quarter. However, this is subject to change, so always refer to the UROP website for the most current information and opportunities. If your research is interdisciplinary, you may also want to explore the Interdisciplinary Research Training (IRT) program as another funding option. More information is available on our website.

How can I increase my chances of receiving funding?

Ensure that you submit the strongest application possible: consult with your faculty-mentor to write a well-justified and detailed Proposal and Personal Statement. Ensure that your budget is realistic and clearly outlines the necessity of each expense. Go to the UCI Writing Center to receive feedback on your documents. While we strive to fund as many worthy projects as possible, the UROP award budget is limited and it is rare to receive the maximum amount. The final funding decision is based on a variety of factors considered by our Faculty Advisory Board. You will increase your chances by following our Guide closely to submit the best application you can.

Frequently Asked Questions (Continued)

Can my grad student be my mentor?

Graduate students can assist you with your project, but the official mentor must be a UCI faculty member. The Faculty Mentor Agreement Form indicates that your faculty mentor agrees to review your proposal and mentor the student researcher(s) named on the proposal. Graduate students may not serve as primary mentors but can be designated by the faculty mentor to provide additional guidance and support.

If a group project is awarded funding or recognition, do all members need to present at the UCI Undergraduate Research Symposium?

No, not all group members need to present. The group can decide who will present, and we recommend at least two presenters. You can choose to rotate presenters or have the same two individuals present each time.

What if I don't know enough about my project to address all of the points in the proposal?

If you're unsure about certain aspects of your project, such as methods, timelines, and other details, you should ask your faculty mentor or graduate mentor for assistance. They are there to help you with these aspects and provide the necessary guidance. For detailed proposal components, your mentors will be the best resource.

For group projects, who should be the lead applicant?

We recommend selecting a lead applicant who is dependable and has the ability to submit application materials accurately and in a timely manner. It's crucial to choose someone who checks their emails regularly and is willing to read and follow all the guidelines. A reliable lead applicant will ensure that your application process runs smoothly and is not negatively impacted by missed deadlines or incomplete submissions.

Am I automatically registered to present at the UCI Undergraduate Research Symposium?

No, you must register separately in early April. You will only be allowed to present **one** individual project (you can also be involved in one group project).

If awarded for multiple projects, will I need to present all of them at the UCI Undergraduate Research Symposium?

No, you do not need to present all of them. You can decide which project to present.