

Student-Initiated SPUR

Student-Initiated SPUR projects provide research funding to eligible juniors and seniors who wish to pursue their own research project under the mentorship of a Rausser College faculty member. Applicants may apply for up to \$2,000 in SPUR funding to support their project. Students may only apply **once** for Student-Initiated SPUR funding during their time in Rausser College.

Eligibility Requirements

Applicants must:

- Be declared in a Rausser College major.
- Have junior or senior standing (at least 60 completed units). Graduating seniors on the summer degree list may not apply in their final summer term.
- Have a minimum 3.00 cumulative UC-GPA .
- Have not received funding previously for a Student-Initiated SPUR project.

Application and Program Requirements

- Applicants must identify a faculty research mentor in advance of the semester in which the project is to be initiated. The faculty research mentor must belong to a department in the Rausser College of Natural Resources:
 - Agricultural and Resource Economics (ARE)
 - Energy & Resources Group (ERG)
 - Environmental Science, Policy, and Management (ESPM)
 - Plant & Microbial Biology (PMB)
 - Nutritional Science & Toxicology (NST)
- Applicants must submit a research project proposal and a detailed research budget (approved by the applicant's faculty research mentor) **by November 18, 2025**.
- If awarded, recipients are required to fill out a Fellowship Acceptance form, which is provided in the award email. Information in the Fellowship Acceptance form may be shared with the RCNR donors who support the SPUR program funding.
- If awarded, recipients are required to enroll in research units under their faculty research mentor.
- If awarded, recipients are required to present their research at the Rausser College Research Showcase and/or Honors Symposium, if applicable, which take place at the end of the Fall and Spring semesters. Because of this requirement, graduating seniors on the summer degree list are not eligible to apply in their final summer term.

- If awarded, recipients and their faculty research mentor are required to submit an “End-of-Term” report by the last day of the semester of the project. Feedback may be shared with the RCNR donors who support the SPUR program funding.

Please read the information below carefully before beginning the application process.

- [Faculty Research Mentor - Role and Responsibilities](#)
- [Research Proposal - Guidelines & Examples](#)
- [Budget Proposal Guidelines & Examples](#)
- [Appropriate Use of Funding](#)
- [Application Evaluation](#)
- [Enrollment Requirements](#)
- [Presentation of Research Requirement](#)
- [End of Term Report Requirement](#)
- [Spring 2026 Application - Due November 18, 2025](#)

Faculty Research Mentor - Role & Responsibilities

Students are strongly advised to begin the process of identifying a faculty research mentor and project well in advance, preferably in the semester preceding the one in which the student project will begin. Faculty research mentors should provide guidance and feedback to students during this preparatory process.

If awarded, SPUR funding is paid out to the faculty mentor’s research account. By signing and approving the budget for a Student-Initiated project, the faculty research mentor indicates that they will be responsible for assisting the student with accessing their research funds. The faculty mentor also agrees to be responsible for covering any overexpenditure of the SPUR grant. However, if some of the SPUR grant remains unused by the end of the project’s completion, the funds will remain in the faculty mentor’s research account and can be used toward other purposes.

All proposals and budgets should be reviewed prior to submission. Before the student submits their student-initiated project, the faculty research mentor will need to approve the project by signing the budget proposal. The approval serves as the faculty mentor’s agreement to participate as the research mentor and indicates that the faculty research mentor has reviewed the student's proposal and budget. If the project is approved, students will be directed to contact their faculty mentor for departmental guidelines on how to access research funds (e.g., departmental purchase order, reimbursement guidelines and procedures). This process varies by department.

Research Proposal - Guidelines & Examples

Students are encouraged to review [example research proposals](#) and OURS [research resources](#) such as [Research Proposal Workshop](#), [Slides](#), and [Worksheet](#).

The proposal must include:

- Project title
- Abstract
- Background
- Objectives
- Hypothesis
- Methods
- Timeline
- Expected results
- References

Budget Proposal - Guidelines & Examples

Students are required to review the [SPUR Budget Example](#) prior to creating their budget.

Students are required to use the [SPUR Budget Template](#). Please download the pdf to edit it.

Budget Proposal must include:

- Student Name
- SID
- Faculty mentor name
- Specific item name
- Purpose of the item for their research
- Price
- Working hyperlink to the item showing the specific cost
- Faculty Research Mentor signature on the budget verifying all items are necessary to the student's SPUR project and are not available in their lab.

Appropriate Use of Funding

Students must submit a budget proposal (see Budget section) that clearly shows how all potential expenses pertain directly to the student's research project and are needed for it.

Sponsoring faculty must sign the budget proposal before the student submits. Applications without a detailed budget will be considered incomplete and will not be funded.

SPUR may provide funding of up to \$2,000 to be used to cover:

- Lap Supplies and Equipment
 - Faculty mentors must sign "Confirmation of Student Need".
 - SPUR funds will **not** pay for personal laptops, digital cameras, or similar personal equipment. Such items included within a budget will not be funded.
 - All purchased equipment must be returned to your faculty mentor's lab at the end of term.
- Travel Costs to Research Site(s)
 - Must provide proof of cost estimates (e.g. print out of quotes from airline, hotel, or rental car sites).

- Travel to destinations reachable by Alameda Contra-Costa Transit are not eligible for reimbursement since the Student EasyPass provides free unlimited AC Transit access.
- Mileage reimbursements must follow the [federal mileage rates](#). SPUR does not provide funding for gas. This is covered in your mileage reimbursement.
- Travel funding maximums:
 - Up to \$400 within California
 - Up to \$600 within North America
 - Up to \$1000 for international
 - Students should explore alternative funding sources to cover remaining travel costs
- Gift Awards to Interviewees
 - May not exceed \$10 per person. Unused funds for this expense must be returned.

SPUR awards will not fund:

- Personal laptops, digital cameras, or similar personal equipment
- Personal salaries
- Meals
- Rent
- Other expenses deemed unrelated to the research project

Students interested in funding to present their research at a conference should apply to the [RCNR Conference Travel Grant](#).

Application Evaluation

Research project proposals will be reviewed by a committee composed of the Associate Dean, Assistant Dean, Conference Travel Grant Coordinator, and the SPUR Coordinator. Projects are evaluated on the strength of the research proposal, the thoroughness of the proposed budget, student's academic performance, and funding availability. Students will be notified of the committee's decision by email.

Enrollment Requirements

In order to be eligible for SPUR funding, students must be enrolled in research units: 199S (SPUR units), 195 (non-honors thesis), H196 (honors thesis), or 175A/B (for Environmental Science majors only). Funds are not released to faculty mentor accounts until the SPUR coordinator has verified that all students are enrolled in units.

During the summer term, students are not required to enroll in units. In lieu of enrolling in units, students may submit a [SPUR Summer Learning Contract](#), signed by their faculty mentor, to the SPUR Coordinator no later than the last day of instruction of the preceding spring semester..

Presentation of Research Requirement

In order to receive SPUR funding, students are required to present their research via a Rausser College Research Showcase, Rausser College Honors Symposium, or Environmental Science Symposium. **Failure to present your research will result in the funding being rescinded.**

Due to the “Presentation of Research” requirement, graduating seniors on the summer degree list are not eligible for SPUR funding.

End-of-Term Report Requirement

Student participants and faculty research mentors are required to provide feedback on their experience with the SPUR program via the End of Semester Report. End of semester reports will be emailed to participants and their faculty research mentor and are due on the last day of instruction. Feedback may be shared with the RCNR alumni who donated the funds that support the SPUR program.

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