Resolution to Increase Stipend Awards for Undergraduate Research Programs

The University of Minnesota Student Senate recommends that the University of Minnesota administration:

- Increase the stipend for the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP) and the MN Futures UROP from $1500 to $1800
- Increase the stipend for the Undergraduate Research Scholarship (URS) from $1400 to $1700
- Increase the stipend for the International UROP (I-UROP)
- Increase funding for the above programs so as not to decrease the number of available awards from any program

Justification:

The UROP, MN Futures UROP, I-UROP, and URS will hereinafter be referred to collectively as "the [OUR] Programs", where OUR stands for Office of Undergraduate Research. UROP is the largest program by enrollment, and the one for which the most detailed data is available. Therefore, data from UROP will often be generalized to all Programs.

In August 2022, the campus minimum wage was raised from $10.33/hr to $15/hr.[1] The current stipend for UROP and MN Futures UROP is $1500 for 120 hours of research, or $12.50/hr.[2] Increasing these to $1800 for 120 hours of work changes the hourly rate to $15, matching the current campus minimum wage.

One of the MPact 2025 goals is to increase student participation in research to 50% of all students, from 37.5% in 2021 (down from 40.9% at the start of reporting).[3] UROP applications during the academic year are down 50% over the last 5 years (from 830 to 415).[4] Applications from CSE and Swenson CSE (Duluth) are down 57.6% (from 382 to 162).[4] Increasing the stipend amounts for the Programs will help draw more students into undergraduate research and meet the goals outlined in MPact 2025.

Since the stipends for UROP (awarded as tuition subsidies) were last raised in Fall 2016, tuition has increased by 6.25% (from $14,142 to $15,027) for in-state/reciprocity students and 40% (from $23,806 to $33,325) for out-of-state students.[4,5] This proposal would increase UROP/MN Futures UROP stipends by 20% and URS stipends by 21.4%. Therefore, students who are engaging in research opportunities, especially those paying nonresident tuition, will continue to receive a high level of tuition support through the Programs.

The pay for URS is lower for several reasons, including the fact that it is offered as an award to first-year applicants, rather than requiring an application and project proposal before being offered.[6] Therefore, we suggest that the relative stipend amount ($100 less than UROP) be maintained.

I-UROP was introduced in 2013 and the stipend amount has remained constant at $2000, despite rising costs of living and inflation. Since study abroad expenses very widely from program to program, we would like to voice our support for increasing them but will not provide a specific recommended value.

Citations:

[1] Horstman, Kenneth E. Email to University Community: “Increase in minimum wage for student workers”. 3 Aug 2022

[2] https://ugresearch.umn.edu/

[3] https://conservancy.umn.edu/bitstream/handle/11299/228186/university_of_minnesota_progress-card-2022.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

[4] https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/106DxDRjpF4CPZCHCnVzbXU9BnvNNEBvl?usp=sharing (Data obtained through UMN public records request #22-232)

[5] https://idr.umn.edu/reports-by-topic-tuition-fees/historic-annual-tuition-rates

[6] https://ugresearch.umn.edu/opportunities/urs