

# FCSM Undergraduate Research Proposal Instructions

The FCSM Undergraduate Research Committee will consider only complete undergraduate research proposals prepared according to the instructions below.

**I. Eligibility Requirements.** Students are eligible to receive undergraduate research grant funding only once per academic year (August 31 to May 30). To be eligible for support, a student must:

1. be a sophomore, junior, or senior with a major in the Fisher College, and
2. have a recommended cumulative GPA of 2.75.

In cases of **group projects**, each student in the group must meet the eligibility requirements.

**II. The Complete Proposal** consists of a single PDF file that contains the following sections—*in this order*:

1. Completed application form cover sheet. **A link to the application form cover sheet is given at the end of these instructions.** In cases of **group projects**; the submission must contain a separate cover sheet for each student in the group, but *only one research proposal should be submitted - by the first listed group member*.
2. Letter(s) of support from the faculty member. In cases of **group projects**, the faculty member must provide a separate letter of support for each student in the group.
3. Project description, prepared according to the instructions below and *not to exceed five pages* in length.

The single PDF file containing the above documents must be submitted electronically to Dr. Vonnie Shields, Associate Dean, at [vshields@towson.edu](mailto:vshields@towson.edu) by the **application deadline**:

- the fifth Friday of the term for proposals submitted in a fall term;
- the first Friday in February for proposals submitted in a spring term.

**III. Cover Sheets** are provided as a fillable, one-page PDF form that must be filled. If the title of the project exceeds 60 characters in length, the cover sheet should list a short title capped at 60 characters. The PDF form(s) are to be filled-in electronically, printed, and then scanned into the single-PDF submission file.

**IV. Letter(s) of Support** from the faculty research mentor must be on departmental letterhead and specifically discuss in sufficient detail the project and the student's ability to successfully complete the project. If this is a **group project**, a separate support letter must be submitted for each student that addresses *that* student's specific contributions to the project. The letters of support are *not* recommendation letters and are not intended to be kept confidential from the student researchers. In particular, it is *not* acceptable for a mentor to submit a proposal on behalf of their student(s) with the explanation that the mentor wanted to protect the confidentiality of the support letter(s). If the student's GPA falls below 2.75, the letter of support from the mentor must clearly address the student's ability to undertake the project.

**V. The Project Description** must be written by the student under the guidance of a faculty mentor. It must state the purpose of the research and describe the project clearly. It should be written for an intelligent, interdisciplinary audience, not one composed of experts in the research field. Technical jargon should be kept to a minimum. The description should not exceed five pages in length, including the bibliography. It should be typeset in 12-point Times New Roman font, double-spaced, with one-inch margins. It should consist of the following sections: title, project summary, introduction, methods, budget, project timeline, and bibliography. These seven sections are described below. The Committee requests that all sections, except for the title, be named exactly as listed below and that the section titles be formatted as below—typeset in boldface at the beginning of their respective sections, but *not* numbered.

**Title.** Include the full title of the project, the student researcher's name (or names, if a **group project**) and major department, and the faculty mentor's name and department. The faculty mentor must be a full-time faculty in the Fisher College.

**Project Summary.** The scope of the project should be described in *200 words or less*. The project summary should state the objectives of the project, the methods to be used, and the “intellectual merit” of the work being proposed.

**Introduction.** This section should state the problem concisely, provide background information, explain the goal of the research, discuss the significance of the research, and predict outcomes. Key literature references should be included. If the project is a continuation of a project that has been funded in the past or is currently being funded by the FCSM Undergraduate Research Committee, the introduction must include a clear statement of the results of previous funding and of the relationship of the proposed work to prior work.

**Methods.** This section should describe how the research question will be approached, as well as the methodology and equipment needed. It should reflect familiarity with the literature in the field and provide a justification for the materials requested in the budget. Key literature references should be included. If the project is a ***group project***, please, state clearly the role of each team member. To be eligible for funding, a ***group project*** must describe how each member of the group is responsible for one unique facet of a larger multi-dimensional research project; the proposal must also clearly demonstrate that each member of the group will contribute equally to the project.

**Budget.** This section must list the itemized budget in table form. For each budget item include requested quantity, unit cost, and subtotal cost. Research funds may be used for:

- supplies, books, software, and equipment;
- travel expenses to and from an off-campus research site.

Funds may not be used for reimbursement for services or for conference travel (the Fisher College has a separate program that supports student conference travel). Budget requests of up to \$700 will be considered.

This section must include also a brief justification why each budget item is needed. If the total budget exceeds \$700, the department and/or faculty grant will be responsible for the excess.

**Project Timeline.** Provide a table describing the chronological order of research activities for the duration of the project. The timeline should note important milestones throughout the period, including the planned date of completion of the project. Note that the date of completion may not extend beyond the anticipated graduation date of the student. In cases of ***group projects***, the completion date may not extend beyond the earliest among the anticipated graduation rates of all the students in the group.

**Bibliography.** This section must contain the citations for each of the key literature references included in the Introduction and Methods sections. It is suggested, though not required, to list and cite references using the APA format; the Cook Library provides online references to this format at the following website:

<https://towson.libguides.com/apastyle7/home>

**VI. Final Remarks.** All money awarded under this program is distributed through the home department of the faculty mentor and must be spent by the next June 30. Before the award can be transferred to the department, the student researcher(s) must sign an acceptance form, as part of which they commit to submit a final report upon completion of the project. The deadline for the final report will be stated in the acceptance form. Students are also given the option to give a final poster presentation in lieu of report. Poster presentations may be given at a variety of venues, such as: the annual TU Student Research & Creative Inquiry Forum, the FCSM Honors Convocation, or a poster presented at a professional meeting. Instructions for submitting the final report may be found on the FCSM website.

**[Get the Application Form Cover Sheet](#)**