FURSCA Guidelines for Preparing Student Research Proposals

INTRODUCTION

The Foundation for Undergraduate Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity (FURSCA) was established to promote and support student research, original scholarship and creative efforts in all disciplines. Through a number of programs, taking place at all points in a student's career at Albion, FURSCA can help students pursue independent study in their areas of interest. Students work closely with a faculty mentor to develop and carry out creative and/or research projects. Participation in such projects provides valuable experience beyond the scope of classroom work, and enhances a student's preparedness for future employment and post−graduate studies.

FURSCA provides support for student research projects during both the academic year and the summer. During each of the three time periods, students may apply for up to $500 per semester to support research, scholarship, or other creative projects. In the summer, students may also apply for FURSCA support to stay on campus and do research with a faculty mentor. Students must work closely with a faculty advisor and are not limited to any particular discipline. Students have been funded to pursue a wide variety of projects in all disciplines on campus. To see a complete list of funded projects, please visit the FURSCA website (www.albion.edu/fursca).

FURSCA does not support projects that are part of a class project.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSAL

Semester FURSCA proposals are composed of three major parts:
1. Online application form containing the cover sheet and the body of the proposal.
2. Signature sheet in .pdf format. This needs to be turned in on paper.
3. Faculty support letter via online form

Summer FURSCA proposals are composed of four major parts:

1. the cover sheet,
2. the body of the proposal,
3. the signature page,
4. the faculty support letter.

The cover sheet includes basic information about the student and faculty

including name, major and information about your faculty advisor. Budget information and a brief narrative of previous results (for continuing projects only) should be included on the cover sheet in the appropriate space.

The body of the proposal is limited to three pages, excluding references. This is where the description of the work that you are proposing is given. Group projects are permitted and encouraged. If your proposal is part of a group project, make sure to indicate your contribution to the project's goals. Separate proposals from the different group members are allowed. Identical proposals from two or more students will not be funded. Student applicants should consult with their faculty mentors prior to submitting their application online.

The signature page gives FURSCA permission to ascertain that the student is in good standing with the College and that the student has a GPA of 2.70 or higher. A Department chair or Director's signature is required in addition to that of the faculty advisor.

PROPOSAL REVIEW PROCESS

After a proposal has been submitted, it is then reviewed by the FURSCA committee. The FURSCA committee is composed of faculty from all divisions (generally two from each division), a representative of the library, the Director of the Prentiss M. Brown Honors Program and two student members. The current committee makeup can be found on the FURSCA website (www.albion.edu/fursca).

As part of the application process for the summer program, students are often asked to submit a revised proposal for further review. Often the committee members have questions about the proposed work and would like to see information clarified or explained further. Commonly students are asked to revise either the budget or the timeline (see below for further information). Revised proposals are generally not accepted during the semester proposal process. Once a final decision on the proposal has been made, students will be contacted. This process generally takes 1−2 weeks for a semester proposal and between 3−6 weeks for the summer program.

ELIGIBILITY

All students in good academic and social standing and with a minimum 2.70 GPA are eligible for funding through FURSCA. Students who are not in good standing will not be funded. Before funding is announced, a student's academic and social standing will be checked with the registrar and the Dean's office, respectively.

DETAILED INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROPOSAL

COVER SHEET *(this is included in online application for semester grants)*

A copy of the cover sheet is included at the end of these instructions. A .doc file is also available on the FURSCA website (www.albion.edu/fursca). When filling out the form, please make sure that the cover sheet stays at one page.

Abstract. Please provide a short (100 words or less) abstract that describes the work that you are proposing in layman's terms. The abstract should be understandable by a general audience. The abstract will be placed on the FURSCA website and could be used in presentations or recruiting activities.

Human Participants or Animal Subjects. If a project requires human participants, it must be approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). If you are using animal subjects, you must go through the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC). FURSCA funding of the project will not be given without IRB/IACUC approval. If a project already has IRB/IACUC approval, please provide a copy of the approval email from the IRB/IACUC to the Coordinator, or attach a copy to the end of your proposal. When submitting a summer proposal, you should submit your proposal to the IRB or IACUC (if needed) at the same time.

Budget Information. Awards are limited to $500 per semester for a research project conducted during the school year and $500 to support summer research conducted at Albion College or with an Albion College faculty or staff member. Funds can be used to pay for supplies, printing costs, subject incentives, software, books, or other costs associated with the completion of the project. This award may be used for travel expenses related to the collection of data for the student project. For semester research grants, student wages are not eligible expenses. If you have any questions about whether or not an item is eligible for funding through FURSCA, please contact either the Director or the Coordinator of FURSCA.

If books, DVDs, and/or journals are needed for a project, please make sure to check the library catalogue for these items before requesting them. Items that are needed for short term should be borrowed through the Interlibrary Loan (ILL) system. Help using the ILL system can be obtained through the library. If books, DVDs or journals are purchased for completion of a student's research project, they become the property of the Albion College Library. They will be purchased by the Coordinator and then entered into the library catalogue. They will then be checked out to the student. Failure to return these materials to the library will result in a hold being placed on a student's diploma and/or transcript.

If money is being requested for travel needed in the course of the research project, reimbursement will be done in the form of mileage, not gas money. In order for this reimbursement to be available for travel expense, the travel must be approved in advance by the FURSCA committee. The actual number of miles to and from your destination must be recorded on the approved expense form and a mileage log form (located on the FURSCA website) or proof of mileage to destination (mapquest, google maps, etc.) must be attached to the standard reimbursement form. Please check with your faculty sponsor or the Coordinator to determine the current reimbursement rate.

For example, in the second half of 2013, the mileage reimbursement is $0.56/ mile. If your research trip is 50 miles each way, then the total mileage is 100 miles (2x50 miles). You would request a budget of $55.00 for this trip ($0.565/ mile x 100 miles). If you have questions regarding whether or not a trip is eligible for reimbursement, please contact the FURSCA Coordinator or Director.

BODY OF THE PROPOSAL

It is expected that the proposal is the work of the student. However, students should meet with faculty sponsors well in advance of the deadline to review the proposal. Proposals that have not been reviewed or read by faculty sponsors may not be funded.

The body of proposal has a three−page limit, not including references or timeline (summer only).

While we understand that scholarship in different areas can be unique and varied, all proposals should answer the following questions:

1. What is the goal of the project and why is achieving this goal important? (100-200 words)
2. How does this project fit into work that has already been done by you or/ and others? (200-300 words)
3. What is the strategy for completing this project? (200-400 words)
4. What do you wish to gain from this experience? (200-400 words)
5. What is the timeframe for completing this project?

In some proposals, this information might be given by using the following format:

a. Proposed Work (100-200 words)
b. Introduction/Background (200-300 words)
c. Methodology (200-400 words)
d. Outcomes (200-400 words)
e. Timeline (summer only)
f. References/Endnotes/Cited Work

The FURSCA committee understands that the sections listed above may not be relevant to your discipline and the information in your proposal is not required to be in the order listed above. Whatever format you use for your proposal, please make sure all of the requested information is supplied, all questions are answered and that this information is easily identified.

PROPOSED WORK or GOAL: This section should answer the question "What is the goal of the project?" Many proposals can present this information in one or two paragraphs.

INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND or WHY?: This section should explain the rationale for your project and describe any preliminary preparations you have made before undertaking the project. You should briefly summarize any work you, previous students or your advisor has already done related to the proposed project (such as a directed study on the topic, library research, etc.), any planning you have done to lay the groundwork for your project, or explain briefly what led you to want to undertake this project. You might also include information about discussions you may have had with your advisor about the project, and describe why you think your project is important and interesting.

The committee is composed of faculty and students from all disciplines. The introduction should be written so a layperson understands the context of the work you are proposing to do. If an introduction is too technical, you might be asked for clarifications about the project.

METHODOLOGY or HOW AM I GOING TO GET THERE: In this section, you should describe in general terms what you propose to do. The committee is interested in seeing a methodology (if appropriate) or an outline of the proposed work. How are you going to complete the aims of the project? References to known methodologies are appropriate in this section. We are not looking for you to copy what has been done in the previous literature, but instead to describe the basic outline. Discussions with your advisor may be helpful to make sure that your project is well designed.

If a literature review is part of the proposed project, it would be appropriate to include a tentative reading list. This list is meant to help guide the research project and make sure that all of the sources are available through the library or easily accessible from other sources.

** NOTE ** All research that involves the use of human research participants (e.g., interviews, experiments, questionnaires) MUST receive approval from the college's Institutional Review Board (IRB). Research that involves the use of animals must receive prior approval from the college's IACUC panel. Please see

the FURSCA website for links to the appropriate committee's website. If a project requires IRB approval, funding will not be released until IRB approval has been forwarded to the FURSCA committee.

PROPOSED OUTCOMES or WHAT DO YOU WISH TO GAIN FROM THIS PROJECT: You should clearly state what the outcomes of the project are. These outcome should be unique to your project, and will be determined by you and your faculty mentor. If there is a specific way in which the "success" of your project will be measured, you should indicate this as well. Try to be realistic and specific with goals, taking into account the time frame of the study.

While we do not require you to write a thesis or give a formal presentation, we encourage students to present the results of their work in a variety of venues.

TIMEFRAME or TIMELINE – SUMMER PROPOSALS ONLY: In the summer research proposals, a timeline that outlines your short terms goals and the approximate time needed to reach them should be included. For most projects, a week to week timeline is preferable. Two weeks is about the smallest amount of time that you should include in your timeline. You should present a feasible plan to convince the FURSCA advisory committee that you know how to go about getting research/project results.

The timeline is not included in the three page limit.

REFERENCES: References should be in the style that is appropriate to your discipline. For example, chemistry students should use ACS guidelines, while psychology students should use APA style. Students in the Fine Arts and Humanities should use MLA style. If you are in doubt, please ask your faculty advisor or the Director of FURSCA for help.

The body of the proposal, *excluding references and timeline*, should be no longer than three pages (summer only - follow limits suggested in online application for Semester Grants). Font size should be 10 pt or greater.

Copies of successful proposals that have been funded through FURSCA in the past are available on the FURSCA website or through the FURSCA office. Please make sure to adhere to the guidelines laid out in this document when you are preparing your proposal.

SIGNATURE PAGE

A copy of the signature page is included at the end of this document. The signature page gives FURSCA permission to ascertain that the student is in good standing with the College. Students who are not in good standing are not

eligible for FURSCA funding.

By signing the signature page, the faculty sponsor agrees that they have read the proposal and that they are willing to work with the student on this project.

The student must give the your faculty sponsor and the chairperson or director of the Department, Center or Institute that is most closely related to the project a copy of the proposal a week or more in advance for review. **Contact these people well ahead of the FURSCA deadline so you can find out when they would like to see the proposal**. The collection of this signature indicates that the student's proposed project meets previously established standards for scholarship in the particular field.

A paper copy of the signature page must be delivered to the Coordinator, Seeley Mudd Center, room 108, ext. 0833, by the faculty deadline.

SUBMITTING THE PROPOSAL The application process for any FURSCA research grant is completed through an online application. The application site can be found at http://www.albion.edu/fursca. For Summer Grants, the cover sheet and the body of the proposal, including references, should be submitted as a single pdf file. For help in saving your files, please contact IT.

The application website will NOT accept any format other than pdf.

Your application is not considered complete until the signature page has been received by the Coordinator. Note that the deadline for the signature page is the same as the Faculty Deadline. Late proposals WILL NOT be considered for funding.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Director – Dr. Ian MacInnes
(517) 629–0259
imacinnes@albion.edu

Coordinator – Starr E. Weaver Mudd Learning Center/Stockwell Memorial Library, Room 108
(517) 629–0833
sweaver@albion.edu

FURSCA Research Program Cover Page for Summer Grants:

Name of applicant_____Date:_____ Graduation Year_____ Major_____
Advisor_____
Advisor's Department_____
Title of Project_____
_____

Grant Period: Summer start and end dates?_____

Abstract. Please provide a short (100 words or less) abstract that describes the work that you are proposing in layman's terms. The abstract should be understandable by a general audience.

Does this project require IRB or IACUC approval? [ ] YES [ ] NO

If yes, has approval been granted? [ ] YES [ ] NO (If you answer no to this question, please explain.)

Does this project require chemicals or biological agents? [ ] YES [ ] NO If yes,

Have you received approval to order these chemicals? [ ] YES [ ] NO
BUDGET SUMMARY
Amount(s) Requested

Total_____ Please make sure the cover page does not exceed 1 page.
_____ For each line requested, briefly explain the purpose _____
_____

FURSCA Research Program Signature Page for Summer and Semester Grants

Signature Page for:_____ (Student name – please print)

I have read the Guidelines for Students and agree to meet the stated requirements. I certify that I am a currently enrolled student at Albion College. I authorize the Student Affairs Office to release information about my cumulative grade point average (CGPA) and my academic and social standing to FURSCA's Coordinator. This information will be used only to verify that I have a minimum 2.70 CGPA and am not on academic or social probation.

Signature:_____Date:_____ (Student Applicant)

Student ID Number_____

Expected Graduation Date (month/year):_____

I have read the student's proposal and the Guidelines for Project Sponsors and agree to supervise this student's project.

Signature:_____Date:_____
(Faculty Sponsor)

My signature indicates that the proposed project meets previously established standards for student scholarship in this field and is worthy of FURSCA funding.

Signature:_____Date:_____
(Department Chair/Institute or Center Director)

The applicant must return this completed page to FURSCA's Coordinator at the FURSCA office, Seeley−Mudd Center, Room 108 by the deadline indicated on the FURSCA website.