OFFICE OF STUDENT RESEARCH
Illinois State University

The FIREbird Program 2023/2024
(Faculty-mentored Independent Research Experience)

Purpose

The objective of the FIREbird program is to engage *undergraduates* in intensive, faculty-mentored research that they might not otherwise pursue due to time constraints, the need for research supplies, or access to research materials. OSR aims to fund diverse students from a variety of disciplines across campus to reflect the richness of research, scholarly creativity, and innovation at Illinois State University. A portion of the funds will be dedicated Arts and Humanities, Education, Sciences, Applied Sciences and Technology.

Eligibility

Students must be undergraduate students in good standing at Illinois State University during the time of their research grant. Groups of students working with faculty mentor(s) on the same research project may apply collectively for one research grant. Priority will be given to students/faculty mentors who have not previously received OSR Research Support.

Students must have at least one faculty mentor who must be a tenured/tenure track professor at Illinois State. Faculty mentors agree to assist the student with the research project and must submit a brief Faculty Mentorship Plan.

Amount of Funding and Allowable Expenses

The FIREbird Program provides up to $3000 (summer); $1500 (Academic Year, fall or spring Semester) of funding may be used for:
- student researcher employment (at the rate of $15/hr.),
- reimbursement of supplies that directly support the student's research project,
- travel essential to conduct/complete an independent research project,
- equipment needed to conduct research, but note that:
    - All durable equipment/software purchased with OSR funds is University Property and must be returned to the University at the end of the grant program.
    - Requests for equipment/software must be accompanied by a letter from the faculty mentor that confirms that the 1) equipment is not already available on campus, 2) provides a rationale for the purchase, and 3) plans for future use of the software/equipment. *See the notes in the Budget Template and Justification below.*
    - Once equipment is purchased it must be tagged as university property and the student must fill out a loan agreement.

FIREbird funds may <u>not</u> be used for:
- Faculty mentors' salary, expenses, travel, or supplies.
- Expenses covered by another grant program (e.g. A FEEDER grant, faculty grant)
- Costs associated with traditional class projects, class assignments, or any activities that are associated with a traditional campus "in the classroom" course
- Supplemental funding for study abroad trips, student teaching, training, or internships.

Students who can be funded with faculty grant funds should not apply for the FIREbird Program.

Unused funds over $100 must be returned to OSR.

Deadlines

For Spring funding: Last Friday in January
For Summer funding: First Friday in March
For Fall funding: Third Friday in September

Application Requirements

Applications for the FIREbird Program must be developed *by student researchers in collaboration with their faculty mentors*.

Students will submit:
I. A completed application form in https://ilstu.infoready4.com/#
II. Proposal. Must follow the following outline (1500 word limit, inclusive of references.)

    A. Student Name/Email/Major

    B. Faculty Mentor Name/Email/Department or School

    C. Project Title

    D. Project Description. The project description should be written for a non-specialist audience and must include the following sections:
        1. What is the goal of the project (background, objectives, and significance)?
        2. What is your research question or hypothesis?
        3. What methods will the student use to investigate this issue?
        4. What are the anticipated outcomes of the project?
        5. What is the significance of the project?
        6. What is the schedule for the project and use of funds (they should be used within the term)?
        7. References Cited
III. Personal statement (300 words max) from each student researcher stating why participating in research experience is of interest to them, what they hope to gain from the experience, and how

they plan to balance this research experience with other commitments they have (other employment, classes, etc).

IV. Budget and Budget justification. Please provide an itemized list of all anticipated purchases with individual costs and a short explanation/justification for each expense (*See Budget Template below.*)

V. Faculty Approval and Mentorship Plan. Once these are submitted, an email prompt will be automatically sent to the faculty mentor asking them to "Review" the application. At that time, the mentor will be asked to:
- Approve the project
- Upload a Mentorship Plan (See attached file)

Note: Faculty mentors must also affirm that the proposed student research project is not supported under a faculty research grant (student awards must not supplant faculty grant funds that provide student research support).

Budget and Justification Template

For each research expense, list the cost of the item to the nearest whole dollar and provide a justification for the item.

	Item	Cost	Justification
		$	
		$	
		$	
Total Cost		$	
Amount Requested*		$	

*Maximum FIREbird award amount is $1500/semester or $3000/summer.

Please list other funding requested and received for this project:

Amount Requested	Amount Received	Comments/Notes
$	$	
$	$	

NOTES:

1. Student who request funds for research incentives (i.e. gift cards for research participants) must also include a completed **Incentive Card Request Form** found on the Research Incentives webpage. This form must be submitted via email to Barb at bjrexro@ilstu.edu. IRB approval is required before incentives will be released.

2. If equipment or software is requested, please attach a letter from the faculty mentor that includes:

   a. Confirmation that the requested equipment and software is not already available via [The Help Center Service Catalog](#), [Milner Library's Technology Loan Service](#), the Graduate School, [The Digital Innovation, Graphics, and Gaming Studio (DIGGS)](#), or other campus office.

   b. Purchase justification and plan for long-term use of the equipment/software:
      i. Why should this equipment/software be purchased?
      ii. Would other students find it useful? And if so, where would the equipment/software be most accessible to those students?
      iii. Who will be responsible for maintenance/updates?
      iv. Who will be responsible for managing borrowing/use privileges?

Evaluation

Proposals, personal statements, and mentorship plans will be evaluated by OSR and faculty advisors according to the following criteria:

1. Is research project, methods, and significance of the project (to the discipline) clearly stated?
2. Is it clear what research methods or creative processes the student will be engaged in?
3. Are the anticipated outcomes of the project adequately described and likely to be accomplished?
4. Is the project feasible in the allotted time (e.g. summer or semester)?
5. Is the project well-written?
6. Does the budget adequately reflect the project's goals?
7. Is it clear how this project will be beneficial for the student?
8. Is the mentorship plan submitted by the faculty member adequate to the skills needed and expectations for the project?
9. Does the mentor indicate why *this* student would benefit most from the grant?

Access to Funds

Students will access funds through their Department/School. Lead staff will assist students with purchases, student employment forms, or reimbursement of [travel expenses](#).

Post Award Requirements

Students who receive the award are expected to:
- participate in online research and professional skills development sessions with other awardees (approximately 6 hours total over the course of the summer/semester); and,
- present the results of their research during University Research Symposium or other venue appropriate to the project.

Faculty mentors will be asked to submit
- financial accounting of expenditures
- a list of student outcomes (papers, presentations, publications)

The report on research expenditures and student outcomes is due by January 15th for Summer and Fall grants; and May 31st for Spring and Academic Year grants. Submission of the report is required to maintain eligibility for this, and other programs sponsored by OSR.

Scholarly outcomes resulting from the project must be noted in the faculty member's annual productivity report (e.g. Watermark) and tagged as including undergraduate students. These accounting measures are necessary to help OSR track the impact of the Program and to seek future funding.