



THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA SYSTEM

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH
PROGRAM AWARD REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
FISCAL YEAR 2026

Spring 2025

University of North Carolina System
Raleigh, North Carolina

UNC UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH PROGRAM AWARD

FY (2026) Request for Proposals (RFP) for the UNC Undergraduate Research Program Award Introduction

The University of North Carolina Undergraduate Research Program Award is a grant mechanism to provide funding to universities or consortia of universities within the UNC System to support and enhance undergraduate research (UR). Undergraduate research, defined by the Council on Undergraduate Research as “an inquiry or investigation conducted by an undergraduate student that makes an original intellectual or creative contribution to the discipline,” is recognized as a high-impact practice.¹ Therefore, undergraduate research is aligned with the UNC System’s mission to “impart the skills necessary for individuals to lead responsible, productive, and personally satisfying lives through research, scholarship, and creative activities, which advance knowledge and enhance the educational process .” Specifically, undergraduate research supports the System’s teaching mission of applying multiple approaches to student learning while allowing students and faculty to pursue scholarly activities of the highest intellectual caliber.

RFP Focus and Scope

The UNC System’s Undergraduate Research Council (URC) has identified three priority areas of focus for this RFP: Course-based Undergraduate Research Experiences (CUREs), Digital Learning, and Professional Development. The areas are broadly defined, and the URC welcomes proposals related to the scope of these three areas, either separately or in combination. Each proposal should include an appropriate and thorough assessment plan. ***Successful proposals will articulate a clear plan to have continued impact after the grant period and expand its reach and effectiveness.*** Competitive proposals will include inter-departmental and/or inter institutional collaboration (see rubric). All topic areas are welcome. Suggested topics include one or more of the following:

CUREs: Development or expansion of novel and/or innovative curricula and pedagogical practices that substantively include UR, recognizing that the goal of CUREs is to enhance research skills development toward the expansion of access to UR opportunities.

Digital Learning: Development or expansion of novel or innovative methods that include digital learning tools in support of undergraduate research by distance learning students (e.g., online learning)

UNC System UR Summit: Design and deliver a system-wide professional development conference, workshop, or innovative instructor-focused experience that achieves one or more of the following goals: broadens use of undergraduate research best practices, expand awareness and competitiveness of faculty and instructors seeking institutional or external undergraduate research funding, and/or develops student research and presentation skills.

¹Kuh, G. and O’Donnell (2013) *Ensuring Quality & Taking High-Impact Practices to Scale*, AAC&U: Washington, DC.

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Award Information

The maximum budget for these single year awards is \$35,000. Funding constraints may require budget modifications for projects recommended for funding. Funds will be available and transferred to the institution as soon as possible after award notification and are subject to state fund regulations, which include expenditure by the end of the fiscal year (June 30, 2026). Institutional spending policies may dictate an earlier deadline. All awards are non-recurring state funds and cannot be used for food for meetings or conferences, out-of-country travel, or tuition and fees for any undergraduate or graduate students. Gift cards are discouraged as proposed budget items. Consult your campus budget office for guidance on allowable costs from state appropriated funds.

Guidelines for Proposal Submission

Proposals will be accepted from any institution in the UNC System. Although inter-institutional collaboration is not a requirement; proposals that significantly involve two or more UNC institutions are encouraged and have the potential for a higher overall score and priority funding.

Each institution may submit one proposal, and ***the Undergraduate Research (UR) Coordinator of the lead institution must submit all proposals*** to the UNC System Office. Proposals are due by **5 pm on April 1, 2025**; UR Coordinators at the institutions may wish to set an earlier institution-level deadline to ensure sufficient time to evaluate and submit all proposals. Proposal writers should contact their respective UR Coordinators early in the process to confirm the internal process and deadline to submit the proposal(s).

UR Coordinators will submit their proposals to the following link:

<https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/ad7568e3bc5c41039e2e23b62df43539>

Proposal submissions must include a **single pdf file**. Please use margins no smaller than one inch (all sides) and font of either Calibri or Times New Roman, and size of either 11 or 12. The application must include the following:

- **Front matter** (1 page) including project title; institution name; principal investigator name, title, and contact information; unit/department; names of collaborating institutions; primary focus area
(CUREs, Inclusive Excellence, or Digital Learning); name and contact information for co-PI(s) if applicable; names and contact information for key personnel; and amount requested.
- **Project description** including a detailed description of the proposed project (no longer than 1500 words); expected outcomes and assessment methods for the project; and timeline for project activities. (Note: Projects must include an assessment/evaluation and support for such a plan is an allowable cost). References, if used, may be included in the footnotes using a smaller font.
- **Letters of support** including a maximum of three letters of support are allowed and should be from constituents close to the proposal (e.g. Dept Heads/Chairs, Unit Heads, others contributing to the success of the proposal). A letter from the Chief Research Officer is allowed but not required.

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- **Budget** with accompanying justification (up to 600 words) specifically describing how the funds will be used. Please include any matching funds.

Timeline

- April 1, 2025: Proposals due at 5 pm
- Week of May 26, 2025: Award notification
- Note: Funds dispersed to award recipients once certified and received by the UNC System.
- August 24, 2026: Final progress report due. Awardees will be contacted with progress report submission instructions.

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Proposal Review and Evaluation

Proposals will be reviewed by a panel of university representatives, UNC System Office staff, and possibly external reviewers. Proposals will be evaluated using eight criteria.

Evaluation and Assessment Rubric

CATEGORY	HIGH RATING (2 points)	AVERAGE RATING (1 point)	LOW RATING (0 point)	Weight
Project goals	The proposal provides a clear, concise description of the project, includes all relevant information, and supports the RFP objectives.	The proposal describes the project but is missing some relevant information in support of RFP objectives.	The proposal does not clearly describe the project and does not include all relevant information.	2.5
Project design: Data quality	The application lists all relevant data sources and elements, and those data sources are comprehensive and high-quality. The application includes mechanisms for post grant evaluation.	The application includes a description of the data sources that are available to evaluate the project, but the quality and comprehensiveness of those data sources is somewhat limited and/or unclear.	There is little administrative or project-related outcomes data described to evaluate the project.	5
Scalability	The project includes plans to impact a large population of students or other members of the university community.	The project focuses on a specific group of students or university community with the potential to scale with limited description for that potential.	The project is limited to a small number of students or individuals and does not include plans for scaling.	5
Research design and evaluation	The proposal presents an opportunity for rigorous evaluation using a quasi-experimental design or a statistical model with a rich set of covariates.	The proposal presents an opportunity for evaluation using primarily descriptive research methods with a limited set of covariates.	It is not clear whether the proposal presents an opportunity for evaluation using rigorous research methods.	5
Collaboration	The initiative is proposed by three or more institutions within the UNC and/or NCCC Systems OR two or more interinstitutional departments.	The initiative is proposed by two or more institutions within the UNC and/or NCCC Systems OR two or more interinstitutional departments.	The proposal does not illustrate collaboration	2.5

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Sustainability	The proposal contains mechanisms and/or funding possibilities to continue past the period covered by the RFP	The proposal contains limited mechanisms to continue the proposal past the funding period.	The proposal does not plan for sustainability or offers only minor changes to a funded proposal submitted within the previous 3 years.	2.5
Research contribution	The proposed evaluation represents an opportunity to make a significant contribution to research impacting student success and student learning outcomes.	The proposed evaluation will contribute some new information to research impacting student success and student learning outcomes.	The proposed evaluation will make a minor contribution to student success research.	2.5
Budget	Budget is complete and contains all required information. Budget is cost effective and linked to activities and outcomes.	Budget is included but incomplete. Budget is loosely linked or not linked to activities and outcomes.	Budget is not included	2.5

Inquiries

Questions regarding this solicitation may be directed to Tuan Tran, Ph.D., Jennifer Gerz- Escandón, Ph.D., or Michelle Solér via contact information listed below.

Tuan Tran, Ph.D.

Chair, Undergraduate Research Council
 Director, Undergraduate Research (REDE)
 East Carolina University
ttran@ecu.edu

Jennifer Gerz-Escandón, Ph.D.

Associate Vice President for Academic Programs and Research University
 Division of Academic Affairs
 University of North Carolina System Office
jlgerzescandon@northcarolina.edu

Michelle Solér, Ph.D., M.B.A.

Associate Vice President for Undergraduate Programs
 Division of Academic Affairs
 University of North Carolina System Office
mlsoler@northcarolina.edu