URCA FAQs for Students

1. What is the format and deadline for submission? Do I have to submit reference letters?  
   URCA Award forms are included in the online URCA application. Students should have prepared a  
narrative and a budget justification in collaboration with a mentor before beginning their application, as  
described in the URCA Awards Application Instructions. No reference forms are required; submitted  
applications will be sent via email for mentor approval.

2. I received an URCA Award last year. Can I apply again?  
   We are accepting applications from those who have received an award previously. However, we will  
   check to make sure that you have submitted a report and complied with the presentation requirement  
   for the past award before we consider your application.

3. How much money can I receive?  
   There is a $1,500 maximum per investigator, $2,000 maximum per project, with undergraduate  
   assistantships between $500-1,000 each person. Honors College students may apply for additional funds  
of up to $500. However, an assistantship will not be higher than $1,000. You can use this calculator tool  
to determine the maximum budget for which you are eligible (you must download the calculator in order  
to use this tool).

4. What is the process for applying for an URCA?  
   - The first step is for the student and mentor to read the URCA application instructions- which  
     can be located [here](#).  
   - Next the student(s) and mentor(s) should work together to write the project description and  
     budget request. It is important to adhere to the character and word count limits. We suggest  
     that you compose these in Microsoft Word and then copy and paste the information into the  
     Smartsheet Application Form.  
   - Once the project information is prepared, the student will submit their URCA application on the  
     link provided on our [website](#).  
   - After the application is submitted, the application will be sent to your mentor’s email via  
     Smartsheet for review.

5. How do I know what my category is? Why is it important?  
   Most categories are clear, however, some are not as clear. For example, nursing is usually not  
   Biomedical, but Social Science. Some Biology proposals are Biomedical while others are STEM (Science,  
   Technology, Engineering and Mathematics). You could discuss with your mentor or talk to Director of  
   Undergraduate Research, [Dr. Tuan Tran](#), for clarification. It is important because the proposals are  
   reviewed by discipline-specific reviewers.
6. How can I be sure that my application has been accepted and approved by my mentor?
   • After submitting an application a confirmation screen will appear, confirming that the application was submitted.
   • After your mentor approves your application, you will receive an email notifying you of the approval. If your mentor declines to approve the application, you will receive an email notifying you to contact your mentor.
   • If you submit an application that has exceeded the character count limits, you will receive an email notifying you that the application will not be reviewed. You may then revise and submit a new application that adheres to the character count limits. If you feel that you received this in error, please contact Heather Christman at christmanh14@ecu.edu immediately.

7. I submitted my application before the deadline, but my mentor has not yet approved it. Will my application still be reviewed?
   Yes. As long as your application was submitted before the deadline your application will be considered for funding.

8. When will I find out if my application has been awarded?
   Each URCA application is carefully reviewed by URCA committee members. Decisions are typically sent to student approximately three weeks after the application due date.

9. How can these funds be used?
   The short answer is that the approved budget is provided in the award notification and the funds should be used as indicated in the budget. The budget can be adjusted with approval from the Office of Undergraduate Research by emailing Heather Christman (christmanh14@ecu.edu).

   The long answer is that these are state funds and must be used in accordance with that policy. There are some purchases that are specifically not allowable from state funds. Examples include the following:
   • Alcoholic beverages, “setups”, drinks, or food items;
   • Contributions and donations;
   • Food, coffee, tea, drinks, bottled water, candy, snacks, break refreshments, etc. except for those provided under University and state travel regulations. The State Budget Manual gives specific requirements and limitations for internal and external conferences.
   • Gifts or items of recognition
   • Paper products (cups, napkins, plates, utensils, etc.);
   • Personal clothing items or t-shirts which are not part of required uniforms, safety related, or required program-related;
   • Personalized or personal use items (Kleenex, hand sanitizer, desk name plates, personal memberships, wireless routers for home use, etc.).
   • Pre-payments;
   • Student registration fees unless on official state business;
   • Rental fees for non-State owned buildings for retreats, meetings, etc.
10. Can I use the funds to pay other students or professionals? Generally, these funds cannot be used to pay others for work contributing to a project.

11. I have already paid for project materials, can I be reimbursed? Due to the administrative burden of processing reimbursements, we highly discourage students using these funds to reimburse themselves for project related purchases they made prior to receiving the award. Departments may deny these types of requests.

12. I was awarded an Undergraduate Assistantship, but I have not received these payments. What should I do? Please reach out to your mentor and the departmental funds administrator that was listed on your application. These must be paid out by the time you graduate or by June 30th, whichever is first.

13. How are spending deadlines determined?
   • Students are asked to choose which semester they will be intending to work on their project. Extensions can be granted, but cannot be granted past the students graduation date or June 30th (whichever comes first).
   • These are state funds, therefore the June 30th deadline is firm. **The June 30th deadline is the date that all expenses must be finalized.**
   • The actual purchasing deadline will be determined by the purchase type (technology, University Storeroom, etc.) and the purchasing method (Port, ProCard, etc.). Please contact Materials Management for information on specific purchasing deadlines.
   • When completing Undergraduate Research Assistantship Contracts, the contract and EPAF will need to have been properly routed and completed in accordance with the HR deadlines to have all funds paid out by June 30th or the student’s graduation date ( whichever comes first). Questions regarding Assistantship Contracts should be directed to ugassistantships@ecu.edu. Questions regarding EPAFs should be directed to Keisha Brown (brownla@ecu.edu) .
   • Any unspent funds after June 30th are not returned to our office, they are returned to the state.

14. Can I have an extension to spend the funds? If you would like to request an extension, please contact Heather Christman at christmanh14@ecu.edu. **Extensions cannot be granted past June 30th.**

15. What if I have additional questions? Please contact Heather Christman at christmanh14@ecu.edu.