

URCA FAQs for Mentors and Administrators

1. What is the process for applying for an URCA?

- The student(s) and mentor should review the URCA application instructions, which can be found under URCA Application Materials on the [URCA webpage](#).
- The student(s) and mentor 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 (see URCA Application Materials on the [URCA webpage](#)).
- Once the project information is prepared, the student will submit their URCA application in the Smartsheet Application Form (see URCA Application Materials on the [URCA webpage](#)).
- After the application is submitted, Smartsheet will route the application to your email (the mentor) for review. If you choose to decline approval, the student will be notified that their application was not approved and to contact their mentor. If approved, the student will receive notification that the approval has been submitted.

2. My student submitted an application, but I didn't approve it before the application deadline, is it too late?

No, it is not too late. The application will still be reviewed, but we will not be able to award a project until the mentor submits the approval.

3. How much funding can be requested per project?

Undergraduate Assistantships are capped at \$1000 per student (\$1500 maximum per investigator, \$2000 maximum per project, with Undergraduate Assistantships between \$500-1000 each investigator). Honors College students may apply for additional funds of up to \$500. However, an Assistantship will not be higher than \$1000. Refer to the table below:

Number of Investigators	Member of Honor's College	Assistantship Max Allowed	Total Allowed
1	No	\$1000	\$1500
1	Yes	\$1000	\$2000
2	No	\$1000/investigator	\$2000
2	Yes	\$1000/investigator	\$2500

4. What is the review process?

All applications go through a three-step review process. These reviews are completed by the URCA Review Committee.

- **Step 1: Character and word counts.** If the project description or budget justification is over the character count, the student will be notified that they must make the appropriate changes and resubmit their application in order to have their project reviewed, if time allows to resubmit by the deadline. Do assist your student and review the character limits before you approve their application.

- **Step 2: Compliance of budget items to state funds policy.** Please see Questions 9-13 for more information on allowed expenses.
- **Step 3: URCA Committee Review.** It is a competitive award. Each category within URCA (Biomedical, Humanities, Social Science, and STEM) is reviewed by a subcommittee composed of faculty members with expertise in each respective category. They review the project description and budget justifications and then rate the projects. While we wish we could fund every student project, we do not have the funds to do so.

5. When will URCA funds be disbursed?

URCA applications are due the last Friday of September and the last Friday of January. The URCA Review Committee makes every attempt to have reviews completed within three weeks of the application deadline and to have the notifications sent within three business days after final reviews are completed. The funds are transferred to the project's FOAP shortly after the notifications are sent, but this is dependent on the timeliness having the ORG assigned.

6. How are URCA funds disbursed?

Each project (consisting of 1 or 2 student investigators) needs to be assigned an ORG. Once the ORG has been assigned, please forward the information to our office. **All funds will be transferred into the 111110 FUND.** When we make the transfer it will be transferred to 111110-XXXXXX(assigned ORG)-72000-0000.

7. How are spending deadlines determined?

- To allow some flexibility in spending, students can choose which semester (in the URCA application) 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 university 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.

8. How do I process an Undergraduate Research Assistantship Contract?

- The Undergraduate Assistantship policy can be found [here](#). Students must have a minimum GPA of 2.5 (which is also a requirement of all URCA recipients). They must also have completed at least 30 semester hours of course work and be enrolled at

least half-time in an on-campus ECU undergraduate degree program (minimum 6 semester hours fall/spring semesters).

- The department (**typically a department administrator**) will be responsible for completing the **Undergraduate Assistantship Contract** and submitting the EPAF.
- The student will also need to complete the appropriate I-9 and direct deposit forms with the student employment office.
- An example of a completed contract and can be found on the final page of this document.

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 Dr. Tuan Tran (trant@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. What is the participant incentive purchasing policy?

Funds may be approved for participant incentives. For one-time incentive payments of \$50 or less to an individual in a calendar year, or participant payments for which the research protocol, costs, or technical issues preclude the use of Greenphire debit cards, you must enter your information into the [Greenphire Exceptions Request](#) form. The service request will process your request, route it for approval, and establish a project-specific folder in the Online Participant Log where participant payments for the approved study are recorded. Upon approval of the request, a project-specific link will be emailed to you. Use the link to record the payments made to participants in your study. The Online Participant Log serves as the institutional record for payments made outside of Greenphire, and all payments to participants in any form other than a Greenphire debit card must be recorded in the Online Participant Log. The Online Participant Log replaces the paper logs that investigators previously had to submit annually to Accounts Payable. All payments made to participants must comply with human participants protection policies and guidelines.

11. Can I use URCA funds to pay other students or professionals?

Generally, these funds cannot be used to pay others for work/service contributing to a project.

12. My student already paid for project materials. Can the student 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.

Any additional questions? Please direct them to Dr. Tuan Tran at trant@ecu.edu.