

2026 SUMMER UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

Request for Proposals

University of South Alabama undergraduate students from all academic disciplines are invited to apply for the Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship (SURF) Program. Administered by the Office of Undergraduate Research, the SURF program offers support for undergraduates to engage in scholarly research projects or creative activities under the direction of faculty mentors. Fellows will receive stipends in the amount of \$2500, to be disbursed in installments contingent upon submission of program benchmarks.

Important dates

Application deadline	March 1
Award notifications	April 10
Orientation Meeting	May 6
Program starts	May 18
Program ends	July 24
Undergraduate Research Symposium	October 22

Eligibility

Current University of South Alabama undergraduate students from all majors who will be enrolled in Fall 2026 are eligible. Preference will be given to applicants in their final two years of undergraduate study who have not participated in SURF in prior years, though students in their first year and former participants may apply in case additional spots are available. Generally, a grade point average of 3.0 or higher is required, with flexibility if warranted by unusual circumstances. A South faculty mentor must be identified prior to application, and a maximum of two students with the same mentor may receive awards.

Expectations

Awardees will be expected to attend an orientation session May 6th. Details regarding program administration and benchmarks for stipend payments will be provided there. Training in laboratory safety and/or responsible conduct of research will be required. Summer requirements include attendance at mandatory SURF one-day professional development days to be held 5/29/26 and 7/17/26. Generally, a time commitment to the project of at least 20 hours per week throughout the 10-week program is expected. Awardees must present their completed projects as posters or other exhibitions as fitting their disciplines in the Undergraduate Research Symposium.

Notes to student proposer: Proposal writing is an important part of the scholarly process. Obtaining funding for research or creative projects is a vital part of the work of faculty members as well as for scholars and researchers outside academia. Agencies, foundations, and other funding sources generally have strict guidelines for proposals to their programs. Those guidelines address expectations consistent with the program goals, as well as specifics such as length and format of proposals. The proposals are checked for compliance with those guidelines and are also reviewed based on a set of stated criteria. Reviewers are usually experts in the field of study. For the 2026 SURF program, the review criteria are listed and discussed below. Make sure you understand the guidelines and criteria and adjust your proposal to score well. Use the included worksheet table to prepare for submitting your application in JagSPOT. Pay attention to the descriptions in the worksheet and address everything that is requested.

Criteria for Proposal Review

Quality and clarity of writing

- It is of utmost importance that your proposal communicates your project clearly. Don't consider the length limit a goal for how long it *has* to be. Proposers usually find it challenging to fit their proposal into the length limit, but it's a valuable exercise to fine-tune your communication to create a compelling case within the space allotted. Try to avoid technical jargon, especially in the introduction, so that it can be understood by reviewers who are not experts in your field. Make sure it's free of distracting spelling, grammar, and usage errors.

Creativity, originality, and/or impact

- A defining characteristic of scholarly research or creative work is the generation of new knowledge, new approaches, or original perspectives. This distinguishes these activities from your typical educational studies in which you obtain knowledge discovered or created by others. Proposals for support should also demonstrate that the new knowledge will impact, benefit, or advance society. Sometimes the benefit is short-term, but often it's a contribution toward a large long-term objective.

Rationale and organization of project

- Accomplishing a substantial project goal in a 10-week period requires thoughtful advance organization. You may find that the schedule does not go as planned, but you should nevertheless present a reasonable plan in your proposal. The work you plan to do should be obviously associated with the support of your thesis or testing of your hypothesis.

Qualification of student to perform project

- Ultimately, a fellowship is an investment in you, and your project is a vehicle for your professional development. Your proposal should convince reviewers that *you* will be able to achieve the project objectives in the 10-week period. This criterion will be evaluated from a holistic assessment of your proposal, including your reference letters.

Appropriateness of project for summer term

- It is likely that your project is part of a larger work that you or your mentor have already begun and/or will continue beyond the summer, but you should present a cohesive plan for the portion of the work that will be accomplished during the SURF program.

Commitment and engagement of mentor

- The guidance and support of a mentor is arguably the most important benefit of an undergraduate research project. Because the SURF program is an investment in your development, reviewers will look for evidence that your mentor is engaged in your project and committed to being available to work with you during the summer.