

Submitting a Successful Small Grant Proposal to URSA

DO and DON'TS

DO – apply to IRB or IACUC

1. If the project requires IRB or IACUC approval, this should be obtained prior to the submission if possible. The application must be in process at the time of grant submission to URSA.
2. The investigators should have completed all required IRB or IACUC training prior to grant submission. Student training may be delayed, while the proposal should incorporate the student training as a definite step in the research protocols and time line in order to ensure it will be accomplished in a timely fashion.

DO – incorporate safety training and procedures

1. The safety of student participants is a paramount concern in mentoring student research and creative activity. This is particularly important in laboratory research, off-site and field research, and in travel for research or presentation. Include a brief description of any training the students will receive, and of measures taken to prevent accidents and injuries.

DO – explain the role of graduate students and other research staff

1. The purpose of URSA funding is to provide opportunities specifically to undergraduates. If undergraduates will be working on a team with graduate students, postdoctoral researchers, or staff provide a brief clarification of roles, pointing out the ways the undergraduates will be developing leadership and independence.

DO – explain the role of the undergraduate researchers in publication and presentation

1. Presentation at Scholars Week is required, and should be incorporated in the proposal.
2. Even if the faculty mentor is planning to act as senior author, plans for publication and off-site presentation by undergraduates should be incorporated if this is part of the plan.
3. Plans for student publication and presentation should be realistic.
4. Funds for student travel to off-campus meetings may be incorporated in the proposal.
5. If an undergraduate researcher has plans to apply to graduate school in a field related to the research project, this will strengthen the application.

DO – outline student qualifications

1. An URSA grant application does not require selection of research students in advance. If the student participants have already been determined, do describe their backgrounds, interests and qualifications.

DO – apply for a team project or matching funds

1. URSA encourages team projects, including those carrying course credit.

2. If the project is already grant funded or if matching funds are available from a grant or a department, this will enhance the proposal.

DO – request assistance from the VPRs office and attend grants training

1. If you have question request assistance. The staff of the VPRs office, including the compliance officer are happy to assist with the technical aspects of a proposal. Do call the URSA director if you think a meeting would assist you in framing a proposal.
2. DO attend grants training. URSA grants are competitive and not all are funded. Better strategy and writing can only help

DON'T – include faculty or graduate student travel or expenses, including supplies

1. URSA funds may not be used for faculty or graduate student travel. Be certain the proposal clarifies who will travel or utilize expendable supplies, or how equipment will enhance undergraduate participation.
2. Travel expenses need to be clearly justified in the proposal.

DON'T – clip sections of proposals to other funders without explaining undergraduate roles

1. A common problem with URSA proposals, particularly in STEM fields, is the principal investigator has utilized a methods section or justification for another grant proposal and has not clarified the role of the undergraduate researchers funded by URSA. Using an URSA grant to incorporate undergraduates in an externally funded project is highly desirable, and enhances the student research experience.

DON'T – apply for a grant that is for meeting attendance without research participation

1. You may request travel funds to a meeting to present research, and the support may be from a compilation of funding sources.
2. URSA does not, however, fund student groups traveling to professional meetings if the students are not presenting research or competing in design competitions.

DON'T – assume the reviewers are familiar with the details of the methodology

1. As URSA uses internal Baylor proposal reviewers, they may not be fully familiar with methods within subfields. We do not have a national level pool of specialists available. The reviewers will be generally credentialed in fields like social science or biochemistry. Be certain the specifics of the methods are clear for a more general academic reader.
2. Do assume that one or more of the readers will be a successful undergraduate mentor with a record of productive student supervision. The reviewers will know whether the students are properly incorporated in the project or not.