

UROP FAQs:

Q: Does my citizenship/immigration/visa status matter when applying for a UROP fellowship?

A: No, the UROP is a fellowship, which like a scholarship is disbursed at the discretion of the University, not the US government (e.g. federal financial aid programs)

Q: Are project proposals judged on how “impressive” they are? (i.e. how ambitious, beneficial, exciting, etc.)

A: No—A proposal has to indicate how important the topic is to you. Yes, the topic should be intellectually significant within the field of study, but only as it relates to your academic and/or career goals.

Q: What should I include in the budget?

A: You should include anything and everything that impacts your ability to complete the project—including items such as books that are needed for your learning about the topic. A modest or small budget will NOT increase your chances of being awarded the fellowship. The limit for materials and/or equipment is \$500. If you can easily spend far more, then prioritize to first include “mission critical” expenses, then see what’s left for other purchases.

Q: What if my budget needs to change during the fellowship?

A: This is not a problem as long as the change in materials/equipment remains in line with the project goals. Lots of projects have unexpected cost changes (often in either direction—less for one thing, but more for another). As long as changes are very carefully explained to the UROP budget office and have the backing of the faculty mentor, line items can be changed or redistributed.

Q: When can I start work, once awarded a UROP fellowship?

A: You can opt to begin the project almost immediately after the award (early/mid May). Your total pool of money (\$3000) simply gets disbursed across a longer period of time, thus making each installment proportionally less. All UROP awardees must start by the first day of the Fall semester.

Q: Can intangible expenses be included in the equipment/materials budget?

A: Yes—If any expense is directly related to training, knowledge or analysis such as software, licensing, workshop/conference/training fees they can be included.

Q: Once awarded, is there any way I might lose eligibility?

Yes, but only in rare situations: 1. Reduction in required credit hours (<9.0 in a semester); 2. Attendance problems for monthly meetings or required events (Poster symposium, Thinking Matters)

Q: I have a project idea, but don't have a faculty to mentor the work. What should I do?

A: First, contact the person in your department/program with the closest connection to your topic, and begin a conversation about possible collaboration. At the very least she/he should be able to guide you to another colleague who may be a good fit for the program. Failing this, please contact the UROP Director, R. Bruce Thompson (rbthompson@maine.edu) so we can help identify a faculty match.

Q: Do I have to have a new, original topic idea that I propose to a faculty member, in order to be awarded a UROP fellowship?

A: No. Some UROP awards are made to students who join a faculty member's existing research/scholarly program. But, some awards are for new, original ideas generated by the student. The direction of proposals can happen in two ways: A student approaches a faculty member with an idea OR a faculty member invites a student to collaborate on a project idea. The only stipulation is that the project is "owned" by the student (i.e. they are given "principal investigator" status). The project (even if the idea is generated by the faculty) should be aligned with the goals, knowledge and interests of the student.

Q: I am new to this kind of proposal writing. How do I know I'm including the right things and writing in the appropriate way/style?

A: There is a successful example proposal posted among the application materials. Even if your topic area is very different, all proposals (whether for physics or social anthropology) have the same overall structure: 1. Question/problem/issue statement; 2. Previous approaches (i.e. lit review); 3. Clear identification of your aims/approach to the question/problem/issue. The writing style, mechanics (grammar, diction, etc.) should be closely guided by your faculty mentor, including final proofing/editing.

Q: Does the research that I plan to do have to be something that my professor has experience in? [e.g. language study, in which the mentor is trained in linguistics, but not fluent in the target language to be studied]

A: The answer in this case would be "No, they don't have to have direct experience..." For example, in linguistics there are deeper principles that transcend any particular language. So as long as the prospective faculty mentor is able/willing to guide the inquiry from a conceptual standpoint--great! The key issue is deciding whether the combination of your level of expertise, and your faculty mentor's wisdom/knowledge can successfully bridge gaps in knowledge you **both** have in the topic.

Q: I read on the website that there are mandatory lunch meetings. Is there only one every week? If so, what if we have a class or prior arrangement during the same time as the lunch?

A: The required meetings (which happen to be lunch times--we feed everyone!) are once per MONTH, so overall, a very manageable time commitment. We establish meeting days/dates asap, so that applicants can judge in advance if their fall/spring schedules can accommodate the work, meetings, events, etc.

Q: I see that there is a "travel stipend" included for students, but where are we going to be traveling to? And for how long?

The travel budget is to pay for (or at least defray costs) towards attending a conference or professional meeting. (max \$400, no time limit). The stipulation is that it requires the student be a presenter (e.g. poster, talk, performance) at the meeting. However, if students need/want to attend an event at which they are not a presenter, it still can be paid for if it's presented as a clear training/learning opportunity directly related to his/her project. Also the travel has to be paid for during the period of the fellowship.

Q: Do you allow more than one person to work on a single research project, or does it have to be research that you do completely on your own? If you allow more than one person to work on the same project, then does each person get their own stipends or do we split it?

A: There is precedent for this. Currently we have a pair of fellows working together on the same project. They each received a full fellowship award. HOWEVER, that is because their project had two, very separate parts, each "worthy" of full funding. If two people wanted to collaborate on a single project that, as a whole, represented one full project (i.e. not two that go together) then they would need to split a fellowship (there is also precedent for this arrangement). Although you didn't ask, it's worth mentioning that the reverse of all this is possible too: Two awardees, two projects, supervised by one faculty member.