Summer Research Opportunities Program
Faculty Mentor Handbook

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Contents

General Information ............................................................................................................................ 3
Program Description ............................................................................................................................ 3
Program Objectives ............................................................................................................................ 3
OSEEL Staff Information ...................................................................................................................... 3

Faculty Mentor Roles and Responsibilities ......................................................................................... 3

Program Components .......................................................................................................................... 4
Student Time Commitment .................................................................................................................. 4
Meeting Information ............................................................................................................................ 4
Excursions .............................................................................................................................................. 4
Project Proposal .................................................................................................................................... 4
Project Proposal Guidelines .................................................................................................................. 4
Poster Production ................................................................................................................................... 6
Final Program Requirements ................................................................................................................ 6
Poster Printing ....................................................................................................................................... 6
IRB .......................................................................................................................................................... 6
Biosafety ................................................................................................................................................ 6
IACUC ................................................................................................................................................... 7
Human Subjects ...................................................................................................................................... 7

Student Expectations and Responsibilities ......................................................................................... 7
Attendance Policy .................................................................................................................................. 7
Student Blog .......................................................................................................................................... 7

Additional Opportunities ..................................................................................................................... 7
Undergraduate Special Opportunities in Artistry and Research (USOAR) ........................................... 7
Undergraduate Research and Artistry Day (URAD) ............................................................................. 7
Student Engagement Fund (SEF) .......................................................................................................... 8
General Information

Program Description

The Summer Research Opportunities Program (SROP) was created to promote access to undergraduate research and artistry for students enrolled at NIU. SROP affords students the opportunity to conduct paid, faculty-mentored, research during the summer months (June to August).

Program Objectives

It is the goal of SROP to:

- Engage students in faculty-mentored research or artistry
- Provide a positive learning environment through hands-on experience
- Introduce students to the process of research in their field
- Give students the opportunity to meet other driven and determined students
- Have students present at the Summer Research Symposium

OSEEL Staff Information

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Faculty Mentor Roles and Responsibilities

Faculty mentors overseeing SROP students are expected to:

- Meet with students regularly to create a plan to complete the proposed project
- Provide clear communication about the expectations of the project activities and style of interaction
- Assist student with identifying research articles and related resources
- Provide honest, encouraging feedback to the student about progress
- Assist the student with preparation of project materials for presentation
- Attend the Summer Research Symposium on August 7
- Notify OSEEL staff of any problems in the mentoring relationship
Program Components

**Student Time Commitment**

Students are expected to designate 40+ hours per week toward the SROP experience. This includes required project components (e.g., lab hours), time to attend all scheduled SROP activities/workshops, meetings with the faculty mentor, and preparation of a poster or oral presentation for the Summer Research Symposium on Friday, August 7.

**Meeting Information**

Activities and workshops are generally planned for the entire cohort to attend one day of the week. These events give the students and staff time to check-in and to make sure everyone is on track. Important information is passed along to the students at each meeting regarding various components of the research process. Students should avoid having any lab responsibilities when workshops are scheduled. Students also have weekly one-on-one meetings with OSEEL staff to help assess the progress of their research.

**Excursions**

To strengthen the SROP experience, the cohort will go on occasional excursions throughout the summer session. These excursions are meant to enhance the students’ experiences in the program, as well as provide students with networking opportunities with successful NIU alumni and donors.

**Project Proposal**

The project proposal helps to focus the student before s/he begins the work. The completed proposal shows OSEEL and the mentor that the student knows about the project, its purpose, and what will be done throughout the eight weeks, etc. The project proposal also provides a good base for the information that will later be presented at the Summer Research Symposium. Below is an outline for the project proposal. The final version of the proposal is due from students by 4:30pm on Friday, June 19.

**Project Proposal Guidelines**

1. **Abstract**
   The abstract should be a brief description of the project, its objectives, and expected results. The abstract should be written for an educated but not expert audience. Please limit this section to 250 words or less.

2. **Project Description (limit 6 pages, double spaced)**
   The project description should be a clear statement of the work to be undertaken, using the five headings (A-E) below. It should be no more than six (6) double-spaced pages long with no smaller than 10-point type and 1-inch margins.] Please note: While the mentor should be consulted, it is the student’s responsibility to write the proposal in his/her own words, and
not copied from a website, article or other work. Plagiarism is cause for removal from the program.

a. **Background and Context:** Explain the present state of knowledge, understanding or creative experimentation in the field with proper citations of pertinent literature where appropriate. (See Literature Cited, section III). Make it clear why the research or artistry project needs to be undertaken to fill a gap in knowledge. In addition, highlight how the project pertains to leadership, research, and/or civic, social, and global engagement.

b. **Statement of Significance and Impact:** Explain the significance of the project as it contributes to the advancement of learning within the field (i.e. the big picture), to the enrichment of our cultural and aesthetic heritage, to the public welfare (i.e. the greater good) and/or to other research conducted within the same lab or unit.

c. **Statement of Project Objectives:** Clearly and concisely state the research question or creative concept that will be addressed during the period of the proposed project.

d. **Methods:** Describe, in clear and understandable terms, the general plan of work in order to fulfill the stated goals and project outcomes.

e. **Outcomes:** What are the expected results or the expected range of results? What happens if the data does not yield the results you expected? How will “other” results be interpreted? For creative projects, what will be the final product of the proposed project? Possible products are a report, a publishable article or chapter, a performance, a policy recommendation, a painting, etc. Be specific. **Please note: SROP requires a final paper and a final presentation** (i.e., poster or oral session, or both) at the Summer Research Symposium. **It is up the faculty mentor’s discretion for additional, required final products.**

3. **Literature Cited** (This is not included in your 6 page limit)
Include a list of references that are cited in the abstract and/or proposal, especially in section A. Use standard professional format such APA style for your literature citation (field appropriate).

4. **Impact on Academic Experience** (This is not included in your 6 page limit)
Indicate how the proposed independent artistry or research is expected to enhance the specific student’s academic experience.

5. **Timelines of Project Activities** (This is not included in your 6 page limit)
Provide a timeline of activities throughout the eight week SROP experience. Include specific benchmarks to achieve throughout the summer (such as literature search, data collection, data analysis, and final product preparation to name a few). **This timeline should be on a daily or weekly basis. Timelines written in narrative form will not be accepted.**
**Poster Production**

Putting together a poster takes a lot of time and energy, so students should start the process early. The project proposal can serve as the basic guideline for poster creation since the proposal contains similar sections that should appear on the poster. Faculty Mentors should inform students about what is required for each section of the poster so all necessary information is conveyed accurately on the poster.

The OSEEL staff will provide a .ppt (PowerPoint) template for poster design and preparation to all SROP participants. The poster template is also available online through the Communication Standards for Institutional Brand Identity website (http://www.niu.edu/graphicstandards/templates/). It is recommended to use this template when creating the poster because the poster size proportions are pre-arranged to the required 32”x40” size restriction. The OSEEL staff will provide general feedback if a student should ask, but all students are required to receive mentor feedback and approval prior to printing. Detailed information will be given to all students throughout the program.

**Final Program Requirements**

Each SROP participant is expected to present at the Summer Research Symposium on Friday, August 7. Students have the option of presenting a poster, an oral presentation, or both. In addition, all students will write a final paper that summarizes their project. All SROP 2015 participants are required to present their projects at Undergraduate Research and Artistry Day (URAD) in April 2016.

**Poster Printing**

Summer Research Symposium posters can be printed on campus using Media and Creative Services located in Still Hall. It is recommended that posters are submitted a week in advance of the symposium to ensure complete and accurate printing for the event. It is also extremely important that posters are error-free when sent to print.

**IRB**

The Internal Review Board (IRB) ensures that all research done through NIU follows specific guidelines and does not endanger any of the participants. NIU holds its researchers to extremely high standards so that the integrity and safety of NIU is not jeopardized by any research. Depending on the research being conducted, you may need to undergo either the IRB process regarding Biosafety, IACUC, or Human Subjects. A brief description of each is provided below, and more detailed information can be found on the NIU website through the Office of Research Compliance and Integrity.

**Biosafety**

Students participating in research involving recombinant DNA, and/or pathogenic substances, will have to go through the Biosafety review process. Contact Michele Crase from the Office of Research Compliance and Integrity for more detailed information.
**IACUC**

IACUC focuses on NIU’s want to ensure the safety of any live, vertebrate animals used in university research. If any research involves animals, an IACUC form must be submitted to prove that the animals are not put in any unnecessary harm. Contact Michele Crase from the Office of Research Compliance and Integrity for more information.

**Human Subjects**

Any research involving human participants needs to be approved via the IRB process. Even if it is conducting surveys, getting the approval will more than likely be necessary. Contact OSEEL or Jeanette Gommel from the Office of Research Compliance and Integrity for more information.

**Student Expectations and Responsibilities**

**Attendance Policy**

Attendance is taken at every SROP activity due to the importance of the information discussed. If a student cannot attend one of the meetings due to a conflict or illness, he/she must contact OSEEL prior to the meeting/activity. If he/she does not contact the SROP staff prior to the absence, the absence will be unexcused. Each unexcused absence will result in a 10% stipend deduction. If students have more than three (3) unexcused absences from meetings or events, he/she will be released from the program.

**Student Blog**

Each student will be required to maintain an online blogsite throughout the eight weeks. This includes a minimum of eight (8) posts with prompts given by the OSEEL staff. Pictures of the ongoing research are encouraged but not mandatory.

**Additional Opportunities**

**Undergraduate Special Opportunities in Artistry and Research (USOAR)**

USOAR is a program that funds student-generated research projects, whether the study is conducted on campus, somewhere else in the United States or overseas. Students whose proposals are selected are granted up to $2,500 to carry out their project. Students have between January 1 and December 31 to complete their USOAR project and must submit documentation (final report, receipts, and pictures) to OSEEL within 6 weeks of completion of their project. USOAR funding is for project-related expenses only (e.g., conference registration, accommodations, equipment, etc.), not personal compensation.

**Undergraduate Research and Artistry Day (URAD)**

Any undergraduate student who has participated in a faculty-mentored research or artistry is eligible to showcase his/her work at Undergraduate Research and Artistry Day in April each year. This includes
independent study, capstone projects, URAP, EURA, UARAP, USOAR, SROP, Research Rookies, or any other related research/artistry projects. Eligible students include currently enrolled NIU undergraduates and community college students planning to transfer to NIU. In addition to poster, exhibit, and digital media displays, undergraduate students can now also choose to give a 15-minute oral presentation at URAD. Prizes are awarded in two categories (STEM & AEHSS). In addition, one research advisor/mentor will be honored with the Faculty Mentor of the Year award.

**Student Engagement Fund (SEF)**

All NIU undergraduate students can apply for stipends to work on faculty-mentored research projects and travel to conferences. College of Liberal Arts and Science undergraduates can apply for additional funding to cover a wide range of expenses related to a student engagement activity. Requests need to be for a minimum of $250. Undergraduate students may apply on their own behalf. Faculty can apply for funding on behalf of students working on research projects or service learning projects. Faculty can also apply for funding on behalf of students to be used for group travel expenses and student expenses for conferences and competitions.