Summer Research Opportunities Program
Faculty Mentor Handbook

Northern Illinois University

Office of Student Engagement &
Experiential Learning (OSEEL)
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General Information

Program Description
The Summer Research Opportunities Program (SROP) was created to promote access to undergraduate research during the summer months 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
- 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 Research Symposium

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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 Friday, August 10
- Notify OSEEL staff of any problems in the mentoring relationship

Note: Faculty Mentor’s also assist their student with their final paper, which is broken down into various sections throughout the program. Examples of sections in the paper include the Introduction, Background/Context, Methods, Data Collection, Results, Discussion, Limitations, and Future Implications. The Mentor should provide feedback and suggestions for the paper based on the guidelines that are set for the specific discipline’s field. The sections and formatting of the final paper will be entirely up to the faculty mentor’s discretion.

Program Components

Time Commitment

Students are expected to participate fully by committing 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 10. Also, students should be prepared to do independent work if the faculty mentor requires it or is unavailable at some point throughout the summer. Faculty mentors are relying on students to be curious and pursue the completion of the proposed project. If a student feels as though s/he cannot do this, please speak with OSEEL staff immediately.

Meeting Information

Activities and workshops are generally planned for the entire SROP 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, as well as pass along important information to the students regarding 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. If a student cannot
attend a scheduled meeting or workshop, s/he must notify OSEEL prior to the start of the event. If a student does not notify OSEEL or the SROP program coordination, the absence will be unexcused.

**Excursions**

To strengthen the SROP experience, the cohort may 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 faculty 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.

**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.

   - **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.

   - **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 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/graphics/standards/templates/](http://www.niu.edu/graphics/standards/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 regarding poster requirements and printing.

**Final Program Requirements**

Each SROP participant is expected to present a poster at the Summer Research Symposium on Friday, August 10, 2018. In addition, all students will write a final paper that summarizes their project. All SROP participants are encouraged to present their projects at Undergraduate Research and Artistry Day (URAD) in April 2019.

**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 and IACUC**

All students who will be conducting research in a laboratory setting (i.e. working with chemicals, lab equipment, animals) must participate in Lab Safety Training provided by NIU’s Office of Research Compliance, Integrity & Safety (ORCIS). This is a mandatory requirement and must be completed by all students identified regardless if students receive an additional lab training from the Faculty Mentor. More information will be provided at the start of the program.

**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 and Tardy 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% compensation deduction. If students have more than three (3) unexcused absences from meetings or events, he/she will be released from the
program. Timeliness is also critical for the program. If a student is late to the meeting/activity without notifying the SROP staff prior, then the tardiness will count as an unexcused absence.

**Progress Reports**

A requirement of SROP is that students fill out weekly progress reports (Appendix A). The report is used in an effort to keep track of the amount of time the student has put into the project as well as the student’s progress on the project. This report allows the Faculty Mentor and the SROP Team to verify that the student is meeting their goals. Progress reports must be submitted via email at ugresearch@niu.edu. Student will be responsible for copying their Faculty Mentor on the progress report submission. Mentors are not required to respond to the email unless the information that has been indicated in the report is inaccurate or false. Mentors are encouraged to review the information from their students’ progress reports and discuss the goals and progress of the project with the student(s).

*If a student does not turn in his or her progress report in a timely manner, then he or she will be considered under review by OSEEL staff.*

**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)**

Undergraduate Research and Artistry Day is an annual showcase and celebration of the outstanding research and artistry projects that undergraduate students have participated in throughout the academic year. You have the option to present your work in a poster, STEM or artistry exhibit, table talk, or performance. 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. More information on the event is available at [http://go.niu.edu/URAD](http://go.niu.edu/URAD).
**Student Engagement Fund (SEF)**

Undergraduate students may apply to fund research, artistry, or community-based research projects. All NIU undergraduate students can apply for compensation and project reimbursement for a faculty mentored research project, community based research project as well as travel to conferences. College of Liberal Arts and Science (CLAS) undergraduates can apply for additional funding to cover a wide range of expenses related to a student engagement activity. Limited funding is available for non-CLAS majors for travel to conferences and competitions. Project reimbursement awards will range from $250 to $2500. More information on SEF is available at [http://go.niu.edu/](http://go.niu.edu/).
Appendix A

Summer Research Opportunities Program
Progress Report Template

*Please Note:* This is what a progress report may look like, questions will vary by week. Progress reports must be submitted via email at ugresearch@niu.edu. The student will be responsible for copying their Faculty Mentor on the progress report submission.

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<th>Student Information:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Time Period:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hours Logged:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Name of Student:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Faculty Mentor:</td>
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<td>Project Title:</td>
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Progress Report Questions:

1. Tasks completed during this time period?

2. What has been successful?

3. What has not been successful?

4. Current goals:

5. Do you need any additional support/have any questions?