UAR Student Grants and Grant Proposals

Undergraduate Advising and Research (UAR) Student Grants support rigorous, independent scholarship in all fields (including engineering, fine arts, humanities, natural sciences, and social sciences). If you are working with a Stanford faculty mentor on a Research, Arts, or Senior Synthesis project, you can take advantage of this funding.

- Not all projects require funding; many students move their ideas forward without a Student Grant. While projects often originate in the classroom, the projects that receive Student Grant funding clearly go above and beyond what is normally required by a course or degree program.

- The Student Grants Website at http://studentgrants.stanford.edu contains detailed information on grant types, deadlines, eligibility criteria, and student applicant responsibilities. The site has a comprehensive How to Apply section with a Grant Writing Timeline, a Checklist for complete applications, Sample Proposals for reference, and links to the online Grant Application Portal.

- If your project takes place off-campus, you will need thorough and rigorous preparation, including specific methodological coursework and training in the cultural and ethical aspects of working away from Stanford. A travel safety plan is also required. See http://undergrad.stanford.edu/research/requirements-off-campus for more information.

- If your research project involves human subjects (or information or materials from human subjects), you and your faculty sponsor should submit your protocol to IRB by the time you submit a grant application, at the latest. You will need to have Human Subjects approval in hand before funding can be approved. For more information, consult http://undergrad.stanford.edu/research/human-subjects and the Institutional Review Board’s website at http://humansubjects.stanford.edu.

I. General Guidelines for Grant Proposals

Your original project proposal is the core of your grant application. A good proposal will describe what you hope to accomplish, why those objectives are important, and how you intend to achieve them. The ideal format and language for your proposal will vary with your specific project, and with the discipline in which your project is situated. All good proposals will address the following questions concisely, in a manner clear to both specialists and non-specialists:

Goals and Objectives: What precisely are you hoping to accomplish?

Significance: Why are your goals important? What kinds of previous work (others’ or your own) do you use to justify your goals and objectives? Who will be most interested in what you do?

Project Plan: How will you accomplish these goals? How does your project design lead to the outcomes you envision (logically and logistically)? Will experts in your discipline agree that your plan is a good one? What is your timeline? What final product(s) will result from your plan?

Resources: How will you draw on your mentors’ expertise? Do you have letters of support from contacts (at field sites or other institutions) who will be critical to your project’s success? Are you seeking or do you have any other sources of funding? Are there additional sources of information, supplies, or equipment that you will rely on?

Preparation: What specific steps have you taken to prepare for this project? Where did you get the skills you will need? What other project requirements have you completed (e.g., human subjects approval, travel and safety plans)?

Budget: How much money do you need, and what will it be used for? How does each line-item in your budget support a step in your project plan?
### What is your project?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Goals and Objectives</th>
<th>Arts</th>
<th>Senior Synthesis</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• an original analysis or inquiry situated within a scholarly discipline</td>
<td>• apply my artistic vision to new work in a specific medium</td>
<td>• an intellectual synthesis connecting my curricular foundations with a new experience, reflection, or critical point of view</td>
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<tr>
<td>• test a focused hypothesis</td>
<td>• use my artistic vision to reinterpret existing work in a new production</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Significance and Rationale</th>
<th>Research</th>
<th>Arts</th>
<th>Senior Synthesis</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• a critique of recently published scholarly literature and peer-reviewed papers</td>
<td>• an examination of recent creative work in my medium…</td>
<td>• a critical examination of my courses and motivating personal experiences</td>
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<tr>
<td>• a case that other scholars in my discipline will be interested in my conclusions</td>
<td>…and of recent work in an array of media relating to the themes I will explore</td>
<td>• a case that my project vision is informed by what others have done or tried and what I do will be thought-provoking for my mentors and peers</td>
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<td>• an examination of recent creative work in my medium…</td>
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<tr>
<th>Possible Products</th>
<th>Research</th>
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<th>Senior Synthesis</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• an honors thesis</td>
<td>• an exhibit, performance, film, or composition</td>
<td>• a reflective essay or website</td>
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<td>• a manuscript for peer-reviewed publication or presentation</td>
<td>• a senior recital</td>
<td>• a prototype</td>
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<td>• a poster at SURPS</td>
<td>• a poster at SURPS</td>
<td>• documentary journalism</td>
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<tr>
<td>• a poster at SURPS</td>
<td>• a senior recital</td>
<td>• a presentation, workshop, or event</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• a poster at SURPS</td>
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<tr>
<th>Type of grant proposal</th>
<th>Consult UAR proposal guidelines for Research (Section II)</th>
<th>Consult UAR proposal guidelines for the Arts (Section III)</th>
<th>Consult UAR proposal guidelines for Senior Synthesis (Section IV)</th>
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### II. Specific Proposal Guidelines for Research Projects

**Humanities Proposals**

**Goals and Objectives:** State your general scholarly questions. You may frame exploratory research with open-ended questions, or make specific assertions that you intend to support through your methodology.

**Significance:** Provide a literature review that illustrates your project’s relationship to current thinking in your field. Select and critique relevant works that situate your planned scholarship, and demonstrate your knowledge of what has been done on this topic or in related areas. Show how your project will contribute to existing schools of thought.

**Project Plan:** Provide a detailed methodology that will enable you to achieve your project goals. What texts, observations, or other source materials will you need to answer your question? What analytical framework will you use to understand or interpret these sources? Provide a logistical plan, including your timeline and milestones for progress.
Science or Engineering Proposals

Goals and Objectives: State hypotheses or theoretical predictions that you will test. If your project is part of a larger collaborative research agenda within your mentor’s lab or group, describe both the overarching research goal and the particular component(s) that you are focusing on. What are your specific aims for this particular phase of the project?

Significance: Critique the most relevant recent peer-reviewed papers that set the stage for your hypotheses. Are you challenging or refining current knowledge of the mechanisms, technologies, or phenomena of interest? Demonstrate your grasp of what has been done on this topic or in related areas, and show how your research builds on and contributes to this body of knowledge.

Project Plan: What are the key steps in the experiment or modeling effort that will test your hypothesis? What quantitative analyses will enable you to interpret your observations or refine your model? Spell out your specific role and responsibilities, and your intellectual ownership of these responsibilities. Provide a logistical plan, including your timeline and milestones for progress.

Social Science Proposals

Proposals in the social sciences may share some of the features of either science or humanities proposals. For example, an econometric comparison of tax policy effects would need to discuss a statistical framework, whereas an ethnographic account of folk stories would outline a very different kind of qualitative method.

Goals and Objectives: State the questions or hypotheses you will examine, making clear the level of focus and the quantitative or qualitative nature of your goals.

Significance: Provide a literature review that connects your research questions to current thinking in your field. Select and critique recent works that provide a foundation to the way you are stating your research questions, and that show your knowledge of what other scholars are already working on.

Project Plan: Provide a detailed methodology that will enable you to achieve your project goals. What observations, datasets, or transcripts will you need to answer your question? What analytical framework (statistical or qualitative, as appropriate) will let you draw sound conclusions? Provide a logistical plan, including your timeline and milestones for progress.

III. Specific Proposal Guidelines for Arts or Design Projects

Goals and Objectives: What are the objectives of your project? Give your most focused vision for the finished project or production. Describe any key expressions, impressions, or insights that you intend, and the audience that you intend them for.

Significance: Cite sources of artistic/design inspiration for the project. What is the relationship between your proposed project and past or current work by other artists/designers? In light of the current dialog across related media, how is your vision unique, interesting, or original?

Project Plan: What techniques will you use? Why and how will you use them? What area or media will you be working in? What is your conceptual approach to this project? What concerns do you address? How do you envision your final product? For productions or exhibitions, provide a detailed timeline with the projected start date, including: pre-production research; production schedule, itemizing tasks and allocating time & delegation for each; post-production plans, if applicable. How will the final work or production you envision enhance your interests, skills, opportunities for further work? How will your plans for presenting this work affect your audience?

Preparation: What formal or informal training and mentoring have you had, or will you need? How do your past experiences inform this project? Link to online samples of your previous work if possible.
IV. Specific Proposal Guidelines for Senior Synthesis Projects

Goals and Objectives: As concisely as possible, what do you hope to accomplish? Be clear about your aims for this phase of your project, and how those aims will help further your broader intellectual aspirations.

Significance: Why have you chosen this intellectual goal? Describe the different intellectual aspects of your undergraduate academic and extra-curricular experience and how your proposed project will allow you to integrate these components. Fundable proposals will reflect on the first eight quarters (or more) of your undergraduate work to illustrate what inspires and informs the way you are integrating these ideas. What is the relationship between your project idea and what others have done or discussed (a literature review may also be relevant)? Why will your mentors, advisors, teachers, and peers be interested in what you are doing?

Project Plan: What will you do? What are the steps that will allow you to complete the synthesis and reflection you’ve described above? When will each of these steps be completed, and how will you gauge your progress? How will you reflect on your project experience and share those reflections with others? What form will your final product take, and how will it be shared with the Stanford community? Will you earn academic credit for any part of your project?

Preparation and Mentoring: What skills (from the classroom or from somewhere else) will you bring to bear on this project? What courses provided you with the most important intellectual background? Do you have hands-on experience that will be valuable? Why are your mentors and their expertise a good fit for this project? How have they helped you so far, and how will they continue to mentor you as your project unfolds?

V. Proposal Guidelines for Conference Grants

Conference Grants support your presentation at a scholarly conference or meeting, and UAR requires a different type of proposal for this application. Your proposal should include the sections outlined below.

Proposal title: Provide the title of your conference presentation.

Conference abstract: Provide the abstract of the paper or poster that has been accepted for presentation. Usually, this abstract describes your project’s objectives, significance, methods, and conclusions. If you think additional background or explanation on this project would be helpful, include this information succinctly.

Your role in the presentation: Conference Grants are for presentations that you are leading. If you have co-authors, indicate the extent of your role in presenting and responding to questions from the audience.

The meeting or conference that you are attending: Include the name of the conference, information on the society or association sponsoring it, with dates and location, as well as details of the session at which you are approved to present. Include the abstract acceptance notification you received from the organizers (your name and presentation title should be identified in that official correspondence).

The process whereby your abstract was accepted: Conference grants are for competitive peer-reviewed selection processes.

Goals of attending this conference: Describe specific sessions or meetings that you will attend, beyond the one at which you will present. Describe what you would discuss with scholars, what you hope to learn at this conference, which you will not be able to do if you did not participate in this conference. How will these sessions and conversations fit with the other work you have done in and outside of the classroom at Stanford?
VI. Turning Your Good Proposal into a Great One

Many students turn in proposals that nominally address the points raised earlier in this handout. But often, reviewers’ decisions turn on factors that do not occur to students as important. Paying attention to these details can only improve your chances of getting funded.

- **Focus and scale of the project objectives:** Open your proposal with a crystal clear one- or two-sentence statement of your objective. This helps reviewers orient themselves, and prepares them to read the rest of your proposal more effectively. By carefully articulating specific and well-honed goals, you reassure reviewers that your project will meet with success, and that your final product will exhibit real depth and sophistication.

- **Significance:** Probably the single most common deficiency in student proposals is the inadequate rationale for doing the project at hand. When we ask for a “critique” (of published literature, or of recent creative work, or of your personal experiences) we do not mean a list, or a cursory description. Rather, we expect you to select from a broad range of influences or papers with which you are familiar, and critically analyze these key works and experiences to show how these have shaped your proposed project and how you will contribute to the developments in your discipline.

- **Scholarly significance of research projects:** When we ask about your research project’s significance, we mean “intellectual significance to members of your discipline”. We do not mean “importance to your educational development” or “importance to a humanitarian or ideological cause”. This is almost always best demonstrated through your literature review, and there is always peer-reviewed literature that discusses some of the theoretical or methodological background to your research question.

- **Balance of independence and collaboration:** Write your project plan in the first person. Reviewers want to see what you will take responsibility for, and what you will be doing with the assistance of others. If you write that “… the data will be gathered and analyzed using a statistical model”, you are providing much less information than if you had written “… I will gather the data and analyze them using a statistical model devised by a graduate student in our research group”.

- **Preparation:** Give a concise outline of specific courses that directly shaped your approach to your topic, and are foundational to your project’s success; or state when you will complete such courses before the start of your project. If your project involves the use of human subjects, state when you submitted your Human Subjects Protocol (at the latest, you would submit the protocol to the IRB at the same time as you submit your grant proposal).

- **Mentoring:** Provide an account of the interaction between you and your mentor(s) to date, and your plan for continued interaction. Describe how your mentor’s area of expertise will support your work. Your proposal and the mentor’s letter of recommendation should make clear the balance between independence and assistance you can expect from your mentor.

- **Internship vs. independent project:** Many successful projects involve interacting with non-profit organizations, government agencies, clinical facilities, or private businesses. It is critical that your proposal draw a clear line between your agenda and your other responsibilities in the organization. A volunteer internship hastily married to a thin research question is not likely to be funded; a carefully designed, intellectually rigorous study that leverages your contacts in a particular organization is much more compelling. Reviewers will look closely at how you distinguish between these two kinds of projects.