SOUTH CAROLINA INDEPENDENT COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. **How are projects evaluated?**
   Evaluation of all SCICU Undergraduate Student/Faculty Research proposals are conducted by a panel consisting of inter-institutional faculty members from SCICU member institutions. All members of the evaluation team are active in research at their respective institution. The evaluation team consists of several core members. However, composition of this team changes based on the disciplines of the proposals received each funding cycle.

   Panel members evaluate and rank the proposals based on the following:

   - Research merit,
   - Educational benefit,
   - Appropriateness of proposed method or approach,
   - Capability of the applicant and/or faculty sponsor to conduct the proposed activity, and
   - Appropriateness of budget.

2. **Are funded students and faculty sponsors required to attend and remain for the entire Symposium?**
   Yes, funded students and sponsoring faculty members are expected to be present for the entire Symposium. If there is a compelling reason and/or unexpected issues that arise and the student or faculty member cannot be present for the entire Symposium, the faculty sponsor should contact SCICU (803-799-7122) and explain the reasoning prior to the date of the Symposium. Colleges should plan to excuse funded students and their faculty sponsor for both to attend the entire Symposium. Faculty and their funded students that do not provide an explanation to SCICU prior to the date of the Symposium will risk losing future funding for themselves and their college or university for one funding cycle.

3. **Are projects that produce a creative project, such as a novel, production of artwork, or building of a machine, etc., considered for funding?**
   Every proposal submitted is viewed with the criteria stated in #1 above taken into consideration. We sponsor only traditional research projects. If the research proposal lays the groundwork for the creative project, then the proposal may be considered for funding.

4. **Is compensation to participants in my research allowed?**
   Often student researchers will want to pay (or otherwise reward) research participants. In such cases, the request must contain detailed and compelling information as to why the participant fee is important to the project. The reasoning will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

5. **How is the student stipend calculated?**

Funded students are not paid a flat stipend. The student stipend is paid at a rate of $10 per hour for the time the student is working on the project. The budget section of the proposal should thoroughly explain how many hours the student will spend on his/her project. This is a grant and SCICU does not withhold taxes.

6. **Do you fund equipment or computers/tablets/smart phones/software?**
Small equipment such as hot plates, microscope lenses, pH meter, etc., may be considered for funding. As a general policy, SCICU does not fund the purchase of generic computers, tablets, or software. If a computer, tablet, or software is an integral part of the project, funding will be considered, but not guaranteed. The budget should provide information as to why the particular equipment is needed. All equipment purchased with funds from an SCICU grant becomes property of the faculty/student's institution.

7. **How do I submit a group research proposal?**

Please review the **Application Guidelines** for complete requirements and submission instructions. The following tips are intended to help ensure your proposal is complete and clearly presented:

- **For group projects, submit one combined PDF** containing all application materials for the project. Do not submit separate files for each student.
- **Each student must complete pages 4–6 of the application** and include these pages in the combined PDF.
- **Each student must have their own:**
  - Application signed by student, faculty sponsor, and Chief Academic Officer
  - Letter of recommendation from the faculty sponsor
  - Faculty Sponsor Endorsement & Qualifications Form
  - Student Activity and Responsibility Form
- **Group projects should have one shared abstract and one shared project narrative.** Students working together on the same project do not need to submit separate abstracts or narratives. The abstract should not exceed 200 words, and the narrative should not exceed four pages.
- **Use the same project title on all students' applications and throughout the proposal materials** so it is clear that the students are working together on one project.
- **Submit one combined budget and budget justification for the entire project.** Do not submit a separate budget for each student. Be specific and provide clear justification for each expense.

DO:

1. Have students write their own proposals. The evaluators need to hear the student's voice when reviewing the proposals. The evaluators will turn down any proposal that seems to be mostly written by the professor.
2. Have student proposals include a meaningful, fairly objective means of measurement/analysis. In the Social Sciences and the Humanities, we cannot fund proposals that sound like: "I will tell you how I feel - about how I think they feel." Your means of measurement/analysis should go well beyond this to be worthy of SCICU research dollars. If a student does not use well-known and/or well-structured psychometric instruments, then at least have checklists and grids from well-developed bibliographies. That helps a lot.

3. Feel free to submit research proposals supporting creative activity. We can and will fund objective research supporting the writing of a novel or play, or the painting of a picture, or the composition of music. Since the funds are directed to research, we cannot fund the production of the novel, the picture, or the musical composition itself. For example, we can't and will not pay you to write a novel.
4. Obtain all necessary IRB and/or Principal/Superintendent permissions ahead of time, or our funds will be contingent upon you getting them. We cannot fund human subjects and/or school children research that does not have all necessary, legal permissions.
5. Have specific question(s) driving your research proposal.
6. Have specific means to measure and analyze the data. In the humanities, this may be less straightforward, but it is still expected.
7. Be specific in your budget breakdown. Budgets are more likely to be reduced if there is not a clear justification for each expense. While each student working on the same project must submit their own application, the budget should reflect the **combined total cost for the entire project**, rather than a separate budget for each student.
8. Do get all needed paperwork/approvals before submitting the proposal. Saying you will conduct research on school children requires a long process to get approved (e.g., IRB approval, principal and superintendent).

DON'T:

1. Do not attempt to use SCICU funds to restock general lab chemicals that should be readily available in your own institution's labs. Limited amounts of rather unique chemicals or specific biological supplies (directly related to the proposed research) are OK. If you need 50ml of a chemical, do not request funds to buy an entire liter of that chemical.
2. Do not "pad" the budget. We are more likely to approve leaner, more targeted budgets that don't have a lot of expensive equipment or supplies.
3. Do not request student stipend funds at 40 hours a week, all summer. We only fund students for the active research hours.
4. Do not expect continued funding of slight variations of the same general research project from the same professor year after year, with only the student names and slight variations in the research included in the proposal. Once again, we are much more interested in funding the unique research ideas/projects of the students, provided they are well-structured, modest in cost, have all necessary permissions, and have within them a meaningful means of measurement/analysis.
5 Do not request money to support the faculty member (e.g., travel, per diem, stipends, etc.). **While faculty stipends are not permitted to be drawn from grant funding, the faculty sponsor of a funded project will receive a $250 professional development grant (limit one per faculty sponsor)**
6. Do not add FICA, Medicare or other tax withholding to the student's stipend.

SUGGESTIONS & TIPS

To strengthen your proposal and improve its likelihood of being funded, please ensure the following elements are clearly addressed:

1. **Clearly Defined Research Question**
    - Your proposal should include a **specific and detailed research question**.
    - Vague or overly broad questions indicate that the project is not yet fully developed.
    - **Example of an insufficient question:**
      How are cancerous cells different from non-cancerous cells?
      Unless followed by an explanation of what specific aspect will be investigated, this question is too general to guide a research plan effectively.
2. **Detailed and Appropriate Procedures**
    - The proposed methods should include **enough detail for evaluators to determine whether the approach effectively addresses the research question**.
    - **Example of an insufficient description:**
      We will test the subjects' self-control by giving an adenosine antagonist.
      Since there are many ways to measure self-control, this statement does not provide enough information for evaluators to assess the suitability or rigor of the procedure.
3. **Plan for Data Analysis**
    - Proposals must include a clear description of **how the data will be analyzed**.
    - For quantitative research, specify the **statistical tests or models** to be used.
    - For qualitative or humanities-based research, describe the **interpretive methods or analytical frameworks** that will guide your analysis.
    - **Example of a strong humanities description:**
      By using textual analysis generally, and close reading of passages related to sexual aggression more specifically, I will analyze the discourse of The Great Gatsby *and* Tender Is the Night *through a historical versus a psychoanalytic lens.*

By ensuring that your research question, methods, and analysis plan are clearly articulated and well-developed, you help evaluators assess the merit, feasibility, and scholarly value of your proposal.