Undergraduate Research Award (URA)

Maximum Funding: $1,500
Eligible Students: Degree-seeking undergraduates
Applications Submitted: During February
Award Period: June through the following May

What projects can be funded by URA:
- Valuable and feasible original projects submitted by students from any department, with support from a UMBC faculty mentor.
- Projects that will be completed before the student graduates. (Students graduating in December may apply for funding in February of the same year as long as their proposed URA research will be completed prior to graduation.)
- Team projects may be submitted but a single award will be provided to only the team leader.
- Proposed URA budgets may include:
  - Equipment or supplies specific to the project.
  - Payment or other rewards to subjects in a research project.
  - Photocopying or printing of project related materials.
  - Travel (local or long distance) needed to complete the project.
  - Cost of attending a special program which provides training or information to be used to complete the project.
  - A stipend directly to the student researcher if explanation is provided that the student would otherwise be unable to conduct the research due to a necessity to work.

URA payments are typically made via check to the URA Scholar at his or her home address. This award will be reported as income via IRS form 1099 at the end of the calendar year. With approval of the student, mentor, and departmental finance officer, funds may be transferred directly to the department, in which case they are not reported as income.

What projects cannot be funded by URA:
- Students may not apply in February 2012 if they will be graduating in May 2012.
- Students cannot receive funding retroactively for research they have already completed. They may, however, apply for funding to continue research.
- Research conducted outside of UMBC is funded only to the extent that the student is attending a conference, workshop, laboratory, archive, or event directly related to the research and will follow up with continued research, analysis, or creative work at UMBC with the support of a UMBC faculty member.
- Proposed URA budgets should not include:
  - Purchase cost of books or reference materials that can be accessed via libraries or the Internet.
  - Routine equipment that should be available through the sponsoring mentor or department. In particular, purchase of computer equipment is typically not funded.

Other elements of a successful URA proposal:

- A clear statement of purpose describing **what the project will accomplish**, understandable to educated professionals who may not work in the field being researched.
- The project may be a part of a larger effort by the mentor, but should involve **independent work**; the student should not be solely acting as a technician for the mentor's work.
- An explanation of what **new information, scholarship, knowledge, or creative work** will result from the work.
- A motivation statement explaining **why this research is important**.
- A methods section describing **how the student will accomplish the project**.
- A description demonstrating the **feasible completion of the project within the time available**, given the student's preparation and the methods described.
- Evidence that the student has conducted a comprehensive **literature review** on the topic.
- Information about **the student's background with respect to the research**. If the student is to work in a laboratory, has he or she worked in the lab before? If the student is to create original choreography, has he or she received appropriate training?
- Where travel is involved, a clear statement of **why elements of the work need to be conducted at another location**.
- Where a survey instrument will be used, evidence that the student has **identified a validated instrument.**
- Where human subjects or personal data will be used, evidence that the project is **certifiable by the Institutional Review Board**.
- An **evaluation plan** that describes how the project's success will be measured.
- A description of **how the results of the research will be shared** beyond the student and mentor. This could include departmental colloquia, discipline-specific journals or conferences, a web page, a public show or other dissemination activities.
- A **budget that matches the proposal goals.**
- Information regarding **how the student will fund any outstanding costs** if the overall project will cost more than $1,500.
- A description of the **role of the mentor** in the project.
- **Well-written, grammatically correct narrative**.
- A transcript showing the applicant is **academically successful** and has completed the courses necessary to be prepared for the proposed research.
- A **letter of support** from the faculty mentor indicating knowledge of the student and his or her abilities as well as support of the project. The letter can further explain the importance of the work, the appropriate preparation of the student, and the feasibility of the work. The mentor's commitment to working with the student must be included.
- **Group projects** must name a group leader/contact person. This person will receive the award payment. Group submissions should include a transcript for each member of the group and an explanation of how each member will contribute to the project. In a group project, all members will be considered URA Scholars.