RECEIVED
OCT 12 2026
BLR

Proposed Rulemaking

Title

Promulgated by:
Division of Higher Education

Title 6. Education

Chapter IV. Division of Higher Education, Department of Education

Subchapter B. Scholarships and Grants

Part 396. Student Undergraduate Research Fellowship Program Rules

Subpart 1. Generally

6 CAR § 396-101. Purpose.

The purpose of the Student Undergraduate Research Fellowship (SURF) Program is to support the continued development of undergraduate academic research efforts at state-supported ~~colleges and universities~~ institutions of higher education.

6 CAR § 396-102. Definitions.

As used in this part:

(1) "Approved institution" means a ~~public-supported~~ state-supported or private, nonprofit postsecondary institution with its primary headquarters located in Arkansas that is eligible to receive Title IV federal student aid funds;

(2)(A) "Citizen" means a person who is a United States citizen or a permanent resident alien.

(B) If the recipient is not a United States citizen but a permanent resident alien, the recipient must attach a copy of the permanent resident alien ~~card~~ form, I 551, or I 94 to the application;

(3) "Eligible applicant" means any applicant who meets the eligibility criteria

established in 6 CAR § 396-104;

(4) "Fellowship" means an amount of money given to a student for a specified period that allows him or her to study and research a subject;

(5) "Full-time student" means a student enrolled in twelve (12) semester credit hours or its equivalent per semester;

(6) "Institutional match" means the amount of funds institution must match for a student's stipend;

(7) "Mentor" means a tenured or full-time faculty member;

(8) "Mentor cost" means any salary, fringe benefits, materials, supplies, and travel costs awarded to the mentor associated with mentoring the student;

(9) "Semester" means a spring, summer, or fall term;

(10) "Student stipend" means an amount of money awarded to the student to conduct his or her research;

(11) "Student travel" means costs incurred by a student to present the results of his or her research at a state or national conference or to attend a meeting of experts in his or her discipline; and

(12)(A) "SURF Selection Panel" means a panel of faculty or administrators of Arkansas public or private institutions of higher education who have earned a Ph.D. or terminal degree in the discipline being reviewed.

(B) Other reviewers will be considered who have earned a Ph.D. or terminal degree in the discipline to be reviewed and who have an affiliation with an Arkansas public or private institution of higher education or an education-related entity.

6 CAR § 396-103. Organization and structure.

(a)(1) The Division of Higher Education shall administer the Student Undergraduate Research Fellowship (SURF) within the policies set by the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

(2) All formal communications shall be addressed to or signed by the Commissioner of the Division of Higher Education or his or her designee.

(3) The SURF Selection Panel shall select recipients for awards.

(b)(1) The SURF Selection Panel shall consist of faculty or administrators at an Arkansas public or private institution of higher education who have earned a Ph.D. or terminal degree in the discipline to be reviewed.

(2) Other panel members will be considered who have earned a Ph.D. or terminal degree in the discipline to be reviewed and who have an affiliation with an Arkansas public or private institution of higher education or an education-related entity.

(3) The ~~commissioner~~ Commissioner of the Division of Higher Education or his or her designee shall serve as presiding officer of the SURF Selection Panel.

(c)(1) The focus of the Student Undergraduate Research Fellowship is the continued development of undergraduate academic research efforts at Arkansas's public and private institutions of higher education and to provide funding to encourage students to conduct in-depth research projects in specific fields of study under the tutelage of a tenured or full-time faculty member.

(2) The program is designed to assist all students throughout the state.

(d) The commissioner has the final responsibility for selecting fellowship recipients subject to the provisions of Arkansas Code § 6-61-236 and this part.

6 CAR § 396-104. Fellowship eligibility criteria.

(a) An applicant must meet the following requirements to be eligible to receive the Student Undergraduate Research Fellowship:

(1) The applicant must be a citizen of the United States or a permanent resident alien;

(2) The applicant shall be enrolled in an approved Arkansas institution of higher education as a full-time student as defined by the Division of Higher Education;

(3)(A) The applicant must be enrolled in a program of study that leads to or is creditable towards a baccalaureate degree.

(B) These programs include baccalaureate and associate degree programs;

(4) The applicant must have completed at least thirty (30) semester credit hours before funds are awarded;

(5) The applicant must have a minimum cumulative 3.25 grade point average; and

(6) The applicant must have a tenured or full-time faculty member to serve as his or her mentor.

(b) A student may compete for additional years but cannot receive more than three (3) academic years of funding.

6 CAR § 396-105. Application process.

(a) The Division of Higher Education will disseminate the Student Undergraduate Research Fellowship announcement through workshops, meetings, press releases, division newsletters, the division's website, and by other appropriate methods.

(b) Student Undergraduate Research Fellowship announcements will be emailed to:

(1) Presidents and chancellors of institutions of higher education;

(2) Chief Academic Officers;

(3) Directors of Research and sponsored programs;

(4) Previous SURF panel members and mentors; and

(5) Faculty, administrators, and other interested persons.

(c)(1) Students must submit an application for the Student Undergraduate Research Fellowship to the division.

(2) The division shall provide an application form on its website and to any individual upon request.

(3) The applicant must complete and submit the Student Undergraduate Research Fellowship application to be considered for the fellowship.

(d) Any interested student who meets the eligibility criteria in 6 CAR § 396-104 may apply.

(e)(1) ~~The division shall establish the deadline for receipt of applications each year.~~ The deadline for applications to be submitted to the division is November 1 each year.

(2) The deadline date shall be clearly printed on the application and website.

(3)(A) All applications and supporting documentation must be postmarked or emailed by the established deadline date in order to be considered.

(B) It is the responsibility of the individual applicant to ensure that the application is postmarked or emailed by the deadline date.

(4) If any deadline date occurs on a weekend or holiday, the deadline will be extended to the following business day.

(f) The SURF Selection Panel shall read and score applications.

(g)(1) SURF Selection Panel members shall meet with the division to make recommendations for SURF awards based upon the selection criteria listed in 6 CAR § 396-106.

(2) The SURF Selection Panel is divided into two (2) groups to represent STEM disciplines and non-STEM disciplines.

(3)(A) Each group will make recommendations for applicants from the respective disciplines.

(B) Subject to appropriations, the SURF Selection Panel will award sixty percent (60%) of the funds to STEM applicants and forty percent (40%) of the funds to non-STEM applicants.

(C) Should there not be enough qualified applicants in the STEM or non-STEM group to make recommendations for awards, funds can be shifted from one group to another until all funds are exhausted.

(h) The amount of the fellowship awarded to each recipient shall be as follows:

(1)(A) Up to one thousand two hundred fifty dollars ($1,250) for a student stipend.

(B) If a student is awarded a fellowship for only a spring or fall semester, the student stipend shall not exceed six hundred twenty-five dollars ($625);

(i) If a student is awarded a fellowship for the spring semester through the summer semester, the student stipend shall not exceed six hundred twenty-five dollars ($625).

(2) Up to seven hundred fifty dollars ($750) for student travel;

(3) Up to seven hundred fifty dollars ($750) for a mentor award; and

(4) Up to one thousand two hundred fifty dollars ($1,250) for the institution match.

(i) The maximum award shall not exceed four thousand dollars ($4,000).

(j)(1) The division shall notify each eligible applicant of his or her award.

(2) The award notice shall include the student's name, address, faculty mentor's name, institution, and the actual amount the student is eligible to receive.

(3) The award notice shall explain the division's disbursement procedures and conditions as detailed in 6 CAR § 396-107.

(k) The division shall notify the appropriate faculty and administration at each institution and the SURF Panel of SURF awardees.

(l) The division shall notify applicants who are determined to be ineligible and provide the reason for ineligibility.

(m) Once each applicant has accepted his or her SURF award and all funds are exhausted, the division shall notify all remaining eligible applicants that all funds have been awarded via a "no award" notice.

6 CAR § 396-106. Fellowship selection criteria.

(a) All proposals will be reviewed by the Student Undergraduate Research Fellowship Selection Panel that is selected by the Division of Higher Education.

(b) The SURF Selection Panel will use the following scale to grade the selection criteria found in the table at Appendix A (the selection criteria), one (1) being the best score and nine (9) being the worst score:

(1) 1 – Superior: Extraordinary and needs little to no revision, improvement, or both;

(2) 2 – Excellent: Easily addressable issues and needs little revision, improvement, or both;

(3) 3 – Above Average: Has strong quality and would benefit from revision, improvement, or both;

(4) 4 – Good: Has slightly above average quality and needs some revision, improvement, or both;

(5) 5 – Average: Has average quality and needs revision, improvement, or both;

(6) 6 – Fair: Has slightly below average quality and needs revision, improvement, or both;

(7) 7 – Below Average: Has weak quality and requires revision, improvement, or both;

(8) 8 – Minimal: Multiple issues and severely requires revision, improvement, or both; and

(9) 9 – Poor: Not recommended for funding or consideration.

(c)(1) The SURF Selection Panel shall meet and make recommendation for students to be awarded a fellowship based upon the selection criteria.

(2) Recommendation of awards shall be made until all funds are exhausted.

(3) The SURF Panel shall also select alternates to be awarded in the event a student does not accept his or her SURF award.

(d) The Commissioner of the Division of Higher Education, or his or her designee, has the final responsibility for selecting fellowship recipients.

6 CAR § 396-107. Fellowship payment procedures.

(a)(1) The Division of Higher Education shall disburse fellowship funds to the institution designated on the student's application.

(2) The division shall send funds to the appropriate administrative staff at the institution via electronic funds transfer or state warrant.

(3)(A) The division will also send an award roster and receipt confirmation to the appropriate institution.

(B) The award roster lists the students to be awarded and the disbursement amounts.

~~(C) The receipt confirmation should be signed by the disbursement officer and returned to the division.~~

(4) The institution will disburse the grant funds to the student according to the institution's disbursement procedures.

(b) Fellowships shall be terminated for a recipient's:

(1) Failure to maintain at least a 3.25 cumulative grade point average on a

4.00 scale;

(2) Failure to maintain satisfactory academic progress as defined by the institution; and

(3) Failure to conduct the research for which the fellowship was awarded.

(c)(1) The recipient is responsible for notifying the division in writing of any change in status, i.e., change of address, email, transfer of research to another mentor, etc.

(2) A recipient's failure to provide written notification may result in the cancellation of the fellowship for that term.

(d)(1) Recipients who are members of the Arkansas National Guard or reserve components of the United States Armed Forces units who are called to active duty for reasons other than regular unit training and are unable to complete the current term will be allowed to repeat the missed term.

(2) Those recipients shall be placed in deferred status until six (6) months after release from active duty, at which time they must be reenrolled and continue research with the same mentor.

(e) If the recipient of a fellowship withdraws, drops out, is expelled, falls below the minimum standards in 6 CAR § 396-104, or does not conduct the research for which the fellowship award was received, the fellowship award for that semester shall be refunded to the division.

6 CAR § 396-108. Institutional responsibilities.

(a)(1) The chief executive officer of the eligible institution is responsible for designating one (1) institutional representative to act as administrator of the Student Undergraduate Research Fellowship and to receive all communications, forms, and the like for that institution.

(2) This representative is responsible for verification, data, and compliance with all law and Division of Higher Education rules related to the program.

(3) The institution must comply with all law and rules in order to maintain continued eligibility status.

(b) Each authorizing institutional official certifies, by signing the program

application, that the applicant has met all conditions of the fellowship eligibility criteria in 6 CAR § 396-104.

(c) The institution shall maintain information on the student indicating disbursement of fellowship funds.

(d) The institution shall provide certification of full-time enrollment as of the close of business on the eleventh day of classes.

(e) The institution must comply with OMB Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards in 2 C.F.R. § 200 ~~Circular A-21, Cost Principles for Educational Institutions, and OMB Circular A-110, Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and other Non-Profit Organizations, when managing fellowship funds~~.

(f) Each institution shall establish a separate account for each student awarded a SURF fellowship.

(g) The appropriate faculty head of the academic discipline for which a recipient is conducting research under the fellowship is responsible for ensuring that the student and mentor are conducting research as set forth in the fellowship application submitted to the division.

(h)(1) Funds shall be disbursed to students and mentors in accordance with the institution's disbursement procedures according to OMB Circular A-21 and OMB Circular A-110.

(2) Any outstanding funds not disbursed by the end of the semester must be returned to the division within fifteen (15) days of the semester's end.

(3) The institutional representative is responsible for issuing a refund under 6 CAR § 396-107(e) to the division within fifteen (15) days of the semester's end.

(i) Each institution shall exercise due diligence in providing complete, accurate, and timely information as requested by the division on any fellowship recipient or former recipient.

(j) The division shall periodically review the program.

6 CAR § 396-109. Fellowship recipient's responsibilities.

(a)(1) It is the recipient's responsibility to notify the Division of Higher Education in writing of any change in status, i.e., change of address, email, transfer of research to another mentor, etc.

(2) Failure to provide written notification may result in the cancellation of the fellowship for that term.

(b) A fellowship recipient shall not change the purpose for his or her research project.

(c) Each fellowship recipient shall submit a one-page abstract on the findings of his or her research upon completion of the project to the division as follows:

(1) By May 1 for a spring term project completion;

(2) By August 1 for a summer term project completion; and

(3) By December 1 for a fall term project completion.

(d)(1) Fellowship recipients are required to present the findings of their research at a state or national conference in their discipline or attend a meeting of experts in their discipline as directed by their mentor.

(2) Failure by a fellowship recipient to comply with any of the above may result in forfeiture of his or her SURF fellowship funds.

~~**Appendix A. Student Undergraduate Research Fellowship Selection Criteria**~~

~~**Link:**~~
~~**https://CodeOfARRules.arkansas.gov/docs/CARCodeAppendices/Appendices/322/6CARpt.396AppendixA.pdf**~~
Appendix A. Student Undergraduate Research Fellowship Selection Criteria

Link:
https://CodeOfARRules.arkansas.gov/docs/CARCodeAppendices/Appendices/322/6CARpt.396AppendixA.pdf