

# Office of Undergraduate Research

## Federal Work-Study Research Assistants Program



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**TENNESSEE**  
KNOXVILLE

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UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH

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## Welcome Letter

Congratulations on being involved with the Federal Work-Study Research Assistants Program! Whether you are new to the world of undergraduate research or have completed research in the past, we are excited to have you.

2016-17 is the second year for this initiative. It is our hope you will benefit from this experience and it will meet both yours and our expectations. Work-study is a valuable experience that can fund education while engaging students in learning.

Students, we are excited you are engaging in the research and hope you gain all of the advantages a research experience offers students. Take this time to explore what it would be like to attend graduate school, learn more about what you are passionate about, and build a connection to a faculty mentor. Immerse yourself into your department's activities, ask questions and try new things.

Faculty, we also want you to have a valuable experience mentoring your student research assistant. Help us introduce students to research in your discipline, challenge them by assigning meaningful projects, and engage them in opportunities to present what they have found.

The Office of Undergraduate Research is here to support you on your journey. Please contact our office if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Marisa Moazen  
Director, Office of Undergraduate Research

**What is the Office of Undergraduate Research?**

The Office of Undergraduate Research coordinates and promotes the hundreds of undergraduate research and creative activities that exist across the University of Tennessee, Knoxville campus. Undergraduate research and creative activities can be pursued in a variety of ways, which include assisting a faculty member on his or her project, managing your own research project under the mentorship of a faculty member, conducting research as part of a listed course and conducting research as part of an independent study. Our office is here to support these activities in all manners and across all disciplines.

**Where is the Office of Undergraduate Research?**

The Office of Undergraduate Research is located in Blount Hall with the Office of Research and Engagement.

**What programs does the Office of Undergraduate Research offer?**

The University of Tennessee has a strong commitment to undergraduate research. The Office of Undergraduate Research is funded by the Chancellor and the Office of Research and Engagement to coordinate and support undergraduate research activities across the campus. Some of these activities include the spring campus-wide undergraduate poster and creative activity competition, EURēCA (Exhibition of Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity), Discovery Day, a fall event that celebrates summer research activities and allows faculty to recruit student researchers in person, and a seminar series on undergraduate research. Individual research opportunities include this Federal Work-Study Research Assistant program and the summer research internship program which sponsors students to stay on campus and conduct research with a faculty member. We also support students traveling to select conference to present the outcomes of their research efforts.

Through a vibrant Undergraduate Research Students' Association two additional activities occur – the Undergraduate Research Symposium and the publication of *Pursuit: The Undergraduate Research Journal* of the University of Tennessee.

For more information on our programs visit <http://ugresearch.utk.edu>.

**What is a Work-Study Research Assistant (RA)?**

The Office of Undergraduate Research collaborates with the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships to allow students to use federal work-study funds as to support undergraduate research assistants for University of Tennessee, Knoxville faculty. Work-Study RAs are assigned to a specific faculty member to help work on a research project. While much of the work may be basic (entering and coding data, collecting specimens, conducting literature searches, communicating with participants), the goal is for the student to make a meaningful contribution to the project while learning about the process of research or scholarship in the field. We expect for RAs to be fully integrated in research teams or discussions. RAs can also take on additional responsibility for projects as they gain experience.

## Federal Work-Study Guidelines

### What is Federal Work-Study?

Federal Work-Study (FWS) is a program which provides part-time employment opportunities to eligible students to help meet the costs of post-secondary education. Based on the results of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), eligible students are awarded an allotment which may be earned through part time employment in FWS approved positions either on or off campus. The program is designed to provide students with an opportunity for employment arranged around class schedules. Students must be enrolled at least half-time (six credit hours per semester) to be eligible for this program. **If you wish to be considered for this program, you should indicate this preference on the FAFSA or, if not awarded FWS in your initial award package, you should contact One Stop**, located in Hodges Library on the ground floor, via phone (865) 974-1111, or on the web at <http://onestop.utk.edu/>.

### How do I apply for Federal Work-Study?

Federal Work-Study eligibility is based on demonstrated financial need. To be considered for a Federal Work-Study award at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, you should complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid. Since work-study funds are limited, you should file the FAFSA as early as possible. If you are not awarded Federal Work-Study as part of your initial award package, you should contact One Stop for additional instructions. If you are subsequently awarded a Federal Work-Study award, you will receive a revised Award Notification.

### How will I know if I qualify for Federal Work-Study?

After filing the FAFSA, the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships will send an Award Notification to students whose applications are complete and who are eligible for need-based financial aid. This notification will describe the types and amounts of awards offered, including FWS. If this notification does not include a FWS award, you are not currently eligible to obtain a position under this program. If you are interested in FWS but are not awarded a FWS award, send an email to One Stop at [onestop@utk.edu](mailto:onestop@utk.edu) and let them know you are interested.

### How much can I earn?

Your FWS salary will be at least the current federal minimum wage. Your total FWS award depends on when you apply, your level of financial need, and the amount of FWS funds available. The amount you earn cannot exceed your total FWS award.

### What happens if my earnings reach my maximum award?

You are responsible for ensuring that you do not earn more than your FWS award total. Your department may notify you that you are approaching your limit, but you should monitor your total hours worked and total gross earnings. The department has the option of either continuing your assignment and paying 100% from their departmental budget or ending your assignment altogether.

### Are Federal Work-Study wages considered taxable income?

YES. Federal Work-Study wages are taxable income. It is in your best interest to file a federal tax return with the IRS by April 15th. You will receive W-2 forms from UT for your work-study earnings in January.

**How do I learn more about Financial Aid and Federal Work-Study?**

The website for OneStop Express Student Services (<http://onestop.utk.edu>) is your first stop. The website has information, and you are also welcome to visit the Office of Student Financial Aid and Scholarships on the first floor of the Student Services Building between 9am and 5pm, Mondays-Fridays.

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**Office of Undergraduate Research Federal Work-Study Research Assistants**  
**Terms and Conditions (as determined by the Offices of Financial Aid and Scholarships and Undergraduate Research)**

Including the requirements listed above students are required to meet the followings terms and conditions. Once a student submits a Student Employment Verification form they are accepting the following:

To be eligible to be an Office of Undergraduate Research Federal Work-Study Research Assistant, she or he must:

- File a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and be determined to have financial need. A new FAFSA must be submitted every year to continue to receive FWS. Check the Financial Aid website for deadlines.
- Have FWS awarded on their financial aid package.
- Be an undergraduate student.
- Be enrolled at least part-time (at least 6 credit hours per semester).
- Be a U.S. Citizen or eligible non-citizen.
- Be achieving Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP).
- Not be in default on a student loan.
- Submit all documents required by the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarship.
- Not work more than one FWS job simultaneously.
- Be supported by only one Office of Undergraduate Research program at a time. A student may not simultaneously be supported as a Work-Study Research Assistant and Summer Undergraduate Research Internship Program Grant. However, all students are eligible to participate in events such as EURēCA and other non-paid activities.

Additionally, students acknowledge:

- No student may earn more than his/her award per academic year.
- Any unearned funds will be forfeited.
- The University of Tennessee has the right to terminate any Federal Work-Study position due to changes in availability of FWS funds or due to changes in the student status that could affect continued eligibility for financial aid. Failure to abide by University of Tennessee policies and procedures, unsatisfactory performance, poor attendance, unethical work behavior or dishonesty may also result in the loss of your FWS award.
- The Office of Undergraduate Research has the right to terminate any student from an Office of Undergraduate Research Federal Work-Study Research Assistants program with cause. This means that students have an obligation to fulfill the duties of the position. Willful misconduct and deliberate neglect of your duties are justifiable reasons for termination. Mentors have an obligation to discuss with students the expectations of the position, and to guide students if they are not fulfilling the duties of the position. Faculty should counsel students about corrective action before requesting that the student be terminated. Students and faculty are both welcome to contact the Office of Undergraduate Research if they need assistance in navigating this professional relationship.
- The Office of Undergraduate Research has the right to terminate an Office of Undergraduate Research Federal Work-Study Research Assistants position if the project ends or the faculty mentor is not fulfilling the basic obligations of the mentoring relationship. Efforts will be made to find the student a suitable alternative placement.

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**Important Dates 2016-2017**

July 1, 2016	Beginning of Federal Work-Study Fiscal Year
August 17, 2016	Beginning of Fall Semester
August 31, 2016	Student Orientation for first year students
November 28, 2016	Due Date for First Performance Evaluations
November 29, 2016	End of Fall Semester
January 11, 2017	Beginning of Spring Semester
February 15, 2017	FAFSA Priority Deadline
April 27, 2017	Due Date for Second Performance Evaluations
April 28, 2017	End of Spring Semester
June 30, 2017	End of Federal Work-Study Fiscal Year



## Faculty

### What Does it Mean to be a Mentor?

*“Students report the most important aspect of their undergraduate research experience is the relationship with the mentor” (Temple, Sibley & Orr, 2010)<sup>1</sup>.*

- Mentors are essential in ensuring the success of a student’s experience with research. For some students, they will serve as the first individual to intellectually stimulate them outside of the classroom.
- The mentor teaches a variety of applied skills, methods and techniques that fosters curiosity and allows students to ask question. They help students to develop critical thinking and analytical skills.
- Mentors provide opportunities to collaborate on research projects and publications. They provide guidance in planning professional progress and achieving necessary milestones.
- Mentors train a new generation of scholars and practitioners.

### Recruiting

#### 1. Write a Good Job Description

All positions must give the students direct experience with research or scholarship, at a level that is consistent with the student's skills and interests. These are not secretarial or other administrative support positions. We expect that you will treat the Office of Undergraduate Research Federal Work-Study Research Assistant as a full member of your research or creative team.

A good position description will include:

- 2-5 sentences describing the project and requirements for the position
- reasonably nontechnical and written in language geared toward undergraduate students
- include contact information, in case a student has direct questions about the position

As requested by Financial Aid, all position descriptions must be submitted using the authorized posting form. For priority consideration in a new academic year, positions need to be submitted by early August, although we continue to post and fill position on a rolling basis through the academic year when funding is available.

#### 2. Post and Advertise the Position

The Office of Undergraduate Research will post Work-Study RA positions to our website (<http://ugresearch.utk.edu/federal-work-study-research-assistantships/>). We’ll send you the position number and link within a week of posting. We recommend that you share this

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<sup>1</sup> Temple, L., Sibley, T.Q., & Orr, A.J. (2010). How to mentor undergraduate researchers. Washington: Council on Undergraduate Research.

position information with your students, since they are likely to be most qualified. You can announce the position in class, and send the description through your department student listserv.

Make sure to include the position number with the description. All students must officially apply through the Office of Undergraduate Research to get hired under Federal Work-Study.

### 3. Hire your Office of Undergraduate Research RA

The Office of Undergraduate Research can screen student applications at the faculty members request. While we will make every effort to match faculty projects with undergraduate students, we cannot guarantee that this will happen for every job posting.

Please feel free to interview all, some or none of the applications sent. These applicants have already passed the one requirement that Office of Undergraduate Research and the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships requires and that is they have been awarded Federal Work-Study funds. Any other requirements are completely up to faculty.

Once faculty have interviewed and decided on a student for their position, please send an email to [ugresearch@utk.edu](mailto:ugresearch@utk.edu), and we will assist the students in completing all the necessary Human Resources paperwork.

### **Hours and Schedule Setting**

Office of Undergraduate Research RAs can be awarded up to \$3000 for the academic year through Financial Aid. As faculty make decisions on whom to employ, please have each student share with you their individual awards amounts as we do not have access to that information.

Schedules should be worked out between the student and the faculty member. Students are not allowed to work more than 20 hours per week during regular class sessions. Please keep in mind that the Office of Undergraduate Research RAs cannot work more than **150 hours per semester** and will be paid **\$7.25/hour**. Student employees are paid every two weeks and may earn up to the amount of their total award.

Holidays and closings: FWS students who work on a holiday or when the campus is closed due to inclement weather must have a supervisor present – supervisors will need to initial that time on the time report to indicate it was approved.

Federal regulations state that students cannot work during any scheduled class times. If a class is canceled, the student is required to provide supporting documentation prior to working. A copy of the documentation must be sent with the current time report for that pay period to [utfws@utk.edu](mailto:utfws@utk.edu) in order for the time to be approved. Student workers must provide a current class schedule at the beginning of each semester to their department to avoid conflict with work scheduling. It is the responsibility of the department to verify that students are not working during scheduled class times.

If a student works over his/her award amount, the department may lose FWS students. Award amounts will be given to the department at the time of placement.

## **Timesheets**

Time reports are due to the Office of Financial Aid & Scholarships on the Friday before the pay period ending date. ALL time reports received after 10 am on Monday following the pay period ending date will not be processed until the next payroll. Please send signed time reports to [utfws@utk.edu](mailto:utfws@utk.edu).

Time reports must be filled out with the correct Dates, Cost Center (we can provide if you do not have the current number), Position (FWS), Rate/Hour (\$7.25), Employee Name, Personnel Number (this is NOT the student ID it is the employee number in IRIS), Weekly work hours (may be left blank). Both student and supervisor signature are required before time will be entered for payment.

Daily time in and out is required on the time report. A mandatory 30 minute break is required when a student works six consecutive hours. This must be shown on the time report as time in and out.

Time reports are to be scanned and emailed to [utfws@utk.edu](mailto:utfws@utk.edu) from a university employee email account OR hand delivered in a sealed envelope by a university employee. Students cannot deliver timesheets. (Faxed time sheets are no longer accepted)

## **Evaluating Students**

Faculty will be asked to assess the student's skills, through interviews and observation at least twice during the academic year. We will send you a link to a survey and a prompt to evaluate your students. You should review the each item on the rubric soon after hiring the student to get a sense of where the student is starting, so you can gauge progress as the student works on the project.

## **Discipline and Terminations**

*Faculty members have the right to terminate a student's employment.*

1. Faculty members should make every effort to coach the Office of Undergraduate Research RA and offer him or her the opportunity to improve before termination of employment. However, some situations may warrant immediate termination.
2. Faculty members are responsible for bringing your concerns about job performance to the student's attention.
3. Progressive discipline should be used where applicable, including **verbal warning, written warning, and finally discharge**.
4. Maintain **written documentation** of each discipline situation.

## Students

### **What Does it Mean to Do Research?**

*Research is being introduced to the concept of scholarship, and to learn the research or scholarly methods in a discipline.*

- Students will understand how knowledge is generated and disseminated through scholarship, and the importance of scholarship to society.
  - Distinguish between personal beliefs and evidence.
  - Understand research methods used in a discipline.
  - Understand how knowledge is transmitted within a discipline, across disciplines, and to the public.
- Students will engage in the key elements of the scholarly process and situate the concepts, practices, or results of scholarship within a broader context.

### **How to Apply**

*Obtaining a FWS position is a competitive process so an early start is essential to success. Students can start interviewing prior to the first day of classes. Being awarded FWS does not guarantee a position.*

Below are instructions for students to follow in order to search for available positions:

1. Positions can be viewed on the Office of Undergraduate Research website (<http://ugresearch.utk.edu>). Under 'For Students', then 'Federal Work-Study RA program'.
2. Once you locate a position you are interested in submit an application for that position following the instructions.
3. Once you have submitted your application, the faculty mentor will contact selected students for interviews.
4. If you are selected to be an Office of Undergraduate Research RA, you will be contacted by an Office of Undergraduate Research staff member arrange an appointment for you to complete the required paperwork. The following forms must be completed and submitted prior to starting work:
  - Student Employment Authorization Form (completed by both student and supervisor upon hire)
  - Federal W-4 Employee Tax Withholdings
  - I-9 Employee Eligibility Verification, along with copies of appropriate identification
  - Direct Deposit Form

### Enrollment Requirements

- Enrolled undergraduate students are eligible to work as student employees. If you have graduated, you are not considered a current student and therefore, are not eligible for student employment.
- Be enrolled at least part-time (at least 6 credit hours per semester).

### Orientation

- The Office of Undergraduate Research will hold a Federal Work-Study student orientation in the beginning of each academic year. This orientation is mandatory for all first year students hired through the Work-Study RA Program.

### Professionalism

- Office of Undergraduate Research RAs are representatives of the Office of Undergraduate Research.
  - The Office of Undergraduate Research would like to project a professional image. Since you, as an employee, represent Office of Undergraduate Research, unprofessional behavior should be avoided. This includes dressing appropriately – use the appearance of others in your work environment as a guide, and if you have any questions about what is acceptable, you should ask your mentor.
- Work-Study Positions are Real Jobs
  - Your department and your supervisor are counting on you to be there when you are scheduled. It is unacceptable for you to make a habit of being late or not showing up while the rest of your team becomes frustrated with having to pick up your work. It reflects badly on you and your department. Consistent lateness or missing work is a cause for termination.
  - If you have an unexpected emergency, make sure to call and inform your supervisor so that adjustments can be made.
- Work-Study Does Not Mean Study During Work
  - During your scheduled hours you are there to work. Most Work-Study supervisors are aware that you are trying to juggle an academic schedule with a work schedule.
  - You and your supervisor should plan a work schedule that will best accommodate your academic hours and study time. When discussing your work schedule, be sure to leave time outside of your work hours for studying.

### Hours

- Students **may not work more than 20 hours per week** during the fall and spring semesters and no more than 40 hours per week during winter, spring, and summer breaks.
- Students may not work more than 8 hours in one day, and must take a ½ hour break when working 6 or more hours.

### **Schedule Setting**

- Students must arrange a mutually agreeable work schedule with his/her supervisor and adhere to it.
- Arrange a work schedule that does not interfere with your class schedule.
- Follow the schedule carefully once it has been established. Always, notify your supervisor if you are unable to work.
- During final exams and midterms supervisors must accommodate the student's study/exam schedule.
- Be punctual.
- Student must provide prior notification to supervisor of inability to report for scheduled work hours.

*Students cannot be paid for hours worked when it is determined that they should have been attending class during that time.*

### **Timesheets and Pay Periods**

- All timesheets must be scanned and emailed to [utfws@utk.edu](mailto:utfws@utk.edu).
- Time reports are due to the Office of Financial Aid & Scholarships on the Friday before the pay period ending date. ALL time reports received after 10 am on Monday following the pay period ending date will not be processed until the next payroll.
- It is recommended that students keep a copy of their timesheet, in case there is ever a problem or discrepancy.

### **Direct Deposit**

- The University of Tennessee requires all employees to use Direct Deposit.

### **Resignation and Terminations**

- Students should give a notification of at least two weeks if planning to resign from their FWS position.
- A student's continued employment is contingent upon satisfactory performance as determined by their supervisor. If the supervisor decides that the student's performance is not satisfactory, the student may be dismissed. Student employees may write a letter of appeal to be placed in their student employment file.
- If they knowingly submit fraudulent information, students will be dismissed from the program and may face legal consequences.

## CONTACT US

Have questions or comments? We look forward to hearing from you.

**Website:** [ugresearch.utk.edu](http://ugresearch.utk.edu)

**E-mail:** [ugresearch@utk.edu](mailto:ugresearch@utk.edu)

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