

SPARC Graduate Research Grant

Support to Promote Advancement of Research and Creativity

Application Guidelines Fall 2026

Table of Contents

OVERVIEW..... 2

ELIGIBILITY TO APPLY 2

FUNDS AVAILABLE AND PROJECT DATES 3

RESEARCH INTEGRITY AND AUTHORSHIP 3

REQUIRED INFORMATION FORM 3

PROPOSAL GUIDELINES 4

 Formatting Guidelines..... 4

 Proposal Narrative 4

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION..... 5

 BUDGET FORM AND DETAILS..... 6

Budget and Funding Overview..... 6

Allowable Costs..... 7

Unallowable Costs 7

Participant Incentives Request Process 8

 CURRENT AND PENDING SUPPORT FORM..... 8

 BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH..... 8

 AUTHORSHIP AND GPA CERTIFICATION FORM..... 9

 LETTER(S) OF SUPPORT..... 9

FACULTY ADVISOR 10

 FACULTY ADVISOR ELIGIBILITY 10

 LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION 10

SUBMISSION PROCESS..... 11

ORDER OF DOCUMENTS REQUIRED FOR SUBMISSION.....11

STUDENT APPLICANT RESPONSIBILITY.....11

FACULTY ADVISOR RESPONSIBILITY AND USCERA11

INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL 11

PROJECTS INVOLVING VERTEBRATE ANIMALS OR HUMAN SUBJECTS 13

 GENERAL GUIDELINES13

 FOR RESEARCH PROJECTS INVOLVING LIVE, VERTEBRATE ANIMALS13

 FOR RESEARCH PROJECTS INVOLVING HUMAN PARTICIPANTS13

RESUBMISSIONS 14

REQUIREMENTS FOR SPARC GRANT RECIPIENTS..... 15

CONTACT FOR QUESTIONS 15

OVERVIEW

Sponsored by the Office of the Vice President for Research, the SPARC Graduate Research Grant is a merit-based award designed to ignite research and creative excellence across all disciplines at USC. Students are required to write a grant proposal describing a research project directly tied to and advancing their degree completion requirements. Awardees will receive up to \$5000 to fund innovative research and creative projects. The grant may be used to support the student in a variety of ways, including salary, supplies, travel, and other costs essential to promote research, creative, and scholarly activity.

The overall objectives of the SPARC Graduate Research Grant are to support outstanding student research and advance their degree completion during their graduate career at the University of South Carolina. Importantly, the process of applying for a SPARC Graduate Research Grant will train students to write competitive research proposals, leading to more students with the skills and background necessary to seek national fellowship awards from the federal government and private foundations.

ELIGIBILITY TO APPLY

- All PhD-degree seeking students in their second year (or later) are eligible to apply. First year PhD students are *not eligible* to apply for the SPARC Graduate Research Grant.
- MD-PhD students are eligible to apply for SPARC during the first year (or later) of the PhD phase of the program (if following a plan of 2 years of MD program, 3 years of PhD program, and then 2 years of MD to complete the program).
- Master of Fine Arts (MFA) and Master of Arts (MA) in Public History students are eligible and may apply in their first year (or later) of graduate study. Please note these are the only masters-seeking degrees that are eligible for SPARC.
- At the time of award (May 2027), applicants must have one full year left prior to anticipated degree completion. Thus, for the 2026-27 cycle, applicants must have an anticipated degree completion date of May 2028 or later.
- MD, PharmD, and non-PhD seeking doctoral students are *not eligible* to apply for SPARC grants.
- Applicants must be current students at the time of application.

- Applicants must have a minimum graduate GPA of 3.0.
- International students are eligible to apply.
- Students may receive the SPARC Graduate Research Grant *only ONCE*.
- Students who have previously received a major federal or foundation grant or fellowship (such as NIH F31 Fellowship, NSF Graduate Research Fellowship, etc.) are not eligible to apply for SPARC funding. Students are allowed and encouraged to apply for one of these at the same time as SPARC.
- Each faculty advisor/mentor can sponsor only two student SPARC applications each year (i.e. only two students per faculty mentor may apply for SPARC each year). Faculty mentors may not circumvent this rule by sponsoring two students and then having other faculty sponsor additional students for whom they are the primary dissertation/thesis advisor.

FUNDS AVAILABLE AND PROJECT DATES

Applicants may request up to \$5000 with a project period of up to/maximum of 15 months. Applicants must provide a detailed justification for the requested funds and may request less than the maximum amount. The project start date is May 1st of the year awarded with a project period of up to 15 months. The project end date is July 31st of the following year or upon graduation, *whichever is first*.

RESEARCH INTEGRITY AND AUTHORSHIP

All participants are bound by the Responsible Conduct of Research code of ethics, the Carolinian Creed, and the University's Honor Code. Violations of these codes will result in an immediate decline or withdrawal of funding and referral to the appropriate office for disciplinary measures.

The graduate student is the primary author on the proposal and is responsible for writing their own SPARC proposal. Violations related to plagiarism include, but are not limited to, copying text from previous or same round proposals without proper citations, failure to include references or to cite said references, and any other forms of misconduct or misrepresentation.

REQUIRED INFORMATION FORM

Applicants must complete the [SPARC Applicant Information Form](#) to indicate "intent to submit." *This form is required for every submission – including resubmissions.*

- Proposals received from students who did not complete the SPARC Applicant Information form may be rejected.

PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

Proposals must be submitted into USCeRA by 5:00 pm EST* on the due date. Proposals received after this time will be declined without review. Incomplete proposals and those that do not adhere to formatting requirements or other guidelines will also be declined without review.

- * Please note that the 5pm requirement on the deadline date is for submission of the completed application/proposal INTO USCeRA (=clicking on the “Start approval process” button). Electronic signatures from the Chair and Dean can occur later. They are notified automatically by the system of pending applications.

Formatting Guidelines

- *Failure to adhere to these guidelines will result in rejection of the proposal.*
 - Do not include a cover page.
 - Use a readable font, such as Aptos, Arial, Calibri, Times New Roman, etc.
 - Font size of 11 points (*minimum*) with margins of 0.5 inch (top, bottom, left, and right) for all pages.
 - Center title at top of first page of the Proposal Narrative.
 - Under the title, provide student’s full name, degree program, anticipated graduation date, and advisor’s name and department.
 - **The proposal narrative may not exceed three (3) single-spaced pages.** Proposal narratives which exceed this page limit will not be accepted.
 - All figures and tables must be included in the three-page limit. Figure/table captions must be readable.
 - No hyperlinks are allowed in the proposal narrative.
 - No appendices are allowed in any form.
 - **Two** additional pages are allowed for the bibliography/references/works cited; these are not included in the three-page proposal narrative limit.

Proposal Narrative – Use Subheadings to Help Reviewers

*Your proposed SPARC research project must directly support your dissertation or thesis research. The connection between the proposed research and your dissertation or thesis must be clearly explained in the proposal.

When writing your proposal narrative:

- Students are strongly encouraged to use the [review rubric](#) to guide and strengthen the proposal.
- **Make sure the proposal is written in language appropriate for a broad audience and non-experts.** This is a criterion in the [review rubric](#)! Proposals are reviewed by two USC faculty members, who are typically **outside** of the student’s home department, but in a related field. Thus, all proposals are reviewed by experienced researchers, but not necessarily experts in your specific field of study.
- The proposal narrative must include the following sections with subheadings (**3 page maximum**):

Background and Significance

- Clearly state your project topic and research question, hypothesis, and/or problem statement.
- Briefly discuss the proposed idea and its context relative to the current state of knowledge in the field.
- This section should explain to the reviewers why the proposed project is important, novel, and exciting.

Project Description, Design, and Approach

- *Think of this section as explaining to a non-expert (1) how you plan to answer or solve your research question and (2) how you or others will know that you have successfully answered your question.*
- Provide a detailed description of the **project objectives, the proposed methods and activities** including the evaluation/analysis plan, and the specific anticipated outcomes. The methods and activities proposed should link directly back to the research question/project topic.
- Clearly describe the project **evaluation or assessment plan**. Describe how the project will be evaluated, analyzed, or reviewed and/or how you will determine the project is complete/successful, the objectives met, and/or questions answered. If applicable, be specific about the statistical plan and your
- Include a **timeline** for project tasks and expected accomplishments; presented as a table or other clear graphic format.
- Include a **plan for dissemination of the work**, which must include Discover USC, as well as the conferences, exhibitions, journals, etc. where you plan to present/share your work. Be explicit with the names of targeted conferences and journals for publication. Include their status or importance in your field.
- If you are working with **humans or vertebrate animals**, include a statement within your project description and timeline that you will seek, or already have, approval from the appropriate compliance office and will comply with all rules, regulations, and training requirements. See section below “Additional Requirements for Human/Vertebrate Animal Research” for more information.

Significance of this funding to graduate experience

- *How does this project directly contribute to your dissertation or thesis (*See comment on previous page at top of this section).*
- Explain how this proposed research, scholarship, or creative activity will advance your graduate education and objectives, bridge your funding resources, and/or expand your research, scholarly, or creative direction.

Bibliography (or Works cited, References Cited, etc.)

- This is not included in the proposal narrative page limit; up to two additional pages are allowed.
- Use the standard convention or format specific to your discipline, including the author(s), title or article, journal title, volume, pages, and date.
- Bibliographies are a required component of your proposal. Proposals which do not contain a bibliography will be considered incomplete.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

The Budget Form, the Current and Pending Support Form, and the Authorship Statement are online at go.sc.edu/SPARC. These forms must be downloaded, completed, and saved as a PDF or MS Word File.

All following forms and documents **must be included and completed**, or the proposal will be rejected.

Budget Form and Details

An itemized budget and justification for anticipated expenditures must be provided using the budget form on the SPARC webpage. The budget form is placed after the three-page proposal and bibliography.

Budget and Funding Overview

SPARC Graduate Research Grant awards are set up as individual “N” accounts through the Controller’s Office. SPARC grants are processed as “E” funds, and all expenditures must be compliant with E fund procurement requirements. **Food is not an allowable item on SPARC grants**, such as for events, focus group meeting, participant treats, etc. (*travel per diem meals are allowed*). All budgets should be reviewed by your advisor and department business manager prior to submission.

- Maximum budget request is \$5000. You do not have to request the full amount – request the amount appropriate for your project. (*Requesting less will not change the likelihood of funding.*)
- General budget categories are found in the Budget Form available at go.sc.edu/SPARC.
 - Only the SPARC budget form will be accepted.
 - The budget must include a listing and anticipated cost of each item requested for funding.
 - At the bottom of the form, provide a detailed justification for each line item. [This document contains examples of how to provide justifications](#) for a variety of expenditure categories.
 - The calculations made to arrive at a dollar figure for each item must also be summarized on the Budget Form in the Budget Justification section. *See example document above.*
- If a student has a 12-month Graduate Research Assistantship, the student cannot request salary support, including summer salary. Grant funds cannot be used to increase current salary/rate of pay.
- **When calculating salary support, use the hourly rate established by your department.** Please ask your departmental Business Manager or Faculty Advisor for salary guidance.
- While the intent is to fund projects at the requested amount, the grant award may be reduced depending on the budget justification provided in the application and/or program funds available.
- Funds may only be used for the awarded student and project. SPARC grants cannot be transferred to a different student.
- Unexpended SPARC funds, of more than \$100, must be returned to the Office of Research at the end of the project period, when you graduate, or when you leave USC (whichever is first).
- Materials and supplies purchased through this award remain the property of USC (not the student’s property).
- Students may receive concurrent funding (SPARC Graduate Research Grants may be awarded in addition to Departmental Fellowships, Graduate Assistantships, etc.), with the exception of major federal awards as outlined under Eligibility above. Disclosure of student funding sources is required on the Current and Pending Support Form.

USC Graduate School Policies Regarding Summer Employment for Graduate Students

If you are requesting summer salary from the SPARC Graduate Research Grant, please see Summer Employment on the [Funding Processes](#) webpage of the Graduate School website for options pertaining to how you can be paid. Summer hiring regulations are subject to change.

USC Fringe Benefit Rates

Fringe benefits are various *non-wage* compensations provided to employees in addition to their normal wages or salaries. Fringe benefits are calculated differently depending on whether or not you are taking classes. You may find the current fringe benefit rates for USC students [here](#).

Allowable Costs

- Student Salary and fringe benefits (*exception: 12-month GRA appointments*)
- Temporary Help Salary and fringe benefits, including undergraduates
- Consultants/Transcriptionist fees (these are considered pay for service; no fringe benefits included)
- Project supplies, materials and/or equipment, including computer software
 - *electronics or peripherals such as cpu nodes, SBCs, cameras, voice recorders, etc. may be considered with additional justification, which should include:
 - item requested including description (*if the item is not common to a lay audience*),
 - quantity, cost per unit, and subtotal,
 - purpose/use of item as related to project,
 - is this a consumable or will it be available and have value/usefulness for future projects,
 - other information helpful to the reviewers in evaluating the need/appropriateness of expenditure
 - weblink to item is permitted
- Sample processing costs
- Animal maintenance costs
- Publication costs – *allowed only if student applicant is first author*
- USC Tuition for Special Enrollment Status students (no other tuition costs are allowed)
Contact the Graduate School regarding Special Enrollment Status Policies (also known as Z Status).
- Satellite phones if mandated by the Education Abroad Office for safety and security due to travel in high-risk areas
- Travel as follows but only ONE travel category may be requested:

NOTE Travel dates must be inclusive (*begin and end*) prior to the end of the grant award period (and thus prior to graduation) for all travel related expenditures, including registration, to be eligible for reimbursement AND must be approved by the faculty advisor and department business/account administrator prior to purchase or the reimbursement will be denied.

- Student travel essential to conduct the project (includes transportation, housing, per diem, etc.); research travel costs can be requested for up to the max budget of \$5000, if appropriate for project and justified

OR

- Student travel to present SPARC research or creative work at national or international professional conference or exhibition (includes transportation, registration fees, per diem, housing, etc.; association membership fee may be considered only if required for presentation)

- * conference/meeting travel requests capped at \$1000 maximum for travel, regardless of destination or number of conferences/meetings (*this is \$1000 total, NOT \$1000 per trip*)

- * students are also encouraged to apply for [a travel grant through the Graduate School](#)

- Other costs not specified (if you are not sure if a possible cost is allowed, ask before you submit; email the SPARC program administrator listed on the webpage)

Unallowable Costs

- Food (*exception: per diem is allowed for travel*)

- Compensation for faculty members, including travel reimbursement
 - Computers, laptops, tablets, including similar/related items*
- vi.electronics or peripherals such as cpu nodes, SBCs, cameras, voice recorders, etc. may be considered with additional justification. *See allowable above.*
- Passport fees, vaccination fees, ID cards, travel visas
 - Travel-related expenditures/reimbursements for travel that ends after the award and/or graduation date even if purchased prior to the grant enddate, including registration
 - Professional organization or association memberships (*except if required for presentation*)
 - Salary for students with 12-month GRA appointments
 - Student health insurance fees
 - Salary, incentives, or payments to individuals abroad or otherwise prohibited by USC policy
 - Purchases made prior to start date
 - Office space rental

***Participant Incentives Request Process* - Departmental Pre-Approval Required; Policies vary by Department – these requests may not be allowed**

- Participant incentive requests can be complex and may not be allowed. To determine if participant incentives are allowable in a certain department, the student must consult with their department business manager. Support may not be permitted for non-US citizen/permanent resident participants. **The SPARC Graduate Research Grant program does not allow participant incentives for participants abroad.**
- **If a student plans to request funds for participant incentives, a letter of approval written and signed by their department's business manager must be included with the proposal** (this should appear in the Letter of Support section). The letter must include:
 - Confirmation of approval from the department/program business manager to include and manage participant support
 - The name of the designated custodian or manager of the funds (A USC faculty or staff employee **MUST** be designated as the custodian. Graduate students are not permitted as custodians.)
 - Statement confirming the designated custodian has experience with the participant incentive process

Current and Pending Support Form

On this form (*found on SPARC website*), students are required to report all funding they currently have supporting their graduate education (= Current Support), as well as any funding applied for at the time of application (= Pending Support). Funding may be in the form of an assistantship, fellowship, scholarship, etc. The duration of the funding should also be reported (for example, August 2025 – December 2026).

Once completed, this form must be signed by ONE of the following: your Faculty advisor, Department Chair, Graduate Program Director, or department/program designee (**signature is required**). This form is not complete until an appropriate signature is obtained. **Electronic signatures are allowed as long as pages can be combined into ONE file.*

Biographical Sketch

The Biographical Sketch **cannot exceed two pages**. Select the most relevant and significant awards, publications, etc. to ensure that your Biographical Sketch falls within the allowed 2-page limit. Do not include a narrative statement. The Biographical Sketch must include the following information. Additional project related

knowledge, skills, certificates, and/or training information can also be included within the two pages. It is strongly recommended to use the following order and format with bold subheadings to aid reviewers.

Name

First and Last Name of Student Applicant
Degree Program (ex. Biological Sciences PhD Program)
University email address

Education (list all degrees in the following format)

Institution and Location	Field of Study	Degree	Year
Include current degree program, field of study, and anticipated graduation date.			

Professional Experience (in reverse chronological order)

List positions held which are relevant to your degree program, at USC and elsewhere, with dates

Fellowships and Honors

List major fellowships and awards received and the date(s), both at USC and elsewhere

Peer-Reviewed Publications

List all peer-reviewed publications where you are the author or a co-author, while at USC or elsewhere

Professional Presentations, Exhibitions, Performances, etc.:

List all professional presentations, abstracts, exhibitions and/or performances, associated with USC or elsewhere

Professional/University Service

List relevant professional or university service activities

Authorship and GPA Certification Form

The Authorship and GPA Certification Form (*found on SPARC website*) serves to verify 1) that the graduate student was the primary author of the proposal submitted to the SPARC Graduate Research Grant Program and 2) the student's current GPA in their graduate degree program.

This Authorship and GPA Certification Form must be signed by both the student submitting the proposal and the faculty advisor. The Authorship and GPA Certification Form follows the Biographical Sketch and comes before the Letter of Recommendation. Because signatures are required for this form, the form should be completed, printed, signed, scanned, and saved as a PDF or MS Word file. **Electronic signatures are allowed as long as pages can be combined into ONE file.*

Letter(s) of Support (required if requesting participant incentives – otherwise optional)

If you request funds for participant support, you **must** attach a letter of approval to your proposal written by your Faculty Advisor's department business manager (see *Budget and Funding Overview* above).

A Letter of Support may also be included if your work requires a special arrangement for your project to be successful. Such arrangements may include collaboration with a faculty member with needed expertise, access to a certain facility, archive, or lab, cooperation/partnership/approval from an outside agency such as a

school, non-profit, etc. The letter should clearly and briefly describe the relevant details of the agreement / arrangement should the SPARC grant be funded. Although optional, you are strongly encouraged to include a one-page Letter of Support if this would strengthen your proposal in demonstrating feasibility. You may include more than one Letter of Support if appropriate.

FACULTY ADVISOR

Please see the SPARC Guide for Faculty for additional information, details, and a USCeRA submission guide.

Faculty Advisor Eligibility

- ***The faculty advisor must be a current USC faculty member.***
Former USC faculty members who are no longer employed by the university are not eligible to be a PI on a SPARC grant and are not eligible to oversee SPARC projects. Letters of recommendation written by former USC faculty members will not be accepted.
- ***Faculty advisors may only sponsor two SPARC applications each year.***
Each faculty advisor can sponsor only two student SPARC applications each year (i.e., only two students per faculty advisor may apply for SPARC each year). Faculty may not circumvent this rule by sponsoring two students and then having other faculty sponsor additional students for whom they are the primary doctoral advisor.
- ***If a faculty member is planning a sabbatical during the SPARC project,*** a co-PI must be appointed to help oversee the project. This must be stated in the Letter of Recommendation and the co-PI must provide a Letter of Support indicating their commitment.

The Faculty Advisor on the proposal should be the student's primary Advisor for their dissertation or thesis. If a student wishes to have a USC faculty member other than their primary Advisor as the Faculty Advisor (and PI in USCeRA) for this grant, then the student must either:

- 1) Submit a letter of support from their primary Advisor stating their approval for another faculty member to serve as the PI/Faculty Advisor for the grant (this is in addition to the letter of recommendation from the faculty member serving as the SPARC faculty advisor), or
- 2) The student's dissertation or thesis committee may approve the appointment of a USC faculty member who is not the primary Advisor as the Faculty Advisor for this grant. In this case, the student must provide a letter of support from the Chair of the Dissertation or Thesis Committee stating the committee's approval for a faculty member other than the primary Advisor to serve as Faculty Advisor (and PI in USCeRA) for this grant. (Again, this is in addition to the letter of recommendation from the faculty member serving as the SPARC faculty advisor)

When submitting the SPARC Graduate Research Grant proposal, this letter of support should be appended to the proposal and appear directly before the Faculty Letter of Recommendation (from the project supervisor).

Letter of Recommendation

Please see the SPARC Guide for Faculty for details and information required in the letter.

SUBMISSION PROCESS

This submission checklist may be helpful in finalizing your application.

Order of Documents Required for Submission

- ☐ Resubmission Narrative (*if applicable* – only if resubmitting; see **RESUBMISSIONS** section on page 14)
- ☐ Reviewer Comments from Previous Submission (*if applicable* – only if resubmitting)
- ☐ Proposal Narrative
- ☐ Bibliography
- ☐ Budget Form and Justification
- ☐ Current and Pending Support Form
- ☐ Biographical Sketch
- ☐ Authorship and GPA Certification Form
- ☐ Letter of Support from Department Business Manager (required if requesting participant incentives)
- ☐ Optional Letter(s) of Support from other lab, facility, faculty member, museum, archive, etc.
- ☐ Letter of Recommendation from Faculty Advisor

Student Applicant Responsibility

- Student creates **one** PDF or Word file of proposal and supporting materials (in the order outlined above).
- **File must be named after the student, as follows: Last Name_First Name-YEAR of anticipated award (example Doe_Jane-2027)**
- Provide electronic file to Faculty Advisor.

Faculty Advisor Responsibility and USCeRA

- Faculty Advisor completes the Letter of Recommendation and saves as a PDF or Word file.
- Faculty Advisor appends the Letter of Recommendation as the last item in the student's completed proposal/application file and saves the entire document as one PDF or Word file.
- **Application file name** must be named after the student, as follows: Last Name_First Name-YEAR of anticipated award (example Doe_Jane-2027)
- Faculty Advisor (**not the student**) submits proposal through USCeRA. Please see the SPARC Guide for Faculty for the USCeRA submission guide.

NOTE the USCeRA proposal title for the SPARC program must be entered in the following format: SPARC: Student First & Last Name: Project Title

Ex. SPARC: Jane Doe: The exciting world of graduate research at USC

It is very important that the title in USCeRA follows this format exactly.

INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL

- Education Abroad webpage: sc.edu/educationabroad
- Information specific to [graduate students here](#)

All international travel covered by the SPARC Graduate Research Grant program (including travel to Canada, Mexico, and some US territories) is subject to the approval and standard terms and conditions of the USC Education Abroad Office. Should your travel be deemed unsafe for any reason, at any time (before or during

stay), the SPARC Graduate Research Grant program will follow the recommendations of the Education Abroad Office and has the right to deny and/or revoke funding.

- ALL SPARC Grant recipients conducting research or attending a conference abroad are **REQUIRED** to be protected by the “Overseas Emergency Medical Insurance.” You will be signed up automatically.
- **BEFORE applying for SPARC: find out if your destination is considered higher risk.** Students wishing to travel to a country that is currently the subject of a University Travel Warning must work with the Education Abroad Office to submit a Destination of Higher Risk petition. *This must be stated in your proposal narrative.* USC issues Travel Warnings based upon destinations for which the U.S. Department of State has issued a high-level Travel Advisory, as well as other sources of information, including but not limited to travel advisories from other countries and information from the travel and insurance industries. If you have questions on whether your destination is the subject of a University Travel Warning, please contact the Education Abroad Office.
- It is recommended that students meet with the Education Abroad Office well in advance of submitting a proposal that includes international research to discuss logistical details.

What do I do once awarded a SPARC Graduate Research Grant which involves international travel?

1. Review Education Abroad “[Know Before You Go](#).” The Pre-Departure Essentials video modules and workshops are required.
2. All SPARC recipients traveling abroad (for research or conferences) must complete the [Graduate/Professional Student Registration process](#) with the Education Abroad Office:

https://sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/education_abroad/plan_your_experience_abroad/apply/graduate_professional_students/index.php.

3. If you have included travel expenses in your budget, your travel must be approved through your Faculty Advisor’s department (plan ahead – recommend at least ONE MONTH prior to departure). Take your budget form, which should include the estimates for your travel expenses, to your Department Business Manager at least 30 days before your departure date to complete any required paperwork.

PROJECTS INVOLVING VERTEBRATE ANIMALS OR HUMAN SUBJECTS

Vertebrate Animals or Human Subjects

(https://sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/research_compliance/)

General Guidelines

* Projects involving human subjects and/or vertebrate animals must maintain compliance with regulations, **at all times**, or funding will be revoked

- If the student's research involves Vertebrate Animals or Human Subjects (including interviews, surveys, or review of personal/private information), **IACUC or IRB approval is REQUIRED prior to receiving SPARC funds and before starting the proposed research project.** However, the approval can be applied for and obtained *after* a SPARC Graduate Research Grant award notification is received.
- The SPARC proposal should include a statement, within the project narrative, that the student will apply for IACUC or IRB approval and will comply with all rules, regulations, and training requirements. Submission can also be included as a task in the timeline.
- When submitting proposal into USCeRA:
 - If the IRB or IACUC approval has been granted prior to submission, the number should be entered into USCeRA during the application process.
 - If approval has not yet been granted, then type "Pending" when asked for the approval number.
- If the protocol is approved with the faculty advisor as PI, the graduate student must be added to the protocol (if not already included).

For research projects involving live, vertebrate animals

- SPARC Graduate Research Grant proposals may be submitted prior to approval by the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC). It is preferable to wait until you have funding before applying for IACUC approval (unless you will conduct the project regardless of SPARC Graduate Research Grant funding).
- NOTE: the SPARC grant account will not be established and work on the project may not begin until approval has been received.
- For more information and forms, go to https://sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/research_compliance/iacuc/index.php
You may also call Animal Resource Facilities at 803-777-8106.

For research projects involving human participants: USC is required by federal law to follow strict guidelines when human subjects are involved in research projects requiring Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval.

- To find out if your project requires IRB oversight, as well as for all forms, guidelines, etc. [please review the IRB website](#).
 - NOTE: the SPARC grant account will not be established and work on the project may not begin until approval has been received.
 - For **ALL Human subjects questions:** contact the Office of Research Compliance (https://sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/research_compliance/index.php)
-

RESUBMISSIONS

An important part of the grant writing process is revising and resubmitting proposals that were not previously funded. Students are strongly encouraged to revise and resubmit proposals that were not funded in previous funding cycles.

Resubmission requirements:

- Students who are resubmitting proposals **are required and responsible for adhering to the current semester's SPARC Graduate Research Grant Application Guidelines**, since changes may occur from previous rounds.
- Students must complete a [new Applicant information form](#) for the resubmission.
- Resubmissions should be submitted through USCeRA as "Revisions." Previously submitted SPARC proposals submitted as new proposals may be rejected. To be considered a new proposal, the research focus and methods must differ significantly from the prior submission.

In addition to meeting all other proposal requirements, students preparing a proposal for resubmission must:

1. Revise the proposal to address reviewers' comments.
2. Students must complete a [new Applicant information form](#) for the current submission.
3. Provide a **Resubmission Narrative (max 1 page)** responding to the reviewer's comments and summarizing changes made in the proposal. Label this page at top as "Resubmission Narrative."
 - *Not sure how to write this or what to include?* Talk with your advisor for guidance. Typically, you should respond specifically and directly to reviewer comments. Some choose to do this in the form of a letter, but this is not required. Describe changes you made to strengthen the proposal in the areas judged to be weak and clarify information that may need additional details or were misunderstood in the initial review. You may also summarize additions, deletions, and changes to the application even if not directly related to reviewer comments.
4. Provide the reviewer feedback from previous submission (create a PDF of the email received from previous submission).
5. Ensure that the timeline and all supporting documents are updated, including budget.
6. Remind Faculty Advisor to update Letter of Recommendation, if needed (*including time known*)
7. Be sure to review the order of documents for resubmissions above (Section: SUBMISSION PROCESS)

***Resubmissions must include BOTH the one-page Resubmission Narrative and the reviewer feedback or the proposal will not be reviewed.**

REQUIREMENTS FOR SPARC GRANT RECIPIENTS

- 1) Present research or creative project at Discover USC prior to graduation. *Note: if you are graduating prior to this event, please email the SPARC program contact listed on the website for alternatives.*
- 2) Complete yearly online surveys to track student's progress and document any publications, presentations and/or awards, for three years after award.
- 3) Any publications or presentations produced as a result of this grant must contain an acknowledgement of USC's support, such as "This work was partially supported by a SPARC Graduate Research Grant from the Office of the Vice President for Research at the University of South Carolina."
- 4) At the conclusion of your project or within 30 days after the end of the project period (whichever is first), submit a one to two page description of the completed research project, including an explanation of how the SPARC funding enhanced your graduate research experience. In addition, submit two photographs of yourself, including a headshot and a photograph of you engaged in your research or creative work. *These photographs may be used for promotional materials for the SPARC Graduate Research Grant program.* Submit these items by email to the SPARC program contact listed on the website.
- 5) If requested, provide a detailed report of grant expenditures. At any time, the SPARC program may request documentation of the use of SPARC funds.

SPARC Graduate Research Grant recipients are strongly encouraged to present their work at a national or international conference, performance, exhibition, etc.

CONTACT FOR QUESTIONS

Anne Bailey
Research Development Specialist
CGI Hub
Office of the Vice President for Research
bailey25@mailbox.sc.edu