

SPARC Graduate Research Grant

Support to Promote Advancement of Research and Creativity

2016-2017 SPARC Application Guidelines

Application Due Date: **October 26, 2016 by 5:00pm**

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 which describes a project to advance their dissertation or thesis research. Those found meritorious 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 objective of the SPARC Graduate Research Grant is to provide support and to encourage outstanding students to develop proposals to enhance their research experience 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, which will lead to more students with the skills and background necessary to seek national fellowship awards from the federal government and private foundations.

ELIGIBILITY

- All Doctoral students in their second year (or later) are eligible to apply (second year students should have **completed** two full-time academic year semesters in their degree program at the time of application). In other words, first year doctoral students are not eligible to apply for the SPARC Graduate Research Grant. There are no exceptions to this guideline.
- Master's students in terminal degree programs with a thesis requirement are also eligible to apply (those degree programs include the Master of Fine Arts and the Master of Arts in Public History). MFA and MA in Public History students may apply in their first year (or later) of graduate study at USC.
- Applicants must be current students at the time of application. Students must be enrolled for a minimum of one semester post-award date.

- Applicants must have minimum graduate GPA of 3.0.
 - International students are eligible to apply.
 - Students may receive one SPARC Graduate Research Grant during their graduate career at USC.
 - 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.
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FUNDS AVAILABLE

Applicants may request up to \$5000 with a project period of up to 15 months. Applicants should provide a detailed justification for the requested funds and are encouraged to request less than the maximum amount. The project start date is May 1, 2017 with a project period of 15 months; the project end date is July 31, 2018.

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 APPLICATION WORKSHOPS

Prior to applying, students are REQUIRED to attend a brief application workshop. Applications received from students who did not attend the workshop will be automatically rejected. SPARC workshops will be offered throughout September and October; dates and times of workshops are posted on the website (<http://www.sc.edu/research/sparc.shtml>).

- Students who are unable to attend any of the workshops should contact Dr. Lauren Clark for alternatives (lauren.clark@sc.edu).
 - Students who are resubmitting proposals should refer to pages 13-14 for additional instructions.
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PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

The 2016-2017 SPARC Graduate Research Grant application due date is **Wednesday, October 26, 2016 by 5:00pm.**

Proposals submitted after 5:00 pm on the due date will be returned without review. Incomplete proposals will also be returned without review.

For external proposals, the Sponsored Awards Management Office has a requirement that proposals must be submitted 3 business days prior to the due date. For the SPARC internal research grant program, proposals may be submitted up to 5:00 pm on the due date, and the internal routing can occur afterwards.

Formatting Guidelines

- No cover page.
 - Center title at top of first page.
 - Under the title, write student's full name, degree program, advisor's name and anticipated defense date.
 - **The proposal may not exceed three (3) single-spaced pages.** Proposals which exceed this page limit will not be accepted. All figures and tables must be included in the three page limit. No appendices are allowed in any form. Failure to adhere to these guidelines will result in rejection of the proposal.
 - **Two** additional pages are allowed for references; they are not included in the three page limit.
 - Use Arial font and a font size of 11 points with at least 0.5 inch margins (top, bottom, left, and right) for all pages.
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Proposal Narrative – Use Subheadings to Help Reviewers

The proposal narrative should include the following sections (**3 page maximum**):

Background and Significance

- Project topic, research question (or hypothesis) should be clearly defined.
- 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 novel and exciting.

Project Description, Design and Approach

- Provide a detailed description of the project objectives, the proposed methods and activities and the specific anticipated outcomes. The methods and activities proposed should link directly back to the research question/project topic.
- Include a **timeline** for expected accomplishments, which should be presented as a table or other clear graphic format.
- Include a **plan for dissemination of the work**, which should mention Graduate Student Day, as well as any other conferences or exhibitions where you plan to present your work. Targeted journals for publication should be included.
- If you are working with **humans or vertebrate animals**, include a statement within your project description/timeline that you will seek approval from the appropriate compliance office and will comply with all rules, regulations and training requirements. See Additional Requirements for Human/Vertebrate Animal Research for more information.

Significance of this funding to graduate experience

- Explain how this proposed research or creative activity will advance your graduate education and objectives, bridge your funding resources, or expand your research or creative direction.

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

- This is not included in the proposal page limit; up to two additional pages allowed.
- Use the standard convention of 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.

When writing your proposal narrative, please keep in mind that each proposal will be reviewed by two USC faculty members. Proposals will most likely be reviewed by faculty members **outside** of the student's home department (but in a related field). Thus, all proposals are reviewed by experienced researchers, but the reviewers are not necessarily experts in the student's specific field of study. Make sure that you write your proposal for a broad audience.

Complete Supporting Documentation:

The Budget Form, the Current and Pending Support Form and the Authorship Statement are online at <http://www.sc.edu/research/sparc.shtml>. These forms should be downloaded, completed and saved as a PDF or MS Word File.

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

Budget Form

An itemized budget and justification for anticipated expenditures (you **MUST** use budget form provided on the SPARC webpage); the budget form comes after three page proposal and bibliography. Please see below for Additional Budget Information.

Current and Pending Support Form

On this form, students are required to report any funding they currently have to support their graduate education, as well as any funding applied for. Funding may be in the form of an assistantship, a fellowship or a scholarship. The duration of the funding should also be reported.

If matching funds are available, the matching funds agreement must be described **IN DETAIL** (how much money and from what source committed to this student) in the text box at the bottom of the form.

Once completed, this form must be signed by the Department Chair or designee (**signatures are required** regardless of whether matching funds are available). When the form is complete with signatures, the form should be scanned and saved as a PDF or MS Word file. This form is not complete until signatures are obtained.

USC Transcripts

A USC graduate transcript including grades and GPA must be included. An "official" transcript is not required.

To access unofficial transcripts:

Go to my.sc.edu

Under "Academics" select "View grades, transcripts and holds"

This will bring you to the login page, so login

Under "Student Records" select "Academic Transcript"

For transcript level: "Graduate only"

For transcript type: "Advising"

Click on "Submit"

Copy and paste the entire document (all student info, classes, grades, etc.) with GPA to the proposal after the Current and Pending Support Form

Important notes for pasting transcripts:

Be sure your margins are 0.5 inches

Keel source formatting when you paste (this means a direct paste, do not do anything special)

Once pasted, select the entire table and change font size to 10 pt (helps the transcript fit)

If you have transfer credits from another university, please also include those transcripts and documentation that the credits have transferred (or are in the process of transferring) to USC.

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. Provide the information that is requested. The Biographical Sketch must include the following information **in this order** (use the bold subheadings to aid reviewers):

Name

PhD Student (or MFA Student or MA in Public History Student)

Degree Program Name

Email address

Education (list degrees in the following format)

Institution and Location	Field of Study	Degree	Year
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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 you have 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, both from USC and elsewhere

Professional Presentations or Exhibitions or Performances:

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

Authorship Statement

The Authorship Statement serves to verify that the graduate student was the primary author of the proposal submitted to the SPARC Graduate Research Grant Program. This statement must be signed by both the student submitting the proposal and the faculty advisor. The Authorship Statement 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.

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

If you request funds which involve participant support, you **must** attach a letter of approval to your proposal written by your Faculty Advisor's department business manager (see page 10, Department Pre-Approval Required).

A Letter of Support may be appropriate to include 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 lab or facility, access to archives, etc. Although it is optional, you are strongly encouraged to include a one page Letter of Support if you feel that it would strengthen your proposal.

Faculty Advisor Eligibility

The faculty advisor must be a current USC faculty member. If a faculty member is planning to go on sabbatical during the SPARC project, a Co-PI must be appointed to help oversee the project. Former USC faculty members who are no longer employed by the university are not eligible to be a PI on a SPARC grant.

Faculty Letter of Recommendation

Faculty Letters of Recommendation are limited to **one page**. Letter must be written on Faculty's Letterhead and signed by the faculty member. The letter should include the following:

- How long you have known the student
- Estimate student's anticipated graduation date
- Evaluate the student's degree of independence, generally and specifically in the preparation of this proposal
- Assess student's intellectual ability, creativity and critical thinking skills
- Assess feasibility of project completion based on student's degree of preparation and motivation
- Discuss the significance of this funding for the student's dissertation or thesis, i.e. how would this project impact the student's progress towards degree completion
- Any other information that the committee should be aware of

- Please give **one** of the following overall ratings of the student for a SPARC Graduate Research Grant:

Very Strongly Recommend
Recommend with Confidence
Recommend with Reservations
Do Not Recommend

Complete and Provide Proposal to Faculty Advisor

Student creates **one** PDF or Word file of proposal and supporting materials. **File must be named after the student, as follows: "Last Name_First Initial". For example, "Smith_J"**

- The proposal PDF or MS Word file should contain the documents in the following order: (if applicable Resubmission Narrative and reviewer comments first) Proposal with bibliography, Budget Form, Current and Pending Support Form, USC transcripts, Biographical Sketch, Authorship Statement, Letter of Support.

- Provide electronic file to Faculty Advisor.

Faculty Advisor Submits Proposal through USCeRA

- Faculty Advisor completes the Faculty Letter of Recommendation and saves as a PDF or Word file.
- Faculty Advisor appends the Faculty Letter of Recommendation as the last item in the student's completed proposal and saves the entire document as one PDF or Word file.
- **Faculty Advisor gives the proposal a title in USCeRA that follows this format:**
SPARC: Student Name: Title
Ex. SPARC: Sue Smith: Nutrient cycling in Charleston Harbor
It is very important that the title in USCeRA follows this format exactly.
- Faculty Advisor (**not the student**) submits proposal through USCeRA.
- For more details, see **SPARC Faculty Advisors: Documents and Submission Guidelines** beginning on page 15.

Designation of the Faculty Advisor

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 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) alternatively, 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 produce 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. When submitting the SPARC Graduate Research Grant proposal, this letter of support should be appended to the proposal and should appear after the Faculty Letter of Recommendation.

ORDER OF DOCUMENTS REQUIRED FOR SUBMISSION

- Resubmission Narrative (if applicable – only if resubmitting)
- Reviewer Comments from Previous Submission (if applicable – only if resubmitting)
- Proposal Narrative
- Bibliography
- Budget Form
- Current and Pending Support Form
- USC Transcripts (unofficial transcripts are acceptable)
- Biographical Sketch
- Authorship Statement
- Letter of Support (required if requesting participant incentives)
- Optional Letter of Support from other lab, faculty, faculty member, etc.
- Letter of Recommendation from Faculty Advisor

ADDITIONAL BUDGET INFORMATION

SPARC Graduate Research Grant awards are processed as “E” funds. All expenditures must remain compliant with E fund procurement requirements. **Food is no longer an allowable item on SPARC grants.** ALL BUDGETS MUST BE REVIEWED BY YOUR DEPARTMENT BUSINESS MANAGERS PRIOR TO SUBMISSION.

- Maximum budget request is \$5000. You do not have to request the full amount – request the amount appropriate for your project.
- General budget categories are found in the Budget Form available at http://www.sc.edu/vpresearch/sparc_details.shtml
You must use this Budget Form. Detailed justification is required for each line item. The budget will include your list of budget items; the calculations you have made to arrive at a dollar figure for each item must also be summarized on the Budget Form in the Budget Justification section.
- 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 your current salary.
- A note about hourly rates for Salary Support: **when calculating salary support, you must use the rate established by your department.** Please see your departmental Business Manager for salary guidance.
- Although the review committee intends to fund projects as closely as possible to the requested amount, it reserves the right to recommend a reduction in the amount funded depending on the budget justification provided in the application.
- Unused funds revert back to the Office of Research at the end of the project period or up to one semester past student graduation (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 Presidential Fellowships, Departmental Fellowships or Graduate Assistantships, etc.). However, disclosure of student funding sources is required on the Current and Pending Support Form.

USC Graduate School Policies Regarding Summer Graduate Assistantships

If you are requesting summer salary from the SPARC Graduate Research Grant, be advised that there may be two possibilities for employment:

1. **Graduate Assistant** – qualified applicants must be enrolled for a minimum of one credit hour for each summer term in which they are employed as a Graduate Assistant in accordance with USC Policy on Graduate Assistants – <http://www.sc.edu/policies/ppm/acaf400.pdf> The GA option offers a lower fringe benefits rate but incurs the expense of summer enrollment. TA paperwork is handled by The Graduate School.
2. **Temporary Worker** – qualified applicants are hired by their program or department with paperwork filed through the university’s Office of Human Resources. The fringe benefit rate is higher for Temporary Workers, but there is no summer enrollment requirement.

Please note that tuition requests are not allowed through the SPARC Graduate Research Grant Program, with the exception of students who have been granted Special Enrollment Status (formerly Z status), <http://www.gradschool.sc.edu/post.asp?eventid=365>

USC Fringe Benefit Rates

Fringe benefits are various non-wage compensations provided to employees in addition to their normal wages or salaries. Fringe benefits include FICA (Social Security and Medicare), unemployment insurance, worker's compensation insurance, etc. When you are taking classes, the only cost is worker's compensation. Thus, 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: <http://sam.research.sc.edu/fringebenefits.html>
Refer to Table II. Calculation of Fringe Benefits.

Matching Funds

These are funds that a student's department or program may be able to commit to the student if the student's proposal is funded. Students must ask their Department Chairs or Program Directors whether such funds are available. *Departmental matching funds are encouraged, but not required.*

Examples:

The Department of X will commit \$1000 towards this project if this SPARC proposal is funded.

If funded, the Department of Y will commit \$300 to this proposal to support conference travel.

The Department of Z will provide a 10% match to all Department of Z SPARC applicants who are funded.

If a student secures matching funds, they may create a budget for more than \$5000, as long as the matching funds commitment covers the difference over \$5000. For example, if a project will cost \$6000 to complete, the student may request \$5000 from SPARC. If the student secures \$1000 in matching funds from their department, the student can then create a budget totaling \$6000.

- If matching funds are available, the matching funds agreement must be described **in detail** (how much money and from what source committed to this student) on the Current and Pending Support Form in the "Departmental Matching Funds" text box. This commitment must be signed by the Department Chair.
- If no matching funds are available, write "No matching funds available" in the text box and obtain the necessary signature.
- The availability of matching funds will vary between departments. The presence of matching funds does not give a proposal preference over a proposal without matching funds.

Allowable Costs

- Student Salary and fringe benefits
- Temporary Help Salary and fringe benefits
- Transcriptionist Fees (these are considered pay for service and no fringe benefits required)
- Project supplies, materials and/or equipment, including computer software
- Sample processing costs
- Animal maintenance costs
- Publication costs

- Satellite phones if mandated for safety and security due to travel in high-risk areas
- Student travel essential to conduct the project (includes transportation, housing, per diem)
- Student travel to present research or creative work at National/International Professional Conference or Exhibition (includes transportation, registration, per diem, housing)
\$500 maximum request for travel within US; \$800 maximum request for international travel
- USC Tuition for Special Enrollment Status students (no other tuition costs are allowed)
For more information on the Graduate School's Special Enrollment Status Policies (formerly known as Z Status), please refer to the following link:
<http://www.gradschool.sc.edu/post.asp?eventid=365>
- Other costs not specified (if you are not sure if a possible cost is allowable, ask before you submit!)

Restrictions on Travel Funds

- **Students cannot receive conference travel funds from both the SPARC Graduate Research Grant and the Graduate School Travel Grant Program in the same academic year.**
- Students may request **EITHER** funds for travel to conduct the research **OR** conference travel funds from the SPARC Graduate Research Grant Program – **STUDENTS CANNOT REQUEST BOTH.**
- Students may only request funds for travel to one conference.

Unallowable Costs

- Food
- Compensation for faculty members
- Computers and computer components, cameras, voice recorders, cell phones
- Passport fees, vaccination fees, ID cards, travel visas
- Yearly student health insurance fees
- Incentives to participants abroad
- Salary or payment to individuals abroad
- Purchases made prior to start date

Departmental Pre-Approval Required

(Policies vary by Department – these requests may not be allowed)

- **Participant incentives** These requests are very 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 is unlikely 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 which involve participant support, the students must attach a letter of approval to the proposal written by their department's business manager** (this should appear immediately before the Faculty Advisor Letter of Support). The letter must include:
 - Confirmation of approval from the department/program business manager to include/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 of whether or not the designated custodian has received training or has managed participant support previously

REQUIREMENTS FOR SPARC GRANT RECIPIENTS

- 1) Present research or creative project at Discover USC the year following the project start date.
- 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 the end of the project period, submit a one 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 to Lauren Clark (lauren.clark@sc.edu) at the conclusion of your project period or when the project is completed, whichever comes first.
- 5) If requested, provide detailed report of grant expenditures. At any time, the SPARC program may request documentation of the use of the SPARC funds.

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

RESEARCH ABROAD

(<http://studyabroad.sc.edu>)

- If a project includes travel abroad (including Canada and Mexico), SPARC-funded students will be required to attend a **Study Abroad Workshop in February** (bring a laptop or tablet). The Workshop will guide students through the application process for obtaining approval from the USC Study Abroad Office to conduct research abroad. Students must follow the procedures outlined by the USC Study Abroad Office in accordance with university policy.
- All travel abroad covered by the SPARC Graduate Research Grant program (including travel to Canada and Mexico) is subject to the approval and standard terms and conditions of the USC Study 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 Study 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." The cost of this insurance is \$30 per month. You will be signed up automatically. For more information, go to studyabroad.sc.edu and select "Insurance" from the options on the grey menu on the left.
- Students wishing to travel to a country that is currently listed on the State Department Travel Warning list, or deemed a destination of risk by the University, must work with the Study Abroad Office to submit a Destination of Risk petition. For more details, go to studyabroad.sc.edu, select "Apply to Study Abroad", then select "Destinations of Risk" from the menu on the left.
- It is recommended that students meet with the Study 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 research abroad?

1. Attend the mandatory Study Abroad Workshop for SPARC Recipients in February (date and time will be posted on SPARC website) – this workshop will outline the application process you must follow with the Study Abroad Office.
 - All SPARC recipients conducting research abroad will need to complete the Graduate/Professional Student Registration process with the Study Abroad Office: studyabroad.sc.edu/graduate. When selecting a program in the online application system, SPARC applicants should select the program titled “+SPARC Graduate Research Program”.
 - Questions about forms should be directed to the Study Abroad Office
2. If you have included travel expenses in your budget, you **MUST** have a Travel Authorization (TA) completed 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 well before your departure date to complete your TA.

PROJECTS INVOLVING VERTEBRATE ANIMALS OR HUMAN SUBJECTS

Vertebrate Animals or Human Subjects (<http://orc.research.sc.edu>)

General Guidelines

- If the student’s research involves Vertebrate Animals or Human Subjects (including interviews, surveys, or review of personal/private information), they can apply for IACUC or IRB approval *after* a SPARC Graduate Research Grant award notification is received. **However, the student must produce IACUC or IRB approval prior to receiving any SPARC funds and before starting the proposed research project.**
- If the IRB or IACUC approval has been granted prior to submission, then the number should be entered into USCeRA during the application process. If approval has not yet been granted, then select “Pending” when asked for the approval number.
- **NEW POLICY:** If the IRB or IACUC approval is pending at the time of application and the proposal is funded, then the student must email the approval numbers to Lauren Clark (lauren.clark@sc.edu) once approval has been granted.
- If these protocols have been approved for the mentor, they can produce those documents after the award notification with a letter from the mentor indicating the previous approval of protocols; this should be emailed to Lauren Clark (lauren.clark@sc.edu).

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).
- In the SPARC proposal, students should include a statement (within the project description/timeline) that the students will apply for IACUC approval and will comply with all rules, regulations and training requirements
- NOTE: the grant account will not be established and work on the project may not begin until approval has been received.

- Projects involving vertebrate animals must maintain compliance with regulations at all times or funding will be revoked
- For more information and forms, go to <http://sam.research.sc.edu/animalcare/index.html> You may also call Animal Resource Facilities at 777-8106.

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

- Human subjects research includes studies that use:
 - data collected through interventions, interactions, or observations with human participants (e.g., surveys, interviews, testing, or observational procedures); and/or
 - existing data sets containing any personal information (e.g., medical records, educational records, voting records).
- If the student's research involves human subjects, the SPARC proposal should include a statement (within the project description/timeline) that the student will apply for IRB approval and will comply with all rules, regulations and training requirements
- Projects involving human subjects must maintain compliance with regulations at all times or funding will be revoked
- NOTE: the grant account will not be established and work on the project may not begin until approval has been received.
- For more information and applications process: <http://orc.research.sc.edu/humansubject.shtml>
- For Human Subject FAQs: http://orc.research.sc.edu/hs_faq.shtml

For **ALL Human subjects questions:** contact the Office of Research Compliance (<http://orc.research.sc.edu/contact.shtml>; 803-777-7095)

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. Students may revise and resubmit a proposal up to two times. Students who are resubmitting proposals are not required to attend another SPARC Application Workshop. However, please note that a number of the guidelines have changed, and **students are responsible for adhering to the 2016-2017 SPARC Graduate Research Grant Application Guidelines** regardless of whether or not they attend a current workshop. While not required for students who are resubmitting, students who are resubmitting proposals are strongly encouraged to attend a 2016-2017 workshop to make sure that the student fully understands the current guidelines. Previously submitted SPARC proposals which are submitted as new proposals will 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 should:

1. Revise the proposal to address reviewers' comments. Proposals which do not undergo significant revision will not be accepted.
2. Clearly indicate that this is a revised proposal by writing a **Resubmission Narrative** which responds to the reviewer's comments and details the changes made in the proposal. This Resubmission Narrative should be no longer than one page. This Resubmission Narrative should appear before the revised proposal – i.e. should be the first page the reviewers see.
3. The reviewer feedback must also be attached to the proposal, and should follow the Resubmission Narrative. The first page of the revised SPARC proposal will immediately follow the reviewer feedback page.

Resubmissions which do not include BOTH the one page Resubmission Narrative and the reviewer feedback will not be reviewed.

CONTACT FOR QUESTIONS

Dr. Lauren Clark, Research Program Manager

Office of the Vice President for Research

lauren.clark@sc.edu or (803) 777-3929

SPARC Graduate Research Grant

Faculty Advisors: Documents and Submission Guidelines

GUIDELINES FOR WRITING THE FACULTY LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION

Letters of Recommendation should be no longer than **one page** and should be written on faculty letterhead. Letters which are very general and/or vague are not helpful to the review committee. The review committee has requested that Letters of Recommendation address the bulleted topics listed below. Each proposal should include only one Letter of Recommendation.

- The letter should include the following:
 - How long you have known the student
 - Estimate student's anticipated graduation date
 - Evaluate the student's degree of independence, generally and specifically in the preparation of this proposal
 - Assess student's intellectual ability, creativity and critical thinking skills
 - Assess feasibility of project completion based on student's degree of preparation and motivation
 - Discuss the significance of this funding for the student's dissertation or thesis, i.e. how would this project impact the student's progress towards degree completion
 - Any other information that the committee should be aware of

- Please give **one** of the following overall ratings of the student for a SPARC Graduate Research Grant
 - Very Strongly Recommend
 - Recommend with Confidence
 - Recommend with Reservations
 - Do Not Recommend

- Save as PDF or MS Word file and append to the end of students proposal; save as **one** PDF or Word document

Faculty Advisors must provide additional documentation in the Letter of Recommendation for the following situations:

❖ **Student's Primary Advisor is not the SPARC PI**

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 submit a letter of support from their Primary Advisor stating their approval for another faculty member to serve as the Faculty Advisor for the Fellowship. Alternatively, 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 produce 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. When submitting the SPARC Graduate Research Grant proposal, this letter of support should be appended to the proposal and should appear after the Faculty Letter of Recommendation.

❖ **Student Requests Funds to Attend a Short Course**

The student may request funds to cover the expenses related to the short course; HOWEVER, the Faculty Advisor must state in the Letter of Recommendation that the course is essential to the student's research and that the course will help advance the PhD dissertation.

❖ **Student Requests Funds to Work in Another Lab to Use Equipment and/or Facilities not Available at USC**

The Faculty Advisor should state in the Letter of Recommendation that 1) such training is necessary for the development of your dissertation, and 2) the Faculty Advisor has spoken with the Facility Manager or Director, and that this Manager or Director has agreed to train the student and/or to allow the student to use the equipment/facility.

SUBMITTING THE SPARC PROPOSAL IN USCeRA:

- **Faculty Advisor writes one-page Letter of Recommendation.**
- **Attach (or cut & paste) the completed Faculty Letter of Recommendation to the end of student's proposal.**
- This should create **ONE document (PDF or MS Word)** containing the following documents **IN THIS ORDER**:
 - i. Resubmission narrative (only if resubmitting)
 - ii. Reviewer comments from previous submission (only if resubmitting)
 - iii. Proposal Narrative (first page if not a resubmission)
 - iv. Bibliography
 - v. Budget Form
 - vi. Current and Pending Support Form
 - vii. USC transcripts (unofficial transcripts are acceptable)
 - viii. Biographical Sketch
 - ix. Authorship Statement
 - x. Letter of Support (required if requesting participant incentives)
 - xi. Optional Letter of Support from other lab, faculty member, etc.
 - xii. Letter of Recommendation from faculty advisor
 - xiii. IF USC FACULTY MEMBER OTHER THAN STUDENT'S PRIMARY ADVISOR IS ACTING AS FACULTY ADVISOR FOR ADMINISTRATION OF THE SPARC GRADUATE RESEARCH GRANT, a Letter of Support from the student's primary Advisor or the Chair of the Thesis/Dissertation Committee must follow the Faculty Letter of Recommendation.
- **This document should be named: Student last name_first initial (example: Doe_J)**

- **Please do not scan. Proposals may be submitted as MS Word or PDF documents.**
- **If you cannot combine documents, please contact Lauren Clark at lauren.clark@sc.edu for help.**

Login in to USCeRA (<https://sam.research.sc.edu/uscera/>).

Use your university username and password to log into USCeRA.

1) Complete the USCeRA Proposal / Award Processing Form (PAP)

- On the upper left side of the main USCeRA page, in the red area, select “Proposals”
- Then click on “Create New Proposal.” This will take you to the “Proposal / Award Processing Form” or PAP.
- Complete the fields on the PAP form as follows:

- a. **Title:** Proposal title in USCeRA must follow this format:

Title format: SPARC: Student Name: Proposal Title

Example: SPARC: Sue Smith: Nutrient Cycling in Charleston Harbor

It is very important that the title in USCeRA follows this format exactly so that I can find and sort proposals in USCeRA based on the student’s name and SPARC.

- b. **Institution Co-PI:** leave blank unless there are USC faculty/staff who will be collaborating on this project (do not add the student’s name here – this information is added in a different location in USCeRA)
- c. **Additional Investigators:** *leave blank unless there are additional FACULTY/STAFF who will be collaborating on this project (if not listed as co-PIs); do not list the student’s name here*
- d. **Primary Awardee Department:** *should fill automatically with your department; if not, select “Change”*
 Note to faculty with Joint Appointments: Faculty with joint appointments are registered in USCeRA with their primary department. If jointly-appointed faculty are PIs for a SPARC proposal where the student is in their secondary department, use the Primary Awardee Department drop-down to select the department where the funds should go – the funds should follow the student to the student’s department.
- e. **Total Amt. Requested 1st or Current year:** *Enter total budget requested (max \$5000)*
- f. **Project Years:** *1*
- g. **Indirect Cost:** *Blank*
- h. **Total Project Amt Requested (All Years):** *Enter total budget requested (max \$5000)*

- i. **Project Dates:** *Enter Start date of May 1, 2017 (end date can be left blank)*
- j. **Proposal Type:** *New or Revision (if this is a resubmission)*
- k. **USC account number:** *Blank*
- l. **Agency deadline:** *Found on SPARC webpage; enter due date and select – Receipt*
- m. **Internal Request:**
Select YES,
Under "VP for Research", **SELECT** "SPARC Graduate Grant" from the dropdown.
It is CRITICAL that you do this correctly! Failure to do so will result in improper routing of the proposal.
 - *What if "SPARC Graduate Research Grant" is not available in the list? Contact me immediately as you will be unable to submit: lauren.clark@sc.edu or by phone: 803-777-3929.*

Leave "Provost" blank.
- n. **Project source:** *will not appear or will auto-fill*
 If Project Source does appear and does not auto-fill, select "Private, Foundations, Non-Profit (PHI)"
- o. **Project Purpose** *will not appear or will auto-fill*
 If Project Purpose does appear and does not auto-fill, select "Research"
- p. **Sponsoring Agency:** *will not appear or will auto-fill*
 If Sponsoring Agency does appear and does not auto-fill, type in "SC Research Foundation"
- q. **Program Type:** *NOTE: this field may not appear.* If it does, select *Fellowship /Graduate research*

Questions: *Answer yes/no as appropriate - you must answer all questions – most should be no.*

EXCEPTIONS: *See below for Cost Share, Human Subjects or Vertebrate Animal Usage*

Cost Share in Proposal (i.e. matching funds)? If True, select YES.

Once the Proposal Award Processing (PAP) Form has been saved, you will go to the Proposal Summary page. Under All Forms, there will be an additional form, the Cost Share Form, listed under "All Forms."

Click on "Cost Share" form, which will take you the page entitled "Proposal/Award Processing Form Cost Share Supplement."

Click on either "Add Department Cost Share Line" or on "Add College Cost Share Line" depending on the source of the funds.

For Principal Investigator, click on "Lookup" to find the faculty member's name. Department should auto-fill.

For Year, select "1."

Type the amount of the matching funds in the box labeled "other".

Click on "Add."

Include any comments which help explain the source or use of the cost share funds.

Hit "Save" on the "Proposal/Award Processing Form Cost Share Supplement" page.

Human Subjects? If TRUE, select YES (approval is not required for submission)

After selecting YES (even if you do not yet have IRB approval):

- 1) click on "LOOKUP" button. A new window will open with a search form.
- 2) Select one of the following:
 - a. the appropriate approved research project listed OR
 - b. if not yet approved, select "OTHER" and type in "PENDING".
- 3) Click on "CHOOSE" to save and close the pop-up window.

Vertebrate animals? If TRUE, select YES (approval is not required for submission)

- 1) If available, enter Animal Use Approval Number and Approval Date
- 2) If you do not yet have approval, type "pending" into the box for animal use approval number

Remarks: (last box on PAP form): if **international travel** is a component of this proposal (including travel to Canada, Mexico, and all international conference travel), you must write in this box:

International Travel: Country (or Countries): Approximate Dates of Travel

Example: International Travel: Spain: June 15, 2016 - July 15, 2016

There is no other place in USCeRA to designate whether or not students are planning to travel internationally, and it is important that this information be linked to the proposal.

Click on <SAVE> button

2) Complete and save all forms listed in the "All Forms" box

Once you have successfully saved the PAP form, you will be brought to a "Proposal Summary" page with several sections (see screen capture below).

Under the box/section entitled "All Forms," you will see at least 3 forms listed in red. Forms will include:




- Internal Commit
- SPARC Graduate Research Grant Student List
- Proposal/Award Processing Form (PAP)
- If applicable, a Cost Share Form

Every form listed must be opened, completed, and saved or your proposal will not be complete.

Each form (highlighted in green box) must show a **Status of “Completed”** before the proposal can be submitted.

All Forms

[▶ Start Approval Process](#)

Form Name		Status
Internal Commit		Complete
SPARC Graduate Research Grant Student List		Complete
Proposal/Award Processing Form (PAP)		Complete

Open, complete and save all forms until status of each is “Completed.”

“Internal Commit” form

NOTE: This form indicates a proposal is REQUESTING funds from USC (an internal funding source), which includes the SPARC Graduate Research Grant program. It does NOT indicate a need for cost-sharing from your department or college.

- i. open form by clicking on the form name in blue on the Proposal Summary page
- ii. In the blank square beside **Year 1**, enter the total amount requested for the SPARC Grant award (max of \$5000).
- iii. All other squares and boxes should be blank. Total will auto-fill.
- iv. Scroll to the bottom of the page and click <SAVE>.
- v. This will bring you back to the “Proposal Summary” page and the Internal Commit form will now have a status of “Complete.”

“SPARC Graduate Research Grant Student List” form

This is where you will enter the student investigator’s information

Students for a New Proposal

[Proposal Summary](#) / [Students](#)

First Name

Last Name

Email Address

Current Students

Project

Title

SPARC: Lauren Clark: TEST

Status

Not Submitted

Proposal Number

Type

New

Project Dates

5/1/2017 - 7/24/2018

[Proposal Summary](#) / [Students](#)

- i. open form by clicking on the red form name "SPARC Research Grant Student List"
- ii. Type in the last name, first name and email address of the student
- iii. From the dropdown box, select the department of the student's degree program. To find the department faster, start typing the name of the program in the text box and then select the appropriate department or program.
- iv. Click the "Add Student" button. The student's information will now appear under "Current Students."
- v. Click on "Proposal Summary" to return to the Proposal Summary page, which should now show that the SPARC Program Student List form is complete – the status box for the form is now green.

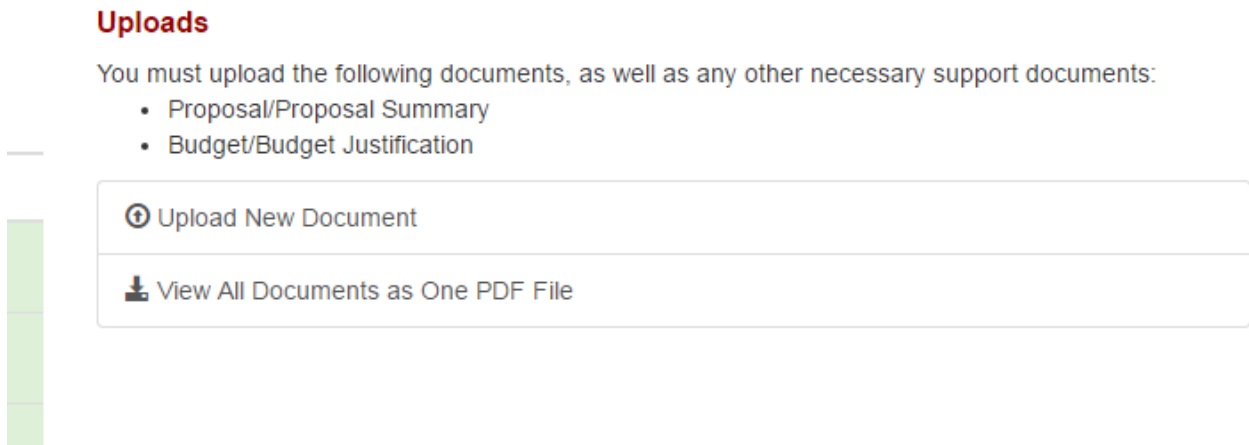
Proposal/Award Processing Form (PAP) This form should already be complete.

Any forms that do not reflect "Complete" under Status should be completed by clicking on the form name, completing as directed in the form, and clicking on SAVE. All forms must be completed in order to successfully submit your proposal.

3) “Upload” the SPARC Graduate Research Grant proposal

NOTE: **please submit as ONE word or PDF document.** Do not scan. Do not submit separate files. Please contact me (Lauren Clark) if you are having any problems (777-3929).

- a. In the middle of “Proposal Summary” page, there is an “Uploads” section (to the right of “All Forms”).



- b. Click on “Upload new document” in grey text. This will bring you to a new page.
- c. **Under “Category,” select “Other.”** This allows you to upload the SPARC proposal as one document (**please do not upload several separate documents**).
- d. Under “New Upload,” Click on “Choose File.” This will open a pop-up.
- e. In the pop-up box, select the student’s proposal from where it is saved in your computer or USB drive.
- f. Click on “Open.”
- g. The name of the student’s file will appear to the right of the “Choose File” button.
- h. Click on the red “Upload” button.
- i. This should take you back to the Proposal Summary page and the file will now be listed under “Uploads”.

NOTE: if this takes longer than a minute – something is wrong, try again or call me (777-3929). I will ask you to email the proposal to me at lauren.clark@sc.edu and I will upload it for you.

4) Start the approval process:

At this point, everything should be ready: all forms should show “completed” under the “All forms” box and the student’s proposal file should show under “Uploads.”

Title
"SPARC: Lisa Smith: TEST"

Project

Status	Not Submitted
Type	New
Dates	05/01/2017 -
Awardee Department	Research, Vice President for - (General)

Principal Investigator
 Dr. Lauren Clark
 Research, Vice President for - (General)

Students

Lisa Smith Exercise Science

Tools

View Audit Trail
Delete This Proposal
Add Certification
Print Cover Page

All Forms

[▶ Start Approval Process](#)

Form Name	Status
Internal Commit	Complete
SPARC Graduate Research Grant Student List	Complete
Proposal/Award Processing Form (PAP)	Complete

Uploads

You must upload the following documents, as well as any other necessary support documents:

- Proposal/Proposal Summary
- Budget/Budget Justification

Smith_L.docx	
Other	12.37 KB
Dr. Lauren Clark	08/26/2016

Upload New Document

View All Documents as One PDF File

- Select the red “Start approval process” button in the “All Forms” box.
- A pop-up will appear that says “Are you sure...”
- Click on OK.
- You will receive a message at the top of your USCeRA main page stating that the proposal has been successfully submitted with a **proposal number** listed.

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, and they are notified automatically by the system of pending applications.

If you do not receive a proposal number from USCeRA – you have NOT submitted the proposal. There is a problem – call Lauren Clark at 777-3929.