

**NC STATE UNIVERSITY**



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**Office of Undergraduate  
Research FWS Mentor  
Handbook**

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

The OUR collaborates with the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships to allow students to use federal work-study funds to support undergraduate RAs working with NC State University faculty. Work-Study RAs are assigned to a specific faculty member to help with a research project. While some 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. We expect RAs to be fully integrated in research teams or discussions. RAs can also take on additional responsibilities in projects as they gain experience. At the conclusion of the academic year, it is the expectation that the RA will present their research at the Spring Symposium.

### **2. What happens if a student reaches the maximum of their award?**

The student is responsible for ensuring that they do not earn more than their FWS award total. The OUR may notify them that they are approaching their limit, but they should monitor their total hours worked and total gross earnings. The department for which the student is working has the option of either continuing the assignment and paying 100% from their departmental budget or ending the assignment altogether. The OUR cannot guarantee continued payment for income over the award limit.

### **3. 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, mentors 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 questions. 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.

The OUR provides professional development opportunities assisting with mentor-mentee relationships and working with undergraduate researchers. If you would like to partake in the activities or would like to have one-on-one assistance with being a mentor (whether you are new to mentoring or experienced and looking to fine-tune/update skills), please contact Dr. Catherine Showalter ([ceshowal@ncsu.edu](mailto:ceshowal@ncsu.edu)).

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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.

## **4. Recruiting**

### 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 office support or other administrative support positions. We expect that you will treat the Office of Undergraduate Research Federal Work-Study (FWS) Research Assistant as a full member of your research or creative team.

A good position description will include:

1. 2-5 sentences describing the project and requirements for the position
2. reasonably nontechnical written language geared toward undergraduate students
3. contact information in case a student has direct questions about the position

Please email your job description to Ryan Leaird at ([prleaird@ncsu.edu](mailto:prleaird@ncsu.edu)) so it can be posted to the job site. The OUR will share the applicant information with the faculty by a set date.

Faculty will select those with whom they wish to interview or meet to further discuss the position. Faculty may select to interview all, some, or none of the candidates. These applicants have already been confirmed that they have a FWS award and any other requirements are completely up to the faculty. Please note that the OUR has only the information provided by both parties; in some cases, the student's interests may be different from their major (but align with the mentor's project), or the mentor may provide a more general area of interest, which can cause error in pairing.

Once a candidate is selected, the faculty will notify the OUR, specifically Brittany Valentine at [bnvalent@ncsu.edu](mailto:bnvalent@ncsu.edu), and the OUR will send out the hiring notification to the student, cc-ing the faculty member on the email notification.

The OUR will complete the hiring process and HR forms, which can take up to two weeks. During this time, the student would be able to volunteer until they are able to start clocking in and out for pay.

## **5. Hours and Schedule Setting**

Student FWS awards may vary, but can be up to \$2,000 per academic year. Faculty will be able to see the award amount during the application review process.

Schedules should be decided upon by both the student and faculty member. Students are not allowed to work more than 20 hours per week for all combined University employment. If the student has a FWS position, as well as a non-FWS position on campus, then they would only be able to work a maximum of 20 hours between both positions. This should be something that the faculty discusses with the student. Please keep in mind that OUR FWS RA positions will be advertised at a rate of \$14 per hour for new hires and \$15 per hour for returning RAs. Student employees are paid every two weeks.

FWS students should not work on holidays or days the university is closed. Student employees earn time and a half if they work during a University holiday under direct supervision. Students are not allowed to work during winter break (between semesters when the university is officially closed) for any reason.

Federal regulations state that a student may not work during their scheduled class time, even if the class is canceled. It is the responsibility of the department to verify that students are not working during scheduled class time.

If a student works over his/her award amount, the department may be given the option to cover the student employment pay or the student, but the OUR will not cover overages and the student will be terminated from the OUR RA position.

## **6. Timesheets**

Students will record their time by clocking in using WolfTime within the MyPack Portal on a mobile device, computer, or time clock (if the department so chooses). A mandatory 30-minute break is required when a student works six consecutive hours. This must be shown on the WolfTime as Time In and Time Out.

Students will be provided handouts and videos on the FWS RA Moodle page indicating how to complete the clocking in/out process.

Students who forget to clock in or out should contact Ryan Leaird at [prleaird@ncsu.edu](mailto:prleaird@ncsu.edu) as soon as possible to ensure that a correction is made, if the mentor is unable to make the adjustment. The student will not receive pay for any exceptions not cleared through the OUR by the payroll deadline.

## **7. Evaluating Students**

Faculty will be asked to assess the student's work through an annual appraisal form provided by the OUR. This form should be sent to the OUR office by the end of the spring semester or fall semester if the student does not plan to work in the spring for any reason.

## **8. Discipline and Terminations**

Faculty members have the right to terminate a student's employment. Faculty members should make every effort to coach the RA and offer the opportunity to improve before termination of employment. However, some situations may warrant immediate termination. The OUR must be notified of any early termination of students.

## **9. Student Requirements**

Students sign a contract which details their responsibilities and requirements. At the end of their final semester (Fall for Fall only; Spring for year-long), FWS RAs will submit a final reflection survey about their experience and a presentation at a conference (this can be the Spring Symposium, preferred, or a field conference, encouraged as an additional opportunity). By the end of *each* semester, students will need to complete at least one professional development experience (one must be through the OUR); we encourage faculty to push opportunities within the department or field, but this experience can also include workshops or presentations from the Office of Undergraduate Research, Career Development Center, field conference, organizations, etc. If a student fails to meet requirements, the OUR reserves the right to terminate the position.

July 1	Beginning of FWS Fiscal Year
First day of Fall Classes	First day student is able to work in fall
Last day of Fall Classes	Last day able to work
Students are prohibited from working when the University is officially closed or over Winter Break	
First day of Spring Classes	First day student is able to work in spring
March	Spring Symposium Registration Opens
End of April	Spring Symposium - Student's present or submit reflection paper
Last day of Spring Classes	End of FWS OUR Fiscal Year - Last day able to work

### **Contact Us**

General Contact Information for the OUR:

**The Office of Undergraduate Research (OUR)**

[undergraduate-research@ncsu.edu](mailto:undergraduate-research@ncsu.edu)

919/513-0095

**Dr. Catherine Showalter**, Associate Director, [ceshowal@ncsu.edu](mailto:ceshowal@ncsu.edu)

**Ryan Leaird**, University Program Coordinator, [pleaird@ncsu.edu](mailto:pleaird@ncsu.edu)