

VIMS Student Research Grants

Request for Proposals

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Deadline for submission of proposals for the 2026-27 Student Research Grants is **15 April 2026 at 11:59pm**. Please note this deadline has changed from previous years, and hereafter feedback will be provided by 15 May; funds will be available on 15 May 2026 and spent out/item(s) delivered/invoice in hand by 1 May 2027.

We anticipate that the maximum amount of an individual award this call will be up to \$4,000, with a total of \$40,000 approved for FY27 student research grants. Funds can be requested for research supplies, equipment, and analytical services in support of a student's research. Field work, such as rental fees for vessels, travel and lodging expenses associated with travel to a field site can also be included. If you have questions related to the Request for Proposals, please contact GSAC Chair Amber Hardison (akhardison@vims.edu).

The Student Research Grant Fund consists of monies administered by the Office for Academic Affairs.

The following **cannot** be funded by this committee:

1. Fees for VIMS Dive Team membership
2. Short-course fees
3. Travel not involving scientific work (e.g., conference travel cannot be funded by this grant)

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

1. A single student must act as the primary investigator and proposer.
2. Although the award can help support work proposed in the student's prospectus, it must not displace funding already received from other sources for identical work (i.e., an award to the student's advisor). Furthermore, the proposed work must not be taken from another proposal initiated by anyone else, such as the student's advisor or another member of their research group.
3. The proposal must also specifically identify the component of their work to be funded by this award. Students may NOT provide their Dissertation or Thesis Prospectus as their Student Research Grant proposal. If students are asking to have a part of their Dissertation/Thesis research funded, they must clearly define how the scope of work to be funded by this award relates to the larger context of their overall research project.
4. The scope of the proposed work should be consistent with the funds requested.
5. Students who previously received a Student Research Award are expected to include a succinct 1-page progress report on the previous award's accomplishments and how

funds were used in the previous year, with their application. The new proposal should also refer to the information in the progress report.

6. Students who have received **two** or more awards from the Student Research Grants Committee will be considered for funding only after other student proposals are evaluated, subject to availability of funds.
7. Projects proposing the use of live vertebrate animals (IACUC) or including human subjects (IRB) must include an acknowledgement of the process for obtaining an approved IACUC or IRB protocol and a certification that the student will submit a completed IACUC or IRB request within 30 days of notification of being awarded funds. Please see instructions for the cover page below. If a student already has an approved IACUC or IRB protocol, they should include the approved protocol and note this on the cover page.

PROPOSAL FORMAT

Proposals not in this format, including templates, or submitted as more than one document, will be returned without review.

Proposals need to include the sections outlined below and follow these guidelines:

- All proposals must be single-spaced, using Times Roman 12-point font with 1-inch margins on all sides.
 - Figures or tables cannot spill over into the 1-inch margins.
- Order of proposal components:
 - Max. 1 page: Cover page using template in Appendix 1
 - Max. 1 page: Results of Prior Support from previous Student Research Grants, if applicable (maximum 1 page, including figures or tables)
 - Max. 3 pages: Background and Objectives, Hypotheses (if applicable) and Rationale, Originality, Materials and Methods, Anticipated Results and Significance, in this order
 - See additional notes below
 - No page limit: Literature cited
 - Max. 0.5 page: Timeline
 - Max. 1 page: Budget and budget justification using template in Appendix 2. The table and budget together should be no more than 1 page.
 - Max. 2 pages: Biosketch using template in Appendix 3
 - No page limit: Approved IACUC or IRB protocol if applicable
- Notes on the components of the Background and Objectives, Hypotheses and Rationale, Originality, Materials and Methods, Anticipated Results and Significance
 - Figures and tables will count in the overall 3-page limit, so use figures or tables wisely
 - No appendices of extra figures or tables will be accepted
 - Proposals with text and figures/tables exceeding 3 pages will be returned without review
- Paginate beginning with the Background and Objectives.

- Computerized spelling and grammar checks should not substitute for careful proof-reading.
- Generative AI functions, such as Grammarly or Google Gemini, cannot be used to develop text, and reviewers will not use these functions to assess the proposals.

Each section is described below as well as how the section will be evaluated by the reviewers. The criteria for selecting proposals for funding are meant to mirror those used by reviewers evaluating competitive proposals to federal agencies – see below for the criteria. Because the members of the Student Research Grants Committee have varied specialties in coastal and marine science, **successful submissions must describe proposed research in a manner accessible to scientists outside the student investigator's specialty.** Students are encouraged to judiciously use bold text or individual sections to make sure hypotheses and specific aims stand out.

For students that have not received prior support, the maximum points possible based on the rubric is 22. For students that have received prior support, the maximum points possible based on the rubric is 25. The student grants committee chair will evaluate whether students have followed the guidelines and return proposals without review if guidelines are not followed. Then, the grants committee will evaluate each section below and follow the rubric provided (half points are permitted).

Cover Page: Use the template provided in Appendix 1. The cover page should be 1-page maximum. Remove the travel funds, IACUC, or IRB statements if not applicable. Advisors can edit the certification statement if there are no additional funds needed in the proposal but must certify that there are no funds already earmarked for this project.

Rubric: 0 – does not follow template
 1 – follows template

Plain Language Summary: The summary should be written in plain and clear language such that anyone at VIMS could read and understand the rationale, objectives, methods, and significance of the proposed work. The summary should be no more than 150 words. The word count needs to be included at the end of the summary.

Rubric: 1 – poorly demonstrated
 2 – demonstrated but lacking detail
 3 – clearly demonstrated

Results of Prior Support: This section only applies if a student has previously been awarded a Student Research Grant. A maximum 1-page summary that clearly outlines (i) the previous award's objectives, (ii) progress to date, and (iii) where these data/results have been presented (e.g., conferences, published articles) or the plans to disseminate the data/results. Each of these three things must be summarized. The summary must also certify the full expenditure of funds of the previous award.

Rubric: 1 – poorly demonstrated
 2 – demonstrated but lacking detail
 3 – clearly demonstrated

Background and Objectives: The background should demonstrate sound knowledge of literature in the area and of prior work on the specific research problem. Strong background sections clearly identify a gap in the literature, setting the stage for the objectives. Objectives should be clearly listed.

- Rubric: 1 – poorly demonstrated
 2 – demonstrated but lacking detail
 3 – clearly demonstrated

Hypotheses and Rationale: Hypothesis-driven studies need to clearly state the hypothesis or hypotheses and provide motivation for undertaking the research. As some research may not be hypothesis driven, the proposal must clearly articulate this in the rationale and why descriptive studies fill a gap in our understanding.

- Rubric: 1 – poorly demonstrated
 2 – demonstrated but lacking detail
 3 – clearly demonstrated

Student's originality: This criterion is less focused on the originality of the project itself but more on the role of the student investigator in developing the ideas. Moreover, a statement that this work is not fully funded by other sources must be included. If the advisor is willing to support the uncovered costs beyond \$4,000, this should be clearly stated here.

- Rubric: 0 – does not provide statements on student's role and funding sources
 1 – provides statements on student's role and funding sources

Materials and Methods: Describe the study design and methods to be used, including appropriate statistics. Enough detail should be included so that a non-specialist can understand and evaluate the proposed methodologies. The research methods must match the budget requested. If the proposal extends beyond 1 year, this must clearly be justified in the methods.

- Rubric: 1 – poorly demonstrated
 2 – demonstrated but lacking detail
 3 – clearly demonstrated

Anticipated Results: Briefly describe the results that will be obtained based on the methodology outlined. This section should include a statement on plans for dissemination of data obtained.

- Rubric: 1 – poorly demonstrated
 2 – demonstrated but lacking detail
 3 – clearly demonstrated

Significance: This section should demonstrate the potential value or contribution to the research problem in advancing knowledge **within** and **outside** the field of study.

- Rubric: 1 – poorly demonstrated
 2 – demonstrated but lacking detail
 3 – clearly demonstrated

Literature Cited: List all citations referenced in the text and no others. Using a consistent format that includes author, date, title, source, and pagination is more important than using a specific format.

Rubric: 0 – does not provide literature cited or an inconsistent format
1 – provides literature cited and in a consistent format

Timeline: Most grant proposals require a timeline for using the awarded funds. The proposal must include a timeline of how and when funds will be used and by the deadline as outlined above in this RFP. Remember, this is a 1-year award. If the project you are proposing extends beyond 1-year (15 May 2026 – 1 May 2027), then a clear justification for the timeline is required. A Gantt chart is an excellent way to show the timeline of each step of the proposal, but students can use any format they wish as long as they effectively convey the timeline associated with their proposal.

Rubric: 0 – does not provide a timeline
1 – provides a timeline

Budget and Budget Justification: Use the provided template in Appendix 2 to complete the proposal itemized budget and budget justification. If the budget exceeds the limit, a concise but clear explanation must be provided justifying the total budget as well as a certification that the advisor will cover the remainder.

Rubric: 0 – does not use the template and/or does not provide justification
1 – uses the template and provides justification

Curriculum Vitae: The NIH/NSF-style biosketch in Appendix 3 must be followed. The biosketch cannot exceed 2 pages total.

Rubric: 0 – does not use the template and/or exceeds 2 pages
1 – uses the template

Research on Animal Subjects Form (if applicable): Provide completed IACUC form if vertebrates will be used as experimental subjects. Note that students will need to supply an approved IACUC prior to funds being released. If the student does not have an IACUC protocol, the student must certify on the Cover page that they will apply within 30 days of notice of award.

Research on Human Subjects Form (if applicable): Provide completed IRB form if humans will be used as experimental subjects. Note that students will need to supply an approved IRB prior to funds being released. If the student does not have an IRB protocol, the student must certify on the Cover page that they will apply within 30 days of notice of award.

Appendix 1

Replace the following text in this order – 1-page maximum:

Title of proposal

Plain language summary and word count

Student's name

Building/Room Number

Office Phone Number

Email address

(Include only if applicable) I have requested travel funds to access field sites.

(Include only if applicable) My proposal contains vertebrate animals. I understand that I will need to apply within 30 days of notice of award for an IACUC protocol via the [Animal Oversight \(IACUC\) website at W&M](#).

(Include only if applicable) My proposal contains vertebrate animals. I have included an approved IACUC protocol that will be valid through the duration of this award.

(Include only if applicable) My proposal contains human subjects. I understand that I will need to apply within 30 days of notice of award for an IRB protocol via the [Human Ethics \(IRB\) website at W&M](#).

(Include only if applicable) My proposal contains human subjects. I have included an approved IRB protocol that will be valid through the duration of this award.

I certify that I will use the awarded funds within the fiscal year awarded (i.e., all funds expended by June 1 of the following year).

If awarded, students must keep an updated account of their award funds and expenditures.

Student signature and Date

I certify that I have read and approve this research. The proposed work has not been earmarked in other funded research, and if applicable, I will support any additional costs beyond the \$2,500 maximum.

Student's advisor signature and Date

APPENDIX 2

Use the following template for the Budget and Budget Justification and remove the examples provided:

Item	Cost per unit	Total Cost per Item	Justification
Sanger sequencing	\$3.50/per sample	\$550	Sanger sequencing will be done commercially at Yale's Keck DNA Sequencing Facility at \$3.50 per sample. We will sequence both the forward and reverse directions for the <i>cox1</i> fragment outlined in the proposal. See prices here: https://research.yale.edu/cores/sanger-sequencing
Hobo Pendant MX Water Temperature Data Logger	\$79.99	\$399.95	I will deploy 5 loggers on oyster bags to monitor temperature as described in the proposal. See product information here: https://www.onsetcomp.com/products/data-loggers/mx2201
...
		TOTAL	Max. \$2,500

APPENDIX 3 BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Name:

Degree Program:

A. Professional Preparation

List undergraduate and graduate education. List the year the degree was received. Provide institution name, location, major/area of study, degree (if applicable), year (or in progress as relevant)

INSTITUTION	LOCATION	MAJOR/AREA OF STUDY	DEGREE (if applicable)	Year (YYYY)

B. Appointments

List, in reverse chronological order, all academic/professional appointments beginning with the current appointment. Start/End Year of Appointment, Position Title, Organization, City, State, Country

FROM - TO	POSITION TITLE, ORGANIZATION, AND LOCATION

C. Products

Acceptable products include but are not limited to publications, data sets, software, patents, copyrights, and presentations (i.e., poster and oral presentations). These products should be closely related to the proposal and research of the applicant. If listing unpublished documents, you must clearly state if they are (i) not yet submitted for publication, (ii) in review, or (iii) in revision. More than five items are not permitted.

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D. Synergistic activities

List up to five distinct examples that demonstrate the broader impact of the individual's professional and scholarly activities that focus on the integration and transfer of knowledge as well as its creation. Awards, scholastic achievements, mentoring, teaching experience, lectures, outreach, workshops are all acceptable activities to be listed under this section. More than five items are not permitted.

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