



Northeastern University

University Scholars Program

Letters of Support for SIRF Applicants

Dear Prospective Northeastern Faculty Mentors,

The University Scholars Program is pleased to announce the continuation of the Scholars Independent Research Fellowship (SIRF), which supports student-initiated independent research and creative endeavors under the supervision of a faculty mentor. All University Scholars in good academic standing and with a GPA of at least 3.0 are eligible to apply for individual or group SIRF awards of up to \$5,000 to be used during the summer. This is a competitive fellowship and funding is not guaranteed.

As part of the application process, University Scholars receive training in how to craft and carry out research proposals. Applicants should demonstrate autonomy in project design and implementation. SIRF awards are not intended to be used for research assistantships or as a substitute for a grant funded position. In the case of the sciences and engineering, the projects can be carried out in close collaboration with a faculty sponsor. However, we ask that faculty mentors assist the student in carving out a distinct and tenable project for the student to conduct. Priority will be given to projects where students are making their own clearly defined intellectual contributions.

Mentors play a key role in the conceptualization and execution of SIRF projects and we are enormously grateful for your generous support. SIRF mentors are expected to help Scholars narrow or expand the scope of the project as appropriate; approve the student's mentoring plan, outlining the expected frequency and mode of communication; write a letter of recommendation in support of the final SIRF proposal; provide feedback on the Scholar's progress toward completion of the project, including through a brief mid-summer survey; and sign off on a final project and short report on the project. Importantly, faculty mentors are expected to ensure the project's compliance with university guidelines related to the ethical and safe conduct of research. **This means ensuring the project's compliance with IRB and IACUC as relevant and taking into account student safety, in terms of project location and design.**

Mentors receive a complementary membership to the Council on Undergraduate Research (see our website under "Faculty Resources") and are warmly invited to the fall Scholars Research Symposium, where SIRF awardees present their work to other Scholars and members of the Northeastern community in a festive atmosphere. Mentors are also encouraged to help students locate appropriate venues for external review of their work.

Once a student submits their proposal, it will trigger an online system where you can submit a PDF of your letter of recommendation. The letter should comment

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on:

- the faculty advisor's involvement with the project
- the student's initiative, motivation, and determination for the proposed project
- the quality, originality, and worthiness of the proposal
- the arrangements to ensure completion of the project
- the status of any IRB or IACUC processes
- the safety of the project, in terms of its location and the project itself

Thank you for your support of this student and the University Scholars Program. Please contact me with any questions or concerns you might have at 617.373.7044 or by e-mail at j.iacono@neu.edu.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "J. Iacono", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jonna Iacono, Ph.D.
Director, University Scholars & Office of Undergraduate Research and Fellowships
Northeastern University