

What are the advantages, for a student, of participating in TURC?

The primary advantage of participating in TURC is *educational*. TURC provides a unique structure for students to work on challenging research or creative projects – and to engage in meaningful community service – under the guidance of faculty mentors who are committed to working closely with their students, sometimes over a period of two or more years. Typically there is no tuition payment—it’s *free*! TURC projects are built on relationships of trust and one-on-one commitments between students and faculty mentors. Through these relationships, students are challenged intellectually and given the opportunity to develop and demonstrate their independence, seriousness of purpose, and organizational abilities. Such experiences help the students to learn and grow in ways that classroom experiences alone cannot provide. These experiences also improve your chances when applying for nationally competitive scholarships, awards, graduate school or employment.

The mention of scholarships and awards brings up another reason to participate in TURC. University of Tulsa students have had great success in winning prestigious national awards and scholarships, and much of this success can be attributed to their participation in TURC. Students who have a record of independent research and leadership in community service have an enormous advantage when applying for awards that can be used to support undergraduate or graduate education. Nona Charleston, our Nationally Competitive Scholarships Advisor and Associate Director of TURC, works tirelessly to help students identify appropriate opportunities for competitions and to assist students during the application process. Again, this valuable service is provided as part of your education at TU – it costs you nothing.

Finally, there are significant financial incentives for participating in TURC. The most obvious of these is a stipend (currently \$450/semester) provided when students are actively engaged in TURC research or creative projects. TURC also offers a summer program for students interested in focusing on their independent projects without having to keep up with a full course load. If accepted into the summer program, TURC students may request room, board, and a modest living stipend for a period of about six weeks. In the past TURC has been open and flexible in attempting to meet students’ financial needs, such as research costs not covered by other sources, travel/conference costs related to one’s research, and other needs directly related to a student’s research or creative project.

What are the advantages, for a faculty member, of participating in TURC?

The primary reason for faculty participation is probably the opportunity to work closely with motivated students in an area of shared interest. Also, by integrating one or more TURC students into aspects of their research, faculty may get some valuable help and collaboration while at the same time furthering the education of the student.

As is the case with students, faculty mentors may also get tangible benefits from participating in TURC. For example, a professor who anticipates working with more than

one student or investing considerable resources in a TURC project in some other way might request a course release. In appropriate cases, faculty mentors may also ask for summer stipends in order to continue TURC projects during the summer break. Faculty and students are encouraged to propose arrangements that make the most sense with an expectation that the A&S TURC Advisory Board will evaluate each proposal on a case-by-case basis.

Should students wait until their junior or senior year to apply to TURC?

No. In fact TURC encourages students to apply during their freshman or sophomore years, because many research or creative projects require a long-term commitment and framework to allow careful preparation, execution, analysis and dissemination of results. In some cases, of course, it might be appropriate to begin a project during the junior or even senior year. However, the program is less likely to fund students who *begin* TURC projects late in their college careers. This is especially true for summer funding: juniors or seniors should not wait until the spring deadline to propose a project that begins in the summer. Although it may not be your intention, such proposals are not likely to be funded because they tend to look like an attempt to obtain summer support with no history of participation in TURC. The summer program is intended to serve TURC students who have already demonstrated a commitment to their projects.

I am really interested in TURC, but I don't really understand what is expected in the proposal. Can I get some help?

Each semester, about two weeks before the applications are due, the TURC Advisory Board holds a workshop to address these sorts of issues. The time and place of the workshop will be sent to your TU email address early in the semester. Sounds like you should attend.

I really want to participate in the TURC summer program, but my TURC mentor won't be around to help me. Can I do the summer program anyway?

It is indeed possible to participate in the summer program when your mentor is not available, but your proposal should clearly delineate what you will be doing and to whom you will be accountable. For example, if a TURC student plans to focus heavily on community service during a summer month, the proposal should describe such plans clearly and perhaps include a letter of support from an official at the organization at which services will be provided.

I want to work together with my faculty mentor on a project related to her research, but the statement of understanding says that projects have to be "student-driven." Does that mean that our project is ineligible?

No. We encourage students to participate in the research projects of their faculty mentors. But we do expect that the student play a significant role in some part of the project.

Example 1: Jane is working together with Professor X on his project. Jane Xeroxes chapters from books and does other errands for Professor X, including bringing him coffee. We won't fund that, and unless Jane is being well paid by Professor X, she shouldn't do this sort of thing even outside of TURC. Example 2: Professor Y collected some data that she has never had time to analyze, and Jane is very interested in what these data might show. With guidance from Professor Y, Jane undertakes the analysis. This project is eligible for TURC funding.

Note that faculty input and editing on proposals are fine, but we expect that TURC proposals will be written by students.

I'm in Arts & Sciences and have noticed that the TURC program has different guidelines and admissions policies in other colleges. Why can't the University have just one TURC program and one set of rules?

TURC is pursued somewhat differently in the different colleges, for the most part because research traditions and project needs vary between disciplines. For example, TURC students in Chemistry might work as part of a team in a laboratory, but that model would not be appropriate for the English department. TURC has adapted to such differences by being flexible and accommodating differences in how research and creative work are pursued in each of the colleges. While a single set of rules might sound convenient, such "standardization" would diminish TURC's ability to encourage and support the wide variety of pursuits available to students in our colleges.

Does TURC support students in the Arts? For example, what about a project that consists of a series of paintings around a particular theme?

The Arts & TURC program places high priority on supporting students in the performing, studio, and creative arts. In fact, more than a third of the A&S TURC over the past several years have come from the arts, including Music, Theatre, and the School of Art. In many instances these projects combined elements of research with pure creative endeavor, such as combining a painting project with studying the works of an established artist whose technique or approach was relevant to the student's goals.

Why does TURC have a community service requirement? I thought TURC was a research and creative program. Does my community service project have to be related to my research or creative project?

A fundamental precept of the TURC program is that all TURC students have an obligation to give something back to the community. While it is not the only avenue at TU for faculty-mentored undergraduate research, it has attracted national attention due to its unique integration of scholarship, research and service. From its inception in 1994, TURC

has sought to encourage the development of students who are socially responsible and civically engaged by requiring all participants to engage in meaningful community service. This requirement grows out of a philosophy that emphasizes not only the pursuit of knowledge and innovation, but also the conviction that research and creativity should be applied in ways that benefit our communities.

As a practical matter, the synergy between research and community service often suggests new avenues of inquiry and potential applications. Your future employers or graduate school program will be impressed by your community service not only because it testifies to your commitment to important causes, but also because it demonstrates the ability to get work done in complex, real-world settings. Students, therefore, are encouraged to find community service projects that mesh with their research or creative endeavors. However, this is not in any sense a requirement. The most important thing is that you establish community service goals that you are committed to and that give you an opportunity to make a real difference.

If I want TURC support over the summer, how much should I request?

Last year the standard summer award was approximately \$1,000 for room and board plus \$700 for living expenses over a six week period. Note that room and board is usually available only to students who live outside the Tulsa area and therefore cannot stay with their parents during the summer. Need based financial aid maybe available to cover tuition that is required by TURC-related activities. You will need to contact Nona Charleston to see if you qualify.

I have a busy class schedule, so I don't really have time to do TURC during the school year. Can I pursue TURC only during the summers?

Because the program is designed to encourage well-thought out and sustained projects, TURC is not likely to fund "summer only" projects. Our record shows that many students have carried out TURC projects during the regular academic year while handling difficult class loads and extra-curricular activities. As a general rule, TURC expects its students to sustain their interest and commitment to projects during the school year.

My TURC application was not funded, and I still feel that the project was fully worthy of support. Can I appeal the decision?

Decisions about admission and continuation in the TURC program are made by two committees which carefully consider and discuss every TURC proposal. If you disagree with the decision that is made about your proposal, you may appeal for re-consideration only under certain circumstances. Specifically, rejected proposals are eligible for appeal when it can be shown that a procedural error or bias led to a flawed process of deliberation on an application. An example of an error might be that your application was not copied

correctly by someone in the TURC office, with the result that an element of your application was missing when in fact you had submitted a complete application. An example of a bias would be that someone on the TURC admissions board had a conflict of interest or dispute with a student applicant or her mentor and was therefore unable to provide objective input on the application. Simple disagreements with the judgments made by TURC are not grounds for appeal. For example, if a proposal is rejected because of an unclear method of research, a student cannot appeal by asserting that the research method is in fact sufficiently clear. All decisions related to TURC are also eligible for appeal under the University's "Academic Appeals" policy described in the student handbook. In this case, appeal would be made to the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.

Where can I get more information, if I have questions that aren't covered in this list?

You can start with your faculty advisor or with the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, Dr. Tom Benediktson. The Dean can be reached by email at tom-benediktson@utulsa.edu.