

College of Engineering Undergraduate Student/Faculty Agreement for Volunteer Research

Policy Number:	2024-13
Effective Date:	08/23/2024
Updated Date:	n/a
Responsible Party	Scott Civjan
References:	

College of Engineering Policy for Undergraduate Research:

Undergraduate research experiences are valuable for our students and an excellent venue to showcase activities and mentor students who are considering graduate studies. Students shall be appropriately compensated for their work and expectations must be appropriate for the scope of work they are undertaking. This policy applies to both academic year and/or summer research. The focus on academic classes shall not be compromised by the extracurricular research experiences but highlight these complementary experiences.

Anyone working with an undergraduate researcher in any capacity shall provide reasonable expectations in line with the student experience and time commitment in a written agreement signed by both parties. They should verify the number of credits the student is taking, other work commitments, and any other factors when determining an appropriate number of hours/week or credits to assign to the research activity. It is inherently implied in research mentoring environments that a student should prioritize these activities over other commitments and attention should be paid to avoid overextending undergraduate researchers, and mentors should explicitly state and allow reasonable research accommodations for academic and extracurricular activities. The faculty member overseeing the research is required to have regular check-ins with undergraduate researchers to assess their workload and allow for re-evaluation of commitment to balance all aspects of their undergraduate experience.

The following are guidelines on the types of undergraduate research opportunities in the College of Engineering. If you have questions or situations that do not fit these guidelines, please contact the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Affairs and discuss with your department head.

1) Paid Undergraduate Research Opportunities

Undergraduate researchers can be hired hourly. Students shall submit timesheets of hours worked each week and be paid accordingly. Time outside of laboratories doing associated work such as readings, data analysis, writing of results, or any meetings where the student is expected to attend are required to be included in these hours. The hourly rate must meet the university minimum requirements and raises should be provided as the student gains experience. Accommodations shall be made for academic conflicts (exam times, increased workload in some weeks based on class assignments), though expectation of relatively consistent hours and progress in research is reasonable.

2) Research for Academic Credit

Students may complete undergraduate research for academic credit. Students should be signed up for an Independent Study or Honor's Thesis/Research appropriate to the work being completed (296/396/496/499T/499Y). Credits assigned are relative to hours worked per week but are NOT a one-to-one correlation. Credits should be relative to course expectations including out of classroom efforts. **One credit of independent study has an expectation of 3 hours/week of research effort (per current Faculty Senate stated Policy).** Time outside of laboratories doing associated required work such as readings, data analysis, writing of results, or any meetings where the student is expected to attend are required to be included in these hours.

3) Volunteer Research

In some instances, students may want to get a feel for what a research position would entail but not be ready to commit to a larger role or may want to shadow a student doing research to learn about a project. These volunteer roles are not appropriate where the student is being tasked to provide research products or deliverables. Such positions should be limited in scope and total hours and should typically not extend beyond one semester or summer, though specific details may vary based on agreements between the student and supervisor. These are not renewable and shall not be used sequentially as rotations through different laboratories or different projects in a particular faculty group. This option should be initiated by student preference and non-committal to regular hours. **Any research opportunity involving significant hours of continuing work that is used to evaluate independent research aptitude before committing to a larger project should be an hourly paid or academic credit undergraduate research opportunity.**

Undergraduate students engaging in such volunteer research activities must execute the attached volunteer research agreement form with the supervising faculty member prior to starting the activity.