CURCA $500 Research Awards: Tips on How to Apply

Download the application forms and instructions located at:
http://curca.buffalo.edu/students/funding.php

Be sure to include: all sections of the application with appropriate section headings and page limitations.

Questions to consider when writing your project description and methods:

1. Did I write my application in such a way that anyone from any discipline would understand my project?
2. Did I explain BOTH the overall project and my specific role in that project?
3. Is the amount of work proposed realistic for the time available?
4. Did I explain what the anticipated end result of the project will be?
5. Did I provide an itemized budget and justify why each item is needed for my project?

Common Pitfalls of the Application Process:

1. Lack of focus: The proposal does not clearly state the specific research objective or question.
2. Lack of specificity: The project is vague or ill defined.
3. Lack of relation to a research hypothesis beyond design and construction of a prototype, e.g. the student(s) request funds to design and construct a robot but do not explain what functions of the robot they will be studying or trying to improve.
4. The project is too large to be managed by an undergraduate in the time allotted.
5. The expenses listed on the budget form are not justified or itemized.
6. The proposal only describes the technical tasks a student will perform.
7. Lack of planning: The timetable is too brief and does not establish the important milestones in the project.
8. Editing required: The proposal is too long and repetitious or displays poor grammar.
9. Insufficient groundwork: The proposal does not adequately describe theories and previous research that are important to the project.
10. Lack of prerequisite experience: The student does not demonstrate adequate preparation for the proposed research, e.g., coursework, research skills, training, or general knowledge.
11. The proposal does not reflect a close, collaborative relationship between the student and the faculty mentor.

CURCA Award Application Dos and Don'ts

DO:

1. Have your faculty mentor sign your application.
2. Proofread your application for grammatical errors, spelling, etc.
3. Have one of your friends from another major read your application. Does he or she understand what you are doing?
4. Request an appointment with CURCA staff to review your application prior to the submission deadline.
5. Cite your references.
6. Work with your faculty mentor. Ask for his or her advice, and ask him or her to proofread your application
7. If you are attending a conference, be sure to state what the end product will be. Are you going to present the results of what you learned? If so, how? Are you going to gain information that will be used in a future project?
8. Be specific about your project. Specify exactly what YOU are going to do, for what tasks you are responsible (which is especially important for group projects or projects in a faculty or graduate student's lab), and what the end product will be (paper, presentation, poster, performance, etc.).
9. Provide us with a copy of any surveys, questionnaires, etc. that will be used in the project.
10. Check your email frequently after you turn in your application, as we may try to reach you to request additional information or to ask a question.
11. Turn in the original application (**single-sided**, original signatures).

DON'T:

1. Use a lot of technical jargon.
2. Turn in an application that contains grammatical and spelling errors.
3. Turn in an application that has an unoriginal project description or an application not entirely written by students.
4. Use "cut and pasted" descriptions of projects, conferences, etc. Rewrite the information in your own words.
5. Ask for money to pay you as a research assistant, UNLESS you can justify that the only way you can participate in the research project is to leave or cut back hours at your current job, and you can provide a letter from your faculty mentor demonstrating why you are the best and only candidate for the project.
6. Request money for projects that are required for your grade in a course. The CURCA awards are intended to fund projects that go above and beyond classroom/degree requirements.
7. Round costs up/down. Provide each itemized cost plus tax and shipping.
8. Request contingency funds. CURCA will only fund materials that are itemized and properly justified.

Conference Applications: ***Please use the Conference Application***

- If you are applying for funding to attend a conference (i.e. you are NOT presenting):
  - Explain why you are going to the conference, what you hope to gain from attending, and how it will benefit your development as a researcher.
  - Explain how you will share what you have learned at the conference with a wider audience.
- If you are PRESENTING at a conference:
  - Provide all conference details (time, date, location, etc.). A link to the conference website is helpful.
  - Provide a copy of the accepted abstract.
  - Provide documentation that the abstract was accepted (if available)

General Budget Tips:

- If your budget exceeds $500, please specify where the rest of the funds will be obtained, or what will happen to the project if you do not receive the money.
- Be specific. List the item, the quantity, the price per item, and the total for each item requested. The more detail you provide, the better.
- Provide a source for the price (i.e. where did you find this price quoted?).
- Refer to the samples below for additional suggestions regarding format and the type of information to provide.

Research Material Budget Proposals

The following is a good example of a budget with a justification included with each item:

Research Project Expenses:

    African-American Historical Society: $75.00
        The student membership rate allows for access to microfilm, historical records, and
        personal papers of local individuals. Rates can be found at http://www.aahgs.org/

    Conference fees: $135.00
        Student registration for the "Weekend of Leadership and Celebrating Women's Human
        Rights Conference" is required for admittance to the conference. Conference
        information, including the student rate, can be found at
        http://www.unfpa.org/rights/women.htm

Operating Expenses:

    Mileage Reimbursement: $157.50
        Reimbursement for transportation to and from the Frank E. Merriweather Library using
        2014 standard mileage rates (per the IRS) for five round trips. Please see attached
        MapQuest routes that display mileage.

    Olympus Digital Voice Recorder: $79.99
        Recorder will be used to conduct oral history interviews with project participants. The
        price quote was obtained for a mid-range model sold at Best Buy
        http://www.bestbuy.com

Total Estimated Expenses: $447.49

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The following is a poor example:

Materials needed:

Qiagen DNA Mini Blood Kit for DNA extraction
Buffer for genotyping
TaqMan ® Mix (Applied Biosystems Drug Metabolism Genotyping Assays, Forster City, CA)

Theatre and the Arts Budget Proposals:

The following is a good example of a budget from this discipline:

Liberace Grant 2013-2014				
Choreographer : _____ Composer: _____ Music: _____				
Composer Fee	to be brought in once in the Fall, once in the Spring			$500
Composer Travel	$.45/mile	300 miles Syracuse to Buffalo, R/T	Once in Fall '08 Once in Spring '09	$270
Composer Lodging	$70/night	1 night Fall '08 1 night Spring '09		$140
Music Usage Fee	$50/performance	12 performances Total (7 performances/fall) (5 performances/spring)		$600
Costumes	$50/dancer	9 dancers		($450) (funded by THD)
Projection	Any costs associated with a projection would have to be funded by the Liberace Grant			?
Total				**$1510**

*** A separate justification for each line item should be included with this budget, since the explanations of the items are not found within the budget itself.

Conference Budget Proposals

The following is an <u>acceptable</u> conference budget proposal:

Airfare: Round trip, Buffalo NY to Orlando, FL: Date- Date

    $269.50

Hotel: Split three ways for three nights; Date- Date

    $124.86

Conference: General Registration fee for students

    $145

Total Estimated cost: $539.36

<u>Justification</u>:

Airfare: It is necessary to fly to Orlando, FL from Buffalo, NY. This reduces time off from academic studies as well as the cost of hotels while traveling to and from Florida. Airfare was purchased from http://www.airtran.com. Over several weeks of searching for lowest airfare, $269.50 was the lowest offer available.

Hotel: The hotel reservation was made from http://www.regalsunresort.com. By being an AAA member, we received a 20% discount. We will be sleeping 3 (three) people per room for 3 (three) nights, and will be in attendance for the entire length of the conference.

Conference: Without purchasing the conference ticket, I would not be able to attend and present my accepted poster. The general registration fee for students was purchased. Reservation was made at http://ww.abct.org.

The $39.36 that the CURCA award cannot cover will be paid by me out-of-pocket.

The following is a <u>poor</u> example of a conference budget proposal:

For the project, the estimated cost is $200 for the one week experiment including cell culture, and western blotting

Travel costs will be additional and will consist of the conference registration fee plus meal expenses.

The conference registration cost is $150 and the living plus meal cost are around $150 per day.