Research Rookies
Faculty Mentor Handbook

Northern Illinois University
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General Information

Program Description

Research Rookies provides freshmen, sophomores, and first-semester transfer students with the opportunity to participate in research and artistry initiatives at NIU. By working with an NIU faculty mentor, they have the opportunity to get involved in their potential field of study and ground-breaking research and artistry. Not only will this further their academic success during the initial years of college, it will give them an invaluable experience that will benefit them throughout their future.

Research Rookies are expected to spend approximately 5-10 hours working on their project every week. In addition, there will be monthly meetings to ensure that their project is running smoothly. To conclude the year of work, they must present at Undergraduate Research and Artistry Day (URAD) in April, which gives them the opportunity to present their findings to the academic community.

Program Objectives

The goal of Research Rookies is to provide students with the opportunity to properly conduct academic research and artistry projects and draw reasoned conclusions in their work. The goals for the program are listed below:

- Students will expand and deepen their knowledge of a topic or subject matter of their choosing related to human societies and the natural world.
- Students will conduct academic research that follows the guidelines of best practice, including developing clear research questions or problems, applying appropriate research methodologies, and adhering to the appropriate ethical frameworks.
- Students will draw reasoned conclusions in the findings of their research.
- Students will engage in reflective practice for the purpose of continuous learning and improvement, identifying lessons learned, strengths, and ways to improve.

Research Rookies Administration

All OSEEL staff can be reached at the following address:

Altgeld Hall 100
Northern Illinois University
DeKalb, IL 60115
815-753-8154
ResearchRookies@niu.edu
http://www.niu.edu/researchrookies/

Destiny McDonald  
Associate Director  
dmcdonald@niu.edu; 815-753-8159

Alison Kramer  
Research Rookie Student Coordinator  
akramer7@niu.edu; 815-753-8154
Program Components

**Cohort Meetings for Students**

Mandatory cohort meetings are held the first Wednesday of each month. These meetings are meant to give students and staff time to check-in and make sure everyone is on track. At the meetings, important information and resources are given to all students regarding key aspects of successful research at NIU. If a student cannot attend a meeting, he/she must contact the OSEEL staff regarding the absence before the meeting happens. Below you will find a table including all monthly meeting dates for the 2019-20 academic year. **Faculty mentors are not required to attend monthly cohort meetings.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fall Semester</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tr>
<td>Monthly Meeting</td>
<td>Wednesday, August 28</td>
<td>5:00 – 6:30 pm</td>
<td>Altgeld Hall 125</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monthly Meeting</td>
<td>Wednesday, September 4</td>
<td>5:00 – 6:30 pm</td>
<td>Altgeld Hall 125</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monthly Meeting</td>
<td>Wednesday, October 2</td>
<td>5:00 – 6:30 pm</td>
<td>Founders Memorial Library 297</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monthly Meeting</td>
<td>Wednesday, November 6</td>
<td>5:00 – 6:30 pm</td>
<td>Altgeld Hall 125</td>
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<tr>
<td>OSEEL Reception</td>
<td>Friday, December 6</td>
<td>11:30 am – 1:30 pm</td>
<td>TBD</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spring Semester</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tr>
<td>Monthly Meeting</td>
<td>Wednesday, January 15</td>
<td>5:00 – 6:00 pm</td>
<td>Altgeld Hall 125</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monthly Meeting</td>
<td>Wednesday, February 5</td>
<td>5:00 – 6:00 pm</td>
<td>Altgeld Hall 125</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monthly Meeting</td>
<td>Wednesday, March 4</td>
<td>5:00 – 6:00 pm</td>
<td>Altgeld Hall 125</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monthly Meeting</td>
<td>Wednesday, April 1</td>
<td>5:00 – 6:00 pm</td>
<td>Altgeld Hall 125</td>
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<tr>
<td>Undergraduate Research &amp; Artistry Day</td>
<td>Tuesday, April 28</td>
<td>9:00 am-2:00 pm</td>
<td>Duke Ellington Ballroom, Holmes Student Center</td>
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<td>End of Year Celebration</td>
<td>TBD</td>
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End of Year Celebration
The pursuit of scholarly activities with undergraduate students brings faculty members some additional benefits that enhance satisfaction with their career and their personal development. These include the following:

- Opportunity to renew and reinvigorate enthusiasm for working with undergraduate students
- Intellectual stimulation and confidence associated with creative and critical thinking
- Excitement created by intellectual activity
- Opportunity to establish or re-invigorate a research, scholarly, or creative program
- Opportunity to promote and model lifelong learning to students and colleagues
- Internal and external recognition


**Faculty Mentor Selection Process for Students**

Students are giving the following procedure/instructions for selecting their faculty mentor:

“To choose a faculty mentor, look through the faculty members in your degree department and read about their research. Take note of three faculty members whose research interests you. Once you have selected the three faculty members, send your list to the OSEEL staff. The OSEEL staff will email the faculty members you have selected to introduce you and Research Rookies; you will be CCed on these emails. Once the OSEEL staff has emailed the faculty members you selected, you should immediately follow up (no more than 48 hours later) with an email to each faculty member (a template will be provided). Whenever you are contacting faculty, remember to be formal, writing in a professional manner.

“When you hear back from your potential faculty mentors, set up a meeting with each of them so you can further discuss their research and make sure the situation is a good fit for both you and the faculty member. Dress and act professionally for these meetings. Once you have decided on a faculty mentor, inform the OSEEL staff of your choice. When the OSEEL staff confirms your match, you will be notified so that you can reach out to your faculty mentor to set up a regular meeting schedule and begin developing your research/artistry topic. It is also a good idea to follow up with the faculty members you did not select to let them know you appreciate the time it took for them to meet with you. It is also a good idea to follow up with the faculty members you did not select as your faculty mentor; let them know you appreciate the time it took for them to meet with you.

“Communicating sufficiently with your faculty mentor is vital to your success in this program, so make sure to keep the lines of communication open. If you are having trouble communicating with your faculty mentor, let the OSEEL staff know immediately.
**Faculty Mentor Roles and Responsibilities**

Faculty mentors are to guide the students through the research or artistry process. Research Rookies helps each student identify a faculty mentor to:

- Provide learning resources and necessary tools for the research/artistry project
- Meet with the student to plan and complete the project
- Attend the Faculty Mentor Orientation (Only required for new Research Rookies Mentors)
- Attend the OSEEL Reception in the Fall Semester
- Review students’ bi-monthly progress reports
- Discuss aspects of academic and research life with student while working with the student on project
- Assist the student with preparation of proposal and project materials for presentation at URAD
- Attend major presentations that the student makes on the NIU campus (i.e. URAD)
- Notify the OSEEL staff as needed of student progress, performance, change of research focus, or any problems in the mentoring relationship

**Continuum of Project Proposal Designs**

Included below is a continuum of undergraduate research and artistry projects that former Research Rookies have designed and executed. Although we acknowledge that some students have completed a student-only designed project (right-side of the continuum) in the past, most of the Research Rookies complete projects designed and initiated by the faculty mentor (left-side of the image). Given the nature of the program and the limited time to complete a research project, it is highly recommended that students work on projects designed by the faculty mentor.
**Project Proposal**

The project proposal helps to focus the student before getting started. The completed proposal shows OSEEL and the faculty mentor that the student knows about the project, its purpose, what will be done throughout the program, etc. The project proposal also provides a good base for the information that will later be presented at the Undergraduate Research and Artistry Day. Below is an outline for the project proposal:

**Project Proposal Guidelines**

The project description should be a clear statement of the work to be undertaken, using the five headings (A-E) below. It should be no more than 6 double-spaced pages long with no smaller than 10-point type and 1-inch margins.

Please note: While you, the Faculty Mentor, should be consulted, it is the student's responsibility to write the proposal in his/her own words, and not copied from a website, article or other work. Plagiarism is cause for removal from the program.

a. **Background and Context:** Explain the present state of knowledge, understanding or creative experimentation in the field with proper citations of pertinent literature where appropriate. (See Literature Cited, section III). Make it clear why the research or artistry project needs to be undertaken to fill a gap in knowledge. In addition, highlight how the project pertains to leadership, research, and/or civic, social, and global engagement.

b. **Statement of Project Objectives:** Clearly and concisely state the research problem/question or creative concept that will be addressed during the period of the proposed project.

c. **Methods:** Describe, in clear and understandable terms, the general plan of work in order to fulfill the stated goals and project outcomes.

d. **Outcomes:** What are the expected results or the expected range of results? What happens if the data does not yield the results you expected? How will “other” results be interpreted? For creative projects, what will be the final product of the proposed project? Possible products are a report, a publishable article or chapter, a performance, a policy recommendation, a painting, etc. Be specific. **Please note: Research Rookies requires a final presentation (i.e., poster, oral session, digital media, or exhibit) at Undergraduate Research and Artistry Day (URAD) in April. It is up the faculty mentor’s discretion for additional required final products.**

e. **Statement of Significance and Impact:** Explain the significance of the project as it contributes to the advancement of learning within the field (i.e. the big picture), to the enrichment of our cultural and aesthetic heritage, to the public welfare (i.e. the greater good) and/or to other research conducted within the same lab or unit.
II. Literature Cited (Not included in your 6 page limit)
Include a list of references that are cited in the abstract and/or proposal, especially in section A. Use standard professional format such APA style for your literature citation (field appropriate).

III. Impact on Academic Experience (Not included in your 6 page limit)
Indicate how the proposed independent artistry or research is expected to enhance the specific student’s academic experience.

IV. Timeline of Project Activities (Not included in your 6 page limit)
Provide a timeline of research activities throughout the full year of Research Rookies. Include specific benchmarks to achieve throughout the year (such as literature search, data collection, data analysis, and final product preparation to name a few). This timeline should be on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. Timelines written in narrative form will not be accepted.

Library Resources

In order to write the research, students may need to find published journal/scholarly articles that provide background on the proposed topic. The Founders Memorial Library offers a variety of research resources. Some of these resources include: the NIU online catalog, interlibrary loan, requesting services (NIUILLiad), scholarly article databases, and subject specialists.

- The NIU online catalog is used to quickly find appropriate books, magazines, articles, etc on the inputted information. The catalog can be accessed by visiting this web address: http://vufind.carli.illinois.edu/vf-niu/.

- Interlibrary loan is used when checking out a book, magazine, or other source that is not found at the NIU library. The student or mentor must then file an NIU ILLiad request (https://niu.illiad.oclc.org/illiad/JNA/logon.html). Make sure to have all pertinent information about the requested source. Once the request has been processed, the library staff will send a notification email when the request has been filled.

- The library also has article databases that contain articles that have been published in various scholarly journals and other sources. Log onto http://libguides.niu.edu/find to search for articles by subject. Then search for the specific topic through the search field.

- Subject specialists are extremely important because they understand the fundamentals for their given subject and are able to assist in finding appropriate material for the project proposal.

If the student or mentor has any questions, there is help online through the “Ask-A-Librarian” chat window or contact your subject specialist.
Peer Mentors
Each new Research Rookie has been assigned to a small group led by a peer mentor who has been through the program before. Peer mentors are meant to serve as guides and resources for first-year Research Rookies. Peer mentors are responsible for:

- Assisting with questions or concerns from small-group members
- Obtaining progress reports from small-group members
- Coordinating one group activity per month with small-group members
- Notifying OSEEL staff of any issues with small-group members
- Helping first-year Research Rookies become familiar with university resources

OSEEL Reception
Towards the end of the first semester, OSEEL has a welcoming ceremony for all students who are participating in their programs, including Research Rookies and their faculty mentors. It is an opportunity for students to get to know each other and the faculty they will be working with, as well as some of NIU’s administrators and special guests that support OSEEL programs. Research Rookies are asked to dress in business casual attire and be prepared to give a very brief introduction to their project and faculty mentor.

Undergraduate Research and Artistry Day (URAD)
Undergraduate Research and Artistry Day (URAD) is an annual showcase and celebration of the outstanding research and artistry projects that undergraduate students have participated in throughout the academic year. You have the option to present your work in a poster, exhibit and digital media display or 15-minute oral presentation session. Each project is judged twice, and awards are given to the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place projects in two categories: Arts, Education, Health, Humanities, and Social Sciences (AEHSS) and Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM). In addition, a People’s Choice Award is given out based on audience votes. URAD is free and open to the public, so we encourage you to invite friends and family. For a detailed list of what the judging criteria are, you can go to the URAD website (go.niu.edu/URAD).

URAD Project Production
Putting together a URAD presentation takes a lot of time and energy, so we encourage both students and faculty mentors to start the process early. Use the project proposal as a basic guideline, since it contains some or all of the parts that should be considered when planning for your presentation. OSEEL staff will provide workshops on presentation options during the Spring semester, which are also available online through the URAD website (go.niu.edu/URAD).

Undergraduate researchers learn tolerance for obstacles faced in the research process, how knowledge is constructed, independence, increased self-confidence, and a readiness for more demanding research. These benefits are an advantage in any career path.

— Lopatto, David. 2010. Undergraduate Research as a High-Impact Student Experience. Peer Review.
Expectations and Responsibilities

Attendance Policy

Attendance is taken at every Research Rookie meeting, due to the importance of the information discussed. If you cannot attend one of the meetings due to a medical or family emergency, contact the OSEEL staff prior to the meeting so that you can still receive the information. Each unexcused absence will result in a 10% stipend deduction. If you have more than three (3) unexcused absences from meetings or events, you will be released from the program. Timeliness is also critical for the program. If a student is late to the meeting/activity without notifying the Research Rookies staff prior, then the tardiness will count as an unexcused absence.

Progress Reports

You must complete bi-monthly progress reports on the status of your project and submit via email to researchrookies@niu.edu and copy your faculty mentor on the email. The report is used in an effort to keep track of the amount of time the student has put into the project as well as the student’s progress on the project. This report allows the Faculty Mentor and the Coordinator to verify that the student is meeting their goals. Progress reports must be submitted via email at researchrookies@niu.edu. Student will be responsible for copying their Faculty Mentor on the progress report submission. Mentors are not required to respond to the email unless the information that has been indicated in the report is inaccurate or false. Mentors are encouraged to review the information from their students’ progress reports and discuss the goals and progress of the project with the student(s).

Failure to turn in the progress reports on time will result in a 10% stipend deduction. The first time you miss the deadline to turn in your progress report will result in a warning. The second time you miss the deadline will result in a 10% stipend deduction. Failure to complete a progress report for the third time will result in a probation period, where your participation in the program will be under review.

Time Commitment

Students are expected to spend 5-10 hours per week for their research. If you, the faculty mentor, notice your student having difficulty committing this time to the research project, please contact the Research Rookies staff. The weekly time commitment can include writing the project proposal, conducting a literature review, working with a Graduate Assistant, working in the lab or other works space, or spending one-on-one time with the faculty mentor.
**Grade Point Average Policy**

As a Research Rookie, they are held to a high academic standard, so they are responsible for maintaining a preferred GPA of 3.0, and cannot fall below a 2.75 GPA. Participating in research/artistry is a privilege that needs to be worked for, but cannot interfere with academic success. If they do not maintain the 3.0 GPA, the Research Rookie Staff will schedule a meeting with them to discuss the future steps to improve their GPA. If you fall below a 2.75 GPA they will be dismissed from the program.

**Compensation**

Students will only receive $500 in compensation at the end of the program if following requirements are met:

- Present at Undergraduate Research and Artistry Day
- Complete a research proposal by the deadline set for the year
- Good academic standing at the end of the school year
- Less than three (3) absences during the academic year. Please note that for each unexcused absence, OSEEL will deduct 10% off the amount of your final stipend.
- Stay in communication with the Coordinator or OSEEL staff

**Email Communication**

Email is the main form of communication used by the OSEEL (Office of Student Engagement and Experiential Learning). Emails can be sent to ResearchRookies@niu.edu for specific Research Rookies questions, or to ugresearch@niu.edu for other research-related questions. These resource mailboxes are checked regularly by the OSEEL staff.

**Plagiarism**

Research Rookies is an academic community that strives for academic honesty, integrity, and originality. All Research Rookies are advised that presenting another’s work as your own, even if by accident, is a serious violation of university policy and the Student Code of Conduct. The Student Code of Conduct identifies the following as acts of academic dishonesty: “The term ‘plagiarism’ includes but is not limited to the use, by paraphrase or direct quotation of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgment. Plagiarism also includes the unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials” (p. 17). Suspected cases of plagiarism will be investigated and dealt with by the Program Director and the Office of Community Standards & Student Conduct.
Additional Opportunities

**Summer Research Opportunities Program (SROP)**

In SROP, students will learn what research looks like in their field of study, learn how to write a formal research proposal and gain experience working alongside talented faculty at NIU. They will also receive housing, meals, and a generous stipend. Please note: Students participating in STOP are required to live together in the residence hall; participants cannot take summer classes or work another job for the duration of the program.

**Student Engagement Fund (SEF)**

All NIU undergraduate students can apply for stipends to work on faculty-mentored research projects and travel to conferences. College of Liberal Arts and Science undergraduates can apply for additional funding to cover a wide range of expenses related to a student engagement activity. Requests need to be for a minimum of $250. Undergraduate students may apply on their own behalf. Faculty can apply for funding on behalf of students working on research projects or service learning projects. Faculty can also apply for funding on behalf of students to be used for group travel expenses and student expenses for conferences and competitions.

**Huskie Commons**

Huskie Commons is Northern Illinois University's institutional repository. Institutional repositories collect, preserve, and disseminate the intellectual output of a university in digital form via the web. At present, Huskie Commons includes an assortment of materials from scholars within the Northern Illinois University Community. More information on Huskie Commons can be found online at [http://commons.lib.niu.edu/](http://commons.lib.niu.edu/).