ORCA Awards $1,500 to Students

ORCA Undergraduate Mentored-research Grants

What is an ORCA Grant?

ORCA, BYU’s Office of Research and Creative Activities, offers $1,500 grants to help undergraduate students work with faculty in a one-on-one setting. Grants are only awarded once a year, and applications for the 2016-2017 academic year are due by 11:50 PM on October 27, 2016.

Students may use their ORCA grant to reimburse themselves for time, supplies, and other expenses involved with conducting an academic project. Projects that are complete at the time of application will not be awarded. Students may either design their own project or work on a professor's ongoing research. All students must work with a faculty mentor.

What do I have to do if I get one?

ORCA recipients must work with a faculty mentor and complete their proposed project by the deadline specified (usually one year after the award announcement). Recipients must also submit a two-page final report to ORCA.

What kind of project can I do?

Students in all majors with all interests are encouraged to apply because projects from all disciplines are funded. Talk to your mentor about what kind of research or work is being done in your field of study.

How many grants are awarded?

ORCA will award as many grants as possible depending on the funds received from donors.

How much money can I ask for?

All ORCA awarded projects receive $1,500. Each student may only apply for one grant per year. Faculty mentors receive $300.

How do I apply?

You must find a faculty mentor and fill out the online application at orca.byu.edu. The application includes a two-page proposal where you will explain your idea and how you plan to carry out your project.

Do I need a mentor?

Yes. Your ORCA application cannot be processed without a mentor endorsement from a faculty member. You may be surprised at how eager professors can be to work on projects with you. Talk to your professors or see the department about which professors are interested in mentoring.

Only full-time faculty members automatically qualify as mentors. University staff who also teach classes and part-time staff are not eligible to mentor ORCA projects. Contact ORCA at 801-422-3022 or email byu_mentoring@byu.edu to inquire about special permission for full-time, visiting faculty.

Student eligibility requirements:

- Must be enrolled as a full-time, undergraduate student.
- Must have at least two semesters before graduating. This includes the semester during which you apply for the grant (students applying this year cannot graduate before April 2017).
- Be in good academic standing.
- Find a faculty mentor who is willing to work on the project.

How can I strengthen my application?

- Find the right mentor: Look for a mentor now! Talk to professors about their research and seek those who share your academic interests. Don’t try to find a mentor at the last minute.
- Write a strong proposal: Start your proposal early! Write and edit several drafts, and have your mentor review it. Don’t throw your proposal together the night before it’s due.

How are winners chosen?

Proposals are separated by academic department and scored by a review committee made up of professors and experts from the mentor’s college. Applicants are ranked within their college and are not compared to students in other fields.

Scores are based on the following criteria:

- Is the proposal well-developed and articulated?
- Does the stated hypothesis or creative focus have merit, or in other words, are the questions and focus valid and significant and will the work be a contribution to the student’s discipline/area of study?
- Is the methodology appropriate to the hypothesis and/or creative focus?
- What is the applicant’s potential for accomplishing the proposed project or expectation that the applicant is capable of successfully completing it? How strong does the mentoring relationship appear to be?
Why apply?

ORCA grants are funded by donations to the University in order to promote mentored learning across campus. Some benefits of mentored learning include graduate school preparation, internships and professional opportunities, relationships with faculty, and professional publications. Many past ORCA recipients attribute their matriculation and success in prestigious graduate schools to their mentoring experience at BYU.

Can I include travel in my research?

Yes. Please indicate in your proposal if your project involves travel. International travel is subject to University restrictions. Contact BYU International Travel Registry (kennedy.byu.edu/itr) or the International Study Programs office (280 HRCB, isp.byu.edu, 801-422-3686) for more about University travel restrictions.

Can I use human subjects?

In order to use people in your research, you may need to obtain compliance approval from the Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects (IRB), a safety board designed to protect human subjects. Visit http://orca.byu.edu/IRB/ to learn more about using human subjects in your project.

Can I use animal subjects?

Animal research at the University is federally regulated. Please visit http://orca.byu.edu/IACUC/ if your project will involve animal subjects. If awarded, you must provide evidence of proper animal training and be added to an active research protocol by your professor.

Does a Stafford Loan disqualify an applicant?

No. However, an ORCA grant could affect your Stafford Loan because the grant is considered income. Check with Student Financial Services (801-422-4104) to see how an ORCA Grant may affect you.

Help & Resources

Writing Workshops:
ORCA offers free proposal-writing workshops to students interested in applying for an ORCA grant. Choose from four different times. Older workshops are available online (http://orca.byu.edu/orca/Workshops.php).

Sample Proposals:
Sample proposals from past ORCA Grant recipients are available online at orca.byu.edu/orca/.

Other Student Resources:
Visit the ORCA website (click on ORCA Grant tab, then ‘Find a Mentor’ link in right column, or use http://orca.byu.edu/mentoring/undergraduate/) to find more resources for students to find available research opportunities in different colleges on campus. You will find information on how to find a mentor, with links to department opportunities across campus, and how to best contact and approach professors.

For other help and questions, feel free to contact ORCA at 801-422-3022 or email byu_mentoring@byu.edu.

Important Dates & Deadlines

Grant-Writing Workshops  *Highly encouraged
Wednesday, September 28, 2016
11 a.m. Varsity Theatre (WSC)
3 p.m. Varsity Theatre (WSC)

Thursday, September 29, 2016
11 a.m. Varsity Theatre (WSC)
3 p.m. Varsity Theatre (WSC)

ORCA Student Application Deadline
Submit online by 11:50 pm, October 27, 2016.

ORCA Faculty Endorsement Deadline
Faculty endorsement due online by midnight, November 3, 2016.

ORCA Award Notification
All applicants will receive a notification of their award status on February 3, 2017.

Other Information

BYU ORCA Facebook Page
Like BYU ORCA on Facebook for application tips and deadline reminders!