

College of Liberal Arts
Research Assistants
Program

Faculty & Student Handbook
2017-2018

Armstrong
STATE UNIVERSITY

The RA Program

Academic Affairs directs funds from the governor's Complete College Georgia plan to pay student workers to serve as Research Assistants (RAs) so that more students can find employment on campus. The program exists to help Armstrong students succeed and to encourage retention.

In the early spring semester, the CoLA Coordinator of Undergraduate Research applies to AA for about 20 positions for college faculty. Faculty submit proposals after Spring Break to the Coordinator. A review committee, made up of members of Undergraduate Research Faculty Board and the UR Coordinator, allocates positions based on the kinds of work students will do, giving priority to opportunities that will teach students more about the research process and academic work occurring outside the classroom.

Research assistants help faculty conduct their own scholarly and creative endeavors. RAs work with archives, build websites, collect and analyze data, document sites, and engage in other hands-on research activities. They do not do predominantly administrative work such as filing or answering phones.

The mission of the CoLA RA program is to enhance the student's academic experience by providing an opportunity to work one-on-one with a faculty mentor. The CoLA RA program offers monthly meetings where students learn about practicing research ethics, building resumes, creating and delivering presentations, and building relationships with other Research Assistants within the College of Liberal Arts.

Faculty Mentors

All full-time Armstrong faculty have the opportunity to hire a student RA for an academic year or a summer semester. The call for proposals comes out in the Spring of the preceding year. Faculty are responsible for posting the job listing on PeopleAdmin, interviewing the candidates, and approving the RA's bi-weekly timecards via ADP throughout the academic year. Faculty must select their student worker before the start of the year. Both Faculty Mentors and RAs must complete progress reports at the end of each semester. It is expected that Mentors and RAs will meet at least once a week in person. Set aside dedicated office hours for consultations and/or provide a physical space for student work. If appropriate, RA/Faculty Mentor teams should meet early in the year with a librarian to discuss research strategies and to authorize the students to order books and information for their Mentors.

Faculty are serving not only as employers but also as mentors. Students working as RAs report extensive learning gains in both hard and soft skills. Mentors are expected to follow the ethical guidelines appropriate to their discipline and to engage the student RA in their research. It is important to develop a personal and intentional relationship with student RAs. Mentoring goes beyond teaching content; it requires communicating the everyday experiences of working in a particular discipline. A successful faculty-student collaboration should include not just skill-building but also providing guidance about research techniques and career ideas. Cultivate approachability and patience and communicate that the RA's work is a priority for you.

Student RAs are looking for a mentor who can help them succeed. They want to work for a faculty mentor who has expertise and is accessible. It is also important for faculty to be communicative about goals and plans while also being helpful with the project at hand. Be empathetic with feedback. It is helpful to nurture students' self-sufficiency by giving them increasing responsibility for research. The RA's work should get more difficult and complicated as time passes. Go beyond advice-giving and knowledge dispensing to become a sponsor and advocate. Encourage students to participate actively and to prepare their own slices of research for presentation and publication. If a student develops a special field of interest within the scope of their work as an RA, consider expanding the collaboration to include an Independent Study or capstone project and encourage applications for Undergraduate Research grants.

Research Assistants

Research Assistantships are open to all Armstrong students in good standing and provide an excellent opportunity for on-campus employment. An RA will work on the faculty mentor's area of research. Each mentor will have unique needs and skills to teach students. In the past, students have developed expertise in Excel, Photoshop, creating maps and websites, transcribing documents, conducting interviews, writing abstracts, and in many other areas. The faculty mentor will determine the RA's role in his or her academic project. RAs are expected to contribute according to the Mentor's expectations. Frequent communication is essential to forming a successful partnership. Students must be available, responsible, and responsive, and they must adhere to the ethical guidelines appropriate to their discipline.

Students can expect to benefit in a variety of ways from their RA experience. In addition to enhancing their resumes by building skills that are valuable to future employers and graduate schools, RAs get a chance to see what professors do outside of the classroom. An RA forges a close working relationship with someone who can provide academic and career guidance, in addition to helpful letters of recommendation. RAs engage in hands-on learning that will help them identify their own areas of interest. Students who can carve out their own research questions from the larger body of work should pursue an Independent Study or capstone project. In addition, the require participation in the Symposium will improve the RAs' presentation skills. Undergrad RAs are encouraged to apply for Undergraduate Research grants, if appropriate, to fund their own research and travel expenses.

Requirements

- RAs must be full-time students. They can be undergraduate or graduate students.
(3 hours in summer, 6 hours in fall/spring)
- RAs must present & work at the Student Scholars Symposium in April.
- RAs serving during the academic year must attend CoLA RA Program meetings.
- RAs must work exact number of allotted hours (10hrs/week or 15 hrs/week).
- RAs & faculty mentors must meet with each other every week.
- RAs & faculty mentors must each fill out surveys at end of each semester.
- RAs cannot submit time worked during breaks or Armstrong holidays.



Student Scholars Symposium Wed & Thurs April 18 & 19, 2018

The Symposium provides a venue for the campus to come together to recognize the outstanding scholarly and creative achievements made by our students. Whether it's turning a ceramic vase or synthesizing chemical compounds, students are working side by side with faculty making valuable contributions to their fields of expertise. The Symposium gives all students a chance to showcase their efforts in either Oral or Poster Presentations. Last year 316 individual students from all four colleges made 181 presentations.

All RAs are required to present at the Symposium. They can discuss their own research or reflect on their responsibilities as an RA. Abstract submissions are due in March; the Symposium will be held in April. Guidelines for the 250-word abstract, the poster presentation, and the twenty-minute oral presentation are available on the Symposium webpage.

Undergraduate Research Grants

All Armstrong undergraduates have the opportunity to apply for a grant to aid them in their research. Grants are available only for academic undergraduate research projects taken for Armstrong class credit. These grants are not to be used to replace departmental budget responsibilities for typical classroom work and cannot be used to purchase computer equipment. Faculty mentor are expected to consult with students in completing this application: a 250-word proposal and a detailed budget plan for their desired grant amount.

The purpose of the application, proposal, and budget process is to provide students with experience in applying for grants in the future. Until the funding is exhausted, a review committee made up of members of the Undergraduate Research Faculty Board approves all grants that follow the guidelines. The maximum amount is \$200 per student per academic year. Additional guidelines are available on the UR Grant webpage.

Deadlines for the 2017-2018 academic year:

Friday, September 8, 2017

Friday, October 20, 2017

Friday, February 16, 2018



RA Program Sessions, 12:20-1:15pm, Hawes 115

Wednesday, August 30 – Orientation and Research Opportunities
Wednesday, September 20 – Information Literacy/Research Skills
Wednesday, November 1 – Grad School & Research Ethics
Wednesday, January 24 – Using UR to build CVs: Career Services
Wednesday, February 28 – Symposium Submission: Preparing to Present
Wednesday, April 4, 1:30-2:30 – Symposium Skills Session
Wednesday-Thursday, April 18-19 – 24th Annual Student Scholars Symposium

Contact Us

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