FAQs for SURF Mentors

What does it mean to be a SURF mentor?

While the exact meaning of mentorship often differs depending on the discipline and parties involved, we expect SURF mentors to offer guidance through the research process and their specific summer project. This relationship involves helping the mentee develop skills related to the discipline. What these skills might include are different depending on what is appropriate for the project and subject matter (such as technical skills, writing skills, specific software usage, etc.).

Given the versatility of these mentor relationships, we strongly recommend establishing shared and realistic expectations at the beginning of communications.

Mentors can also be in various positions (such as faculty, graduate students, or post-docs). However, we ask that the Principal Investigator of the research group be listed as the Rice faculty mentor in the student application.

What are the key details for students?

Students are awarded the $5,000 stipend through the Office of Undergraduate Research & Inquiry and are expected to conduct about 30 hours of research per week for ten weeks (May 28th to August 2nd). There will be weekly programming (such as workshops and graduate student advisor meetings). Applications will open January 26th and close Sunday, February 18th. The selection committee will notify applicants of the decison the week of spring break (March 11th-March 15th).

Do SURF mentors receive a stipend?

While the goals of the SURF program are to provide students with valuable research experiences, skills development, and mentorship, the focus of the stipends is directed toward students from under-resourced backgrounds rather than faculty. Many faculty members are motivated by an interest in mentoring these students and contributing to their professional development. OURI can provide documentation of a mentor's engagement with the SURF program in support for promotion or nomination packages.

What is the SURF Mentor Mixer?

Potential SURF applicants and faculty have an opportunity to discuss projects and interact before students submit an application. This mixer is designed to be an opportunity for students to learn more about research projects and interact with faculty that they may select to be their SURF mentor. We strongly encourage SURF mentors to take advantage of this opportunity to welcome these students to undergraduate research. The mixer is scheduled for February 6, 2023 from 4-5 PM in the Grand Hall.

I have already agreed to mentor a student. Can they apply for SURF?

Yes, it is completely fine if you have a student in mind. We suggest that the student applies with you listed as their mentor along with a project description that both of you agree to beforehand. This process does not guarantee that they will be accepted into the program. The student must still meet the eligibility requirements and submit an application.

The SURF program is only open to students who complete the 1-credit UNIV 201: Research Readiness course. We prioritize novice researchers, first-generation, and limited-income students.

Do I have to be in Houston?

Remote mentorship will be considered on a case-by-case basis. We strongly suggest that remote mentors identify a postdoc or graduate student who will be in-person to serve as a day-to-day contact. The mentor will still need to keep consistent and regular contact with the mentee. Mentors are expected to attend a welcome event the first week of the program and the final poster session on August 2nd.

However, students are required to remain in Houston for in-person attendance at workshops, advising, and a symposium. **Student travel, including for research purposes, must be approved by OURI.**

Will I get to approve the students who are assigned to me?

Students will be assigned based on the qualifications listed by the mentor beginning March 22nd. Faculty will have an opportunity to discuss projects and interact with potential SURF mentees before confirming the match. We do this to ensure we can match student interest while at the same time allowing faculty to review if the student meets any skill qualifications necessary to complete the work.

Can I have more than one student mentees in SURF?

The committee does not limit the number of mentees a mentor can have in SURF. However, OURI can support a limited number of fellows for the summer of 2024. We cannot guarantee all students who apply will be selected for the program.

What happens if a mentor is not matched?

OURI publishes the list of mentors who sign up each year on our website. We use this list to direct students to faculty who are willing to support undergraduates who are new to research.

For any additional questions or concerns,

please contact Jay Bethea at jb112@rice.edu.