FAQs for SURF Students

What is changing in SURF 2023?

This year, we are increasing the stipend from $3,000 to $5,000. Along with this change, students are expected to treat SURF as a full-time job from May 22-July 28 and be dedicated to the program M-F from 9-5. In addition to conducting thirty hours of research per week, they will spend five to ten hours on programming, including weekly workshops and graduate student advisor meetings and completion of written assignments, posters, and reflections.

Where does the funding for the $5,000 stipend come from?

OURI awards the $5,000 stipend from funding allocated by the Office of the Provost. The stipend will be awarded by late April.

Will housing be provided?

Housing will not be provided as a part of the program. Students will be responsible for determining and paying for their housing needs.

Do I have to be in Houston?

Yes, in-person attendance at workshops, advising, and a symposium is required for students.

Who is eligible for SURF?

SURF is designed to address some of the disparities in research specifically at Rice University. Therefore, the program prioritizes underrepresented populations, first-generation college students, and students from low-income backgrounds who have not had prior research experience. While our office is attempting to serve students who have not had access to research, we recognize that there are many intersecting identities. Therefore, any and all identities are self-reported in our application process with room to express any barriers to research participation due to identity in the Personal Statement. To apply, you must be a returning Rice undergraduate.

Am I required to choose a mentor from the provided list of faculty?

When applying, students can choose to list their mentor preference from a list of provided faculty and projects OR apply with a mentor of their choosing. If the student applies with a non-listed mentor, students will be required to provide a project description as determined with their desired mentor.
Who completes the application?

Students are required to complete the application independently.

The program application includes:

- a 250-word personal interest essay that shares how being a SURF fellow will benefit the student personally and enrich their experience at Rice.
- The project description (only will be required if the student is applying with a non-listed faculty mentor).
- resume.

When will the selection committee notify applicants of their decision?

Applications will open Monday, January 30th and close Sunday, February 26th.

Interviews will take place in the two-week period following the application deadline (February 27th to March 10th). Students will be notified of final decisions the week of spring break (March 13th-17th).

How does SURF faculty mentorship work?

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.).

Because this will be a new experience for you, weekly workshops and graduate student advising will support your development of a strong mentor relationship and help you navigate challenges throughout the summer.

Mentors can also be in various positions (such as faculty, graduate students, or post-docs).
What is the SURF Mentor Mixer?

OURI is hosting a SURF Mentor Mixer to allow students to meet with potential mentors before submitting an application. We are inviting a diverse set of students to a comfortable space to approach professors. 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. The mixer is February 7, 2023 from 4-5 PM in the Grand Hall.

Space is limited so RSVP here if you plan to attend.

RSVP:
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSddpUWQrJfy2dTC82dSyDi6lekL1hMiegcnfu2Rm_2d3Uekeg/viewform

How are faculty mentors assigned?

Students will be assigned based on student preferences. We will then send a list of potential mentees (with resumes) to faculty mentors. Faculty could (optional) then set up a meeting with the students. Faculty can veto potential mentees. 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. Potential SURF applicants and faculty have an opportunity to discuss projects and interact at the SURF Mentor Mixer on February 7th.

What programming is available?

Workshops and program events will help students understand roles and responsibilities of undergraduate researchers; set personal goals for the research experience, learn about graduate school and research careers; and practice research communication.

Additionally, students will meet in small groups with a graduate student advisor for individual advising on these topics. (check-ins about their research project and mentor relationships).

For any additional questions or concerns,
please contact Jay Bethea at jb112@rice.edu.