

WORK-STUDY RESEARCH ASSISTANT PROGRAM (2023-24)

OFFICE OF UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH



Program Overview

The Work-Study Research Assistant Program is designed to help students with financial need develop research skills and explore their academic interests. Research experiences develop transferable skills and can change the course of a student's academic and/or professional career. Our expectation is that the research assistant will be substantively engaged in a faculty member's research endeavors. These positions are not to be exclusively clerical or lab upkeep positions.

Federal Work-Study

Work-Study is a need-based financial aid program, through which students can earn the designated amount of the award through employment in an eligible position. Funds are limited and are awarded based on financial need and order of application filing date to eligible full-time students who submitted a FAFSA by the federal on-time deadline. Students may only earn up to the limit of their Work-Study awards for the period of the award (semester or academic year).

- Work-study and the university will pay 100% of the student's wages up to the dollar limit of their awards (e.g., \$3,000 per academic year);
- The *typical* work-study research assistant would work approximately 100 hours in the fall semester and 100 hours in the spring semester;
- If you wish to continue to pay the student for additional work (and their schedule permits), the faculty member/department would be responsible for 100% of the wages and would need to make the relevant payroll arrangements.
- Federal Work-Study is awarded to a relatively small group of undergraduate students, so faculty may not find students with specific skills or advanced qualifications.

Developing a Work-Study Research Assistant Position

Faculty are responsible for developing a job description for their particular research assistant position. All positions are posted by OUR through UConn's Student Job Administration System – JobX. Faculty must develop a job description within the online [WSRAP Submission Form](#) using whichever of the Class II research job codes is most appropriate to the expected work:

- [Student Equipment Design & Testing Assistant \(201\)](#)
- [Student Interview & Survey Research Assistant \(202\)](#)
- [Student Laboratory & Field Analysis Assistant \(203\)](#)
- [Student Human Behavioral Research Assistant \(204\)](#)
- [Student Research Review Assistant \(205\)](#)

Prior to developing and submitting a job description, we encourage faculty to consider the following to determine whether they can commit to hiring/mentoring a research assistant through this program:

- The modality of the position. Consider whether the position you are submitting requires the student to be fully in-person to complete the job responsibilities or whether some work activities may be completed remotely. It is important that the brief description clearly indicate whether the position is in-person, partially in-person, or fully remote. If the position is a fully virtual one, faculty should consider whether they would like the position advertised to UConn students across all campuses or only at their home campus. Please consider whether you are able to mentor and guide a student through the necessary training to accomplish the research work remotely.

- The number of students you wish to hire. Be realistic and keep in mind that the student(s) will need training, supervision, feedback, and guidance on an ongoing basis across both the fall and spring semesters.
- The availability of *adequate, ongoing work* for a student research assistant. Feedback from students suggests that many become frustrated when there is a lack of work or too many research assistants for the volume of work available. Consider what secondary work tasks would be appropriate if there is no new data to enter/analyze, subjects to run, etc. You could, for instance, have your research assistant read relevant literature or other documents, or develop their skills through practice with sample materials, when higher priority tasks are not available. Students' ability to earn their Work-Study awards to cover their expenses depends on work being available consistently.
- The skills necessary for your position, as well as your willingness to train/mentor students through the learning process.
- The potential for growth for a student research assistant in this position. Do you see opportunities for additional responsibility, learning of basic and advanced techniques, development of a more independent project, etc.? Will they have the opportunity to publish, present their research (on or off campus), and/or apply for funding to support the continuation of their research?
- Supervision and collaboration. Will there be anyone, in addition to yourself, who will supervise and assign tasks to the research assistant? Will other faculty members, post-docs, or graduate students work with the research assistant? If yes, have you discussed the hiring of a work-study research assistant with these individuals? What will be the nature of the research assistant's collaboration with other members of your research group?
- Previous work experience. First year students (and other work-study students) may not have previous employment experience. Be realistic about the qualifications that you are seeking. Focus on transferable skills and [Career Competencies](#) that are needed within the role. If you are seeking a student with more advanced skills (e.g., programming, lab techniques), contact OUR to discuss whether a Class III position might be more appropriate. Federal Work-Study is awarded to a relatively small group of undergraduate students, so you may not find students with the specific, advanced qualifications that you are seeking.
- The appeal of your position for a student. Why would a student want your position? What skills/competencies will they learn/develop that will help them be successful in their future careers? Are they going to receive thoughtful feedback that is going to help them grow?

Job descriptions for 2023-2024 research assistant opportunities may be submitted to the Office of Undergraduate Research (OUR) through the online [WSRAP Submission Form](#). We encourage faculty to submit research assistant opportunities early in the summer and no later than **Monday, August 7th**. Work-study students are actively seeking positions for the upcoming academic year during the summer months and early postings will likely elicit a greater number of applications. It is important that faculty are available to review applications and interview students once the research assistant position is posted.

Faculty should review the relevant student research job description templates, which they can access at ugradresearch.uconn.edu/work-study/faculty/ or via the links on the previous page, to determine the template most appropriate for their research activities.

Faculty have control over the hiring process and are responsible for reviewing the candidates' application materials, interviewing the candidates (if interested), and selecting a student to hire. The only constraint is that the student must be an undergraduate student with a 2023-24 work-study award. The OUR will post the job, collect the applications, and forward all of the eligible applicants to faculty for review. The OUR will only screen the applications to determine if the student is an undergraduate with a work-study award.

Faculty will be required to complete a workplace safety and hazard assessment for each student they hire through the WSRAP program. If appropriate, faculty will be required to add the student(s) to their [HuskySMS](#) lab member list and indicate their "job activities" in the system. Faculty must ensure the student employee completes all required trainings indicated in HuskySMS. Faculty are also expected to discuss expectations with the research assistant, supervise their work, and regularly review a time-tracking spreadsheet to ensure the student assistant's work hours are reported accurately. Note that OUR staff will manage all payroll and timekeeping processes – these will not be the responsibility of your departmental staff.