



ST. FRANCIS XAVIER
UNIVERSITY

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH AWARDS

David Bruce, Director, Research Grants, dwbruce@stfx.ca, 3733, 902-318-6842

2026



Overview

- Award value of \$9,250, paid as wages over 14 weeks
- Single common application form on the ROMEO system:
 - Students complete the online form, attach required materials, add supervisor
 - Faculty supervisor completes a reference
 - Student submits
- Deadline is NOON Feb 9, results shared by first week of March
- Single person projects only, with a faculty supervisor
- May be a project of your design or one that is suggested to you by your supervisor
- Students must write the application themselves, with feedback and guidance





Funding Sources – 42 awards

- Ally Heaps (Computing Science, 4)
- CIHR (Health) USRA (1) (Black Canadian students only)
- Irving Awards (all disciplines, with priorities, 8)
- John B. Stewart (Political Science, 1)
- Mulroney/Lauder (Public Policy, all disciplines, 6 awards)
- NSERC USRA (Science, 13) plus
 - 1 Black Canadian students only
 - Unlimited number of Indigenous students
- Richard Cunningham (Engineering, 1)
- Schwartz (Business / Management, 2)
- SSHRC (Social Sciences, Arts, Humanities) USRA (1) (Black Canadian students only)
- STFX General (all disciplines, 4)





Value and Payment

- \$9,250 regardless of source (in some cases university is “topping up”)
- Each award is administered through payroll, you are paid every two (2) weeks through direct deposit to your bank account
 - Everyone gets paid ~\$18.46/hr, plus 4% vacation pay
 - The total award value also **covers mandatory deductions for both employer and employee** (CPP, EI, thus approx. take home money is ~\$7,900)
- Hours per week / total weeks / start and end dates **to be discussed with your supervisor**, but, for payroll simplicity:
 - 14 weeks, 32 hours/week, 448 hours total
 - May 4 to Aug 7
- Research Office sets up payroll and manages it for everyone.
 - You will need to submit banking and related information, if not already set up in payroll. Look for communication from Research Office
- Faculty supervisors are permitted to “pay more” and would discuss with the student





Eligibility

- Must be intending to return to full time studies for fall 2026 term; exceptions:
 - Science students eligible for NSERC USRA
 - Black Canadian students for awarding CIHR / NSERC / SSHRC USRA
 - Indigenous science students for awarding NSERC USRA outside of quota
 - Engineering students for awarding Cunningham
- First year BEd students are eligible
- First year PBD in AI computer science students eligible for Ally Heaps only
- Some funding sources have specific subject matter criteria; successful applicants assigned awards based on subject matter and funder requirements
- Previous award holders are not eligible to apply (exceptions: Black Canadian, Indigenous USRA awardees)
- **Faculty members may only be the proposed supervisor or co-supervisor on no more than two student applications**





Application Package (1)

- One single PDF document
 - Formatting: $\frac{3}{4}$ inch margins all around, 11pt font, single spacing, name at the top
- 1-page research proposal
 - Objectives, context, methodology, expected impact or outcomes
- 1-page list of citations, optional bibliographic references
- 1-page statement of preparation: “How do your unique experiences make you ready for this opportunity?”
 - Academic preparation, qualifications, experiences for this project
 - How this project fits with your longer term plans
- STFX unofficial grade report (available free using Banner)
 - If you have courses / transcripts from other universities or colleges, please include an unofficial grade list for these





Application Package (2)

- Supervisor completes sub-tab section
 - You can have co-supervisors, but **only the main supervisor** completes this task
- Assessment of the research potential of the student:
 - Clear statement about the student's **readiness** for the project
 - Evidence of **potential** for the student to be successful in research
 - Specific **examples** that point to the excellence of the student, more generally
 - If co-supervisors, the assessment can be co-developed / co-written
- 5,000 characters or approximately 600 words
- May include additional information about cash and in-kind support for the student project
- Confirmation email sent to both student and supervisor **AFTER** the student submits the application





1-page Research Proposal

- Objectives, context, methodology, expected impact or outcomes
- Write clearly and simple to explain what you want to do and how you will do it
- Start by stating an issue or problem or opportunity, or the big question or debate, and why it is important (for society, for the discipline, etc)
- Then have a couple of objectives (to assess, to understand, to...)
- What is the context for this proposed project? Cite a couple of articles.
- How will you do this – literature review, surveys, interviews, focus groups, lab experiments, field experiments, simulations, modelling...
- What do you expect to be the outcome – the results will increase our understanding of... will contribute to... will provide insights on...





Statement of Preparation

- 1-page statement of preparation: “How do your unique experiences make you ready for this opportunity?”
 - Academic preparation, qualifications, experiences for this project
 - How this project fits with your longer term plans
- Describe specific courses you took or are taking and what you are learning from them that informs your ability to do this
- Describe any relevant work you might have done – as a research assistant, a volunteer (in a lab, on campus, in the community), and especially any skills you developed like time management, analytical skills, etc
- Describe how this fits with an honours program or other undergraduate work, and describe how this fits with any future plans like graduate school, employment, etc
- **Note: OPTIONAL** If you had “special circumstances” such as part time course load, medical or family leave / issues that affected your grades, you can discuss here





Advice on Theoretical Projects

- Non experts outside of your discipline will be evaluating this
- Give a solid hypothesis or question that you are investigating or thinking about
- Is there a current “debate” that has sparked your interest and you want to explore something related to this?
- Consider providing “the arguments” you will be exploring, rather than “objectives”
- What is motivating you to do this project? (this could be part of the discussion in the statement of preparation)
- What are the key texts (or a working reading list) you will be consulting, and why are these important?
- Make it clear what steps you will be taking – reading, reflecting, drafting “arguments” or “positions” for discussion and debate with your supervisor, etc
- If possible, what will the end product will be – contributing to your honours thesis; perhaps a potential journal article; foundation for a directed studies course, etc





Supervisors on Theoretical Projects

- When commenting on the potential of the student to be successful in research:
 - Draw a linkage to the appropriateness of how the student has set up their plan to the project (and their ability to do it)
 - Comment on the positioning of the hypothesis, question, or debate and the student's ability to take this on
 - Comment on the suitability of the reading list (if appropriate)





Evaluation Criteria (1)

- Will be reviewed by group of faculty members from different disciplines
- **Academic Excellence 20%:**
 - Relative standing in course
 - Grades in courses related to the proposed research subject matter
 - Course load (full course load vs less than full and overall performance)
- **Quality of the proposed research project and expected outcomes 40%:**
 - Significance, feasibility and merit of proposed research
 - Clarity of proposal (ideas, theoretical, technical / concepts clearly and logically written)
 - Appropriateness and clarity of methodology





Evaluation Criteria (2)

- **Research Potential 40%:**

- Courses taken / work done in specific courses to help prepare for the project; Relevance of academic training to field of proposed research
- Activities; Research experiences / employment; Other employment; Extracurricular activities; Other
- Statement of interest in the project specifically and research generally
- Plans / intentions for possible honours, graduate studies, employment in research / related fields
- Clear statement about the student's readiness for the project and evidence of potential for the student to be successful in research
- Specific examples that point to the excellence of the student, more generally





Ally Heaps

- Students must be in Computer Science program to be eligible
- First year Post Baccalaureate Diploma in AI students are eligible
- Computer Science students are also eligible to receive awards from other sources
- Project does not have to be connected to supervisor's own research
- Students must be full-time at time of application, and be returning to full-time studies in the same program in the fall





NSERC USRA (1)

- To be assigned an NSERC USRA, must:
 - Be doing a science project in an NSERC discipline
 - Have minimum GPA of B- or 70%
 - Be Canadian citizen or permanent resident
- Supervisor **does not** have to hold an NSERC grant
- Once assigned, students and supervisor **together** complete “paperwork” on the NSERC on-line system (details will be sent):
 - The student completes Form 202, Part 1, including transcripts
 - Faculty supervisor completes Form 202 Part 2
- **DO NOT** start the NSERC form until you have been assigned this award
- Students in any year, including graduating students, are eligible
- Project is typically closely connected to supervisor's research





NSERC USRA (2)

- USRA Supplements
- Canadian Forest Workforce Diversity Supplement
 - \$5,000 supplement
 - If approved for USRA, and your project falls into research areas of relevance to Natural Resources Canada (Canadian Forest Sector), it is automatically forwarded for consideration
 - No separate application
- ECCC Atmospheric and Meteorological Supplement
 - \$1,000 supplement
 - Research activities in atmospheric and meteorological sciences
 - If approved for USRA, you apply directly to ECCC by August 1
- Eligible **Indigenous students** automatically approved by NSERC outside of our quota of awards – submit separately through NSERC by April 15
- Eligible **Black Canadian students** – approve and submit a **maximum of one such student above our quota of 13** – submit through internal program here, Feb 9





CIHR and SSHRC USRA

- New initiative supported by the federal government's Black Scholars Initiative
- We can offer one award each (maximum quota offered to StFX)
- Eligible **Black Canadian students only**
- Students in any year, including graduating students, are eligible
- Apply through our internal program; two students will be selected
 - Students and supervisor together complete "paperwork" on the NSERC on-line system (details will be sent):
 - The student completes Form 202, Part 1, including unofficial transcripts
 - Faculty supervisor completes Form 202 Part 2
 - **DO NOT** start the NSERC form until you have been assigned this award
 - Automatically approved by CIHR and SSHRC
 - If eligible for these, **but not selected**, you will be considered for any and all other internal awards, subject to alignment with the funds and overall ranking





Mulroney/Lauder Research Awards

- Students must be full-time at time of application, and be returning to full-time studies in the same program in the fall
- Must propose research that is relevant to public policy and governance issues:
 - Women's Studies and Leadership
 - Economics, Trade and Finance
 - Canada-US Relations
 - Global Affairs
 - Environmental Issues and Policy
 - Indigenous Affairs and Governance
 - Underserved Communities, Social Policy and Government
 - Multiculturalism and Linguistic Diversity
- Project does not have to be connected to supervisor's own research





Schwartz Business School Research Awards

- Students must be in BBA program to be eligible
- BBA students are also eligible to receive awards from other sources
- Students must be full-time at time of application, and be returning to full-time studies in the same program in the fall
- Project does not have to be connected to supervisor's own research
- Must propose research that is business / management related, including:
 - Accounting
 - Enterprise Systems
 - Entrepreneurship
 - Finance
 - International Business
 - Management and Leadership
 - Marketing





Other Research Funding

- Contact a professor who does research in discipline of interest for more information about whether or not they are hiring students as research assistants
- Divert NS (research projects on waste diversion, waste reduction)
- National Defence Young MINDS Initiative
 - \$10,000, various themes, many disciplines
 - March 1 and Oct 1 each year (approx. dates)





Useful Data for Research

- Engage Nova Scotia Quality of Life data set (2019)
- Eight domains
 - Community Vitality
 - Democratic Engagement
 - Education
 - Environment
 - Healthy Populations
 - Leisure and Culture
 - Living Standards
 - Time Use
- 230 questions, 12,827 respondents
- Data dictionary available on Dataverse
- Complete a data access request form





Certifications

- If your project involves human participants, animals, or biohazards, you and your supervisor are responsible submitting applications to receive approval PRIOR to the start of your project
 - Check with your supervisor, your project may be covered under an existing certification under his or her name
- Failure to have the appropriate certifications in place may delay the payment of your payroll
 - We can arrange for early release of payroll





Other

- All applicants will be asked to complete an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion survey
 - Will help us track participation over time and allow us to make efforts to increase diverse participation in our program
 - **Will NOT be shared with the review committee and will NOT be used for evaluation purposes**
 - May be used to confirm eligibility for certain awards (e.g., CIHR / NSERC / SSHRC USRA)
- Successful applicants will be asked to complete a satisfaction survey at end of summer
- We will offer various professional development opportunities through the 4-month period
- You are encouraged to participate in student research day March 2027





Can I Work Another Job?

- Awards are designed to be more or less equivalent to full time “work” over 14 weeks
- We recognize that students have income needs
- Taking a “second job” is permissible, if necessary:
 - Discuss with supervisor
 - Does not interfere with completing your research project and tasks
 - You can manage your time accordingly
- Note: If a “second job” at StFX, you cannot work / be paid for, more than 48 hours combined in any given week (payroll system will flag this and “someone” will need to pay you for overtime hours and rates – will not happen)





ROMEO System

- You must “register” to create an account
- “Apply New” (upper right corner)
- Click “Undergraduate Student Summer Research Award”
- You can go back to “edit” your application anytime by clicking on “drafts” on your home page
- Under “Project Team Info” scroll to bottom, add team member, “search” for your supervisor’s name and “select”. Set “role” to Supervisor
- There is no message to the supervisor, they can access your application from their home page under “drafts”
- After everything is done, submit, type in “OK” and submit





Questions?

David Bruce, Director, Research Grants

dwbruce@stfx.ca

902-318-6842

Nicholson Tower 715

