

ACS PRF UNDERGRADUATE NEW INVESTIGATOR (UNI) RESEARCH GRANT

The following comments are presented to assist you in the preparation of a proposal for an Undergraduate New Investigator research grant. See also [ELIGIBILITY, TERMS, and CONDITIONS](#). Only faculty with appointments in *departments that do not offer the doctoral degree* are eligible for Undergraduate New Investigator research grants.

Nature and Scope of the Research: American Chemical Society Petroleum Research Fund (ACS PRF) research grants are made to non-profit **institutions within the United States** for regularly appointed faculty whose research may be sponsored in accordance with the [Agreement of Transfer of Trust](#):

“The recipient (ACS) shall use all funds exclusively for advanced scientific education and fundamental research in the ‘petroleum field,’ which may include any field of pure science which in the judgment of (ACS) may afford a basis for subsequent research directly connected with the petroleum field.”

The ACS PRF Undergraduate New Investigator (UNI) grants program is focused on providing start-up funding for scientists and engineers who are faculty members in non-doctoral degree-granting departments, and who are within the first five years of their first academic appointment at the level of Assistant Professor. **The proposed research must be different from that conducted previously by the PI as part of their graduate or postdoctoral studies.** Proposals that the PRF Committee determines are a logical extension of an investigator’s previous research are denied as “not a new direction.” UNI grants provide financial incentives for students at those institutions to become involved in research activities leading to employment or continued study in graduate school. ACS PRF will not support a proposal having overlap, or partial overlap, with research funded by another agency.

Note that fundamental research is required as opposed to applied research or methods development. All UNI proposals will be reviewed for the following required elements: ***completeness and correctness of the application, fundamental nature of the research topic, relevance to petroleum or fossil fuels, and description of the impact on advanced scientific education of students.***

Funding Criteria: The PRF Committee makes relative rankings of proposals, and recommendations for funding, based on the following criteria:

- The overall quality, significance, and scientific merit of the proposed research, including the extent to which it will increase basic knowledge and/or stimulate additional research. Included in this assessment is a measure of the likelihood that the stated scientific goals will generate publishable results.
- The extent to which advanced scientific education will be enhanced through the involvement of students in the research, and will encourage students to pursue careers in scientific or engineering fields.
- The extent to which the proposed research differs from prior graduate and postdoctoral research.
- The impact of funding the research, including the effect on the principal investigator’s overall research program.
- The qualifications or potential of the principal investigator and adequacy of the facilities to conduct the research. Proposals from institutions with little or no tradition of research will benefit from statements of institutional support, limited to one page, and attached to the end of the proposal.
- All Principal Investigators must describe any significant risks or hazards that may be encountered in the proposed work, and how these risks or hazards would be mitigated.

Eligibility: To be eligible as a principal investigator for a UNI grant, the applicant must be a member of the faculty of a college or university **within the United States** in a department without a doctoral program; be within the first five years of **their first academic appointment** as an Assistant Professor; have completed all requirements for the Ph.D. (however, an application may be submitted before the degree has been awarded). In addition, applicants must meet all three of the following eligibility criteria:

1. The non-profit institution submitting the proposal must certify that the individual listed as principal investigator on the cover page qualifies as a principal investigator under the institution’s policies.
2. In view of the long-standing policy of The ACS Petroleum Research Fund to give priority to support of students, the principal investigator must be eligible to serve as the sole formal, official supervisor of undergraduate students.
3. The term of appointment of the principal investigator must promise reasonable continuity of service. The appointment must continue at least through the period of funding requested in the proposal.

It is assumed that tenure-track faculty meet these criteria, and that non-tenure-track faculty do not meet all three of the ACS PRF eligibility criteria.

Budget: The PRF Committee requires that at least 40 percent of the total budget be devoted to support the education and training of students. See item 4 below for details. A budget justification is required in the online application. If you have any questions about allowable budget allocations, please contact the appropriate Program Manager before submitting a proposal. For proposals that are funded, the budget becomes part of the grant agreement. Revisions to the grant budget can only be made **with prior approval** of ACS PRF.

1. **Request:** Proposals request \$55,000 for two grant years. The total budget may be divided among years according to the needs of the project. The ACS PRF budget year extends from September 1 to August 31. The first grant year may begin earlier than September 1, but must start on the first day of a month and end on August 31 of the following year. **A starting date earlier than September 1 will result in a first budget period longer than twelve months.**
2. **Excluded Charges:** No overhead costs may be charged. Secretarial and/or administrative salaries are considered part of regular departmental expenses and should not be included in proposed budgets or charged against the grant. Funds **may not** be used for tuition or to support postdoctoral fellows, doctoral students, laboratory technicians, contractors, consultants, or visiting faculty.
3. **Principal Investigator Stipend:** The proposed budget may include a contribution for the PI's summer salary, with an upper limit of \$8,000 per grant year, **including fringe benefits**, to a maximum of \$16,000. This limit **does not** change as a result of time extensions.
4. **Support of Students:** Total student support, as salaries or stipends, must be at least 40% of the grant budget. Grant funds **must** be used to support undergraduate students **in each year** of the funded research, and M.S. students may also be supported. Field Work expenses for students, including transportation, lodging, etc., may be considered student support, and must be described in **the budget justification**.
5. **Travel:** A maximum of \$2,000 per grant year, or \$4,000 total, may be budgeted for conference travel. This limit does **not** change as a result of time extensions. Support of student travel to scientific meetings is encouraged. Note that scientific work performed away from the home institution is considered field work, and is budgeted separately.
6. **Capital Equipment:** Requests for capital equipment on UNI grant proposals **are discouraged**. However, a limited amount of capital equipment funds (\leq \$5,000) may be included in the proposed budget, with justification and description of institutional cost-matching (if any) in **the budget justification**.

Carryover and Time Extensions: Funds that are unexpended at the end of an annual grant period may be carried forward into the next period in the same budget category. If unexpended funds remain in the grant account at the expiration of the original grant period, an extension of time without commitment of additional funds may be requested. A maximum of two one-year time extensions may be approved provided reporting requirements are up to date.

Proposal Submission:

1. **Format:** A complete proposal consists of the following material, submitted through the submission website for UNI proposals at www.acsprf.org:
 - a. Web-Submitted Information: The following information is entered as part of your online application, on the proposal submission website: Signature pages, budget and budget justification; Principal Investigator contact information; title of proposed research; abstract; petroleum relevance statement; safety statement; suggested reviewers; PI education and experience; current and pending research support; publications and presentations; collaborations (if any); and technical proposal.
 - b. Signed Pages: A cover page and a budget page are generated from the information entered by the applicant for signatures of the Principal Investigator and the Institutional Representative. The applicant must download the pages, obtain all signatures, and upload the signed documents into the system. If the proposal is funded, the budget will become the approved grant budget. Any revisions to the approved budget require prior approval of PRF.
 - c. Technical proposal: The technical proposal is submitted as a single PDF file, including the scientific text of the narrative, references cited, figures, and tables. The text body may not exceed 4,000 words, double-spaced, in 12-point font (Times Roman, Arial, or Courier), with 1-inch margins, with a word count entered at the end of the narrative text. .
2. **Page Order:** Number the pages of your proposal in the footer. No institutional cover letter is required; if one is included, please place it after the references.
3. **Length Restrictions:** The abstract of the proposal should not exceed 250 words. Submissions that exceed the 4,000 word limit for the technical proposal will not be considered.
4. **Limitations:** An investigator may have only one active ACS PRF grant, or proposal under consideration, at any time. A

new investigator is limited to three UNI applications considered and/or one UNI grant funded in their career. An investigator may submit only one research proposal for consideration at a PRF Committee meeting.

5. **Petroleum Relevance Statement:** A 100-word statement of petroleum relevance (*i.e.*, How is the proposal "fundamental research in the petroleum field"?) is required as part of the proposal submission. This statement is entered in the Web submission portal, before the PDF of the proposal is uploaded.
6. **Safety Statement:** All principal investigators must describe any significant risks or hazards that may be encountered in the proposed work, and how these risks or hazards would be mitigated. Web links to relevant references, and examples of risk assessments and mitigation strategies, are at www.acs.org/safety and also on the PRF [website](#).
7. **References Cited:** Include the **names of all authors (do not use et. al.), complete article title, journal title, year of publication, volume number (if any), and pages of cited article.** For example:
Dunn, D.A., Lee, B.I., Fahr, A., and Clancy, T.C., Characterization and Analysis of Oil-Shale Kerogen from West Virginia. *Journal of Petroleum Chemistry*, 2015, Volume 16, 200-215.
8. **Suggested Reviewers:** The Principal Investigator must submit the names and addresses (including email) of at least six suggested reviewers who are experts in the field of the proposed research. This may not include former research mentors, students, collaborators, or colleagues at the PI's current or former institutions. Also, do not list names of any reviewers whom you have suggested in any previous proposal, submitted to ACS PRF within the past four years.
9. **Additional Material:** If this is a resubmission of a previously denied proposal, you will need to answer the question **"What has been changed in this revised version?"** in the online submission form. This information is just for the use of the Program Manager and the PRF Science Panel members, so it is **not** to be included in the proposal document. "Revised and resubmitted" proposals are sent to a different set of reviewers than those asked to evaluate the initial proposal.

Principal Investigators must keep the ACS PRF office advised of the status of applications for research support at other agencies while your proposal is under consideration by The ACS Petroleum Research Fund. The ACS Petroleum Research Fund reserves the right to scan proposals for plagiarism.

Checklist of Common Errors - Please Review Carefully Before Submitting a Proposal

Most unsuccessful proposals have problems with one or more of the following criteria. If in doubt, please call ACS PRF (202-872-4481) or email the appropriate Program Manager well before the submission deadline. Program Managers and their email addresses are listed on the [Contact PRF](#) page of our website (www.acsprf.org).

1. **Topic outside the scope of ACS PRF.** Research topics within all areas considered by the PRF Committee are listed in the [PRF Science Panels and Areas of Research Support](#) page of our website (www.acsprf.org).
2. **Missing or insufficient statement of petroleum relevance** (*i.e.*, How is the proposal "advanced scientific education and fundamental research in the 'petroleum field'?" **with the definition of 'petroleum field' in the downloadable "Agreement of Transfer of Trust" document.**) This petroleum relevance statement is entered on the online submission page before the PDF file of the proposal is uploaded.
3. **Incomplete application.** All proposals must be received, in complete and final form, by the stipulated deadline. No late submissions, additions, or document substitutions are allowed after the deadline. Proposals submitted in February-March will be considered at the October PRF Committee meeting; submissions in September-October will be considered in May of the next year.
4. **Proposal budget for the wrong amount (must be \$55,000).** If necessary to make the total request equal to this amount, add the "extra dollars" to the student support categories, or to the Supplies and Services budget.
5. **Insufficient student support.** The PRF Committee requires at least 40 percent of the total budget be devoted to support the education and training of students (undergraduate research assistants, Master's students). Undergraduate students must be supported in each year of the proposed research.
6. **Principal Investigator salary over the maximum allowable amount of \$8,000 per grant year (this amount includes fringe benefits), or \$16,000 total.** The limit on PI Salary does not change as a result of any no-cost time extensions.
7. **Travel budget over the maximum allowable amount of \$2,000 per year.** This is travel to meetings or symposia, to

present research results. Travel to obtain data is part of the “Field Work” budget category.

8. **Proposal longer than 4,000 words, double-spaced in 12-point font.** The word count is entered at the end of the proposal narrative. Proposals that exceed this limitation will not be considered.
9. **Missing information for the PI.** Include all academic degrees, institution and date received, the name(s) of the dissertation director(s), and any post-doctoral supervisor(s), if appropriate.
10. **Missing or incomplete information on suggested reviewers.** Include the names, organizational affiliation, and email addresses of at least six peer experts who are qualified to evaluate the proposed research, and have no conflicts of interest with the PI. This information is entered on the online submission page.
11. **Missing signatures.** The signatures of the Principal Investigator and an authorized official of your institution are required on both the title page and the budget page. The institutional official is the person who is authorized to commit the PI’s institution to performing the proposed research, and is not the Department Chair. **Both signatures are required on both pages.**
12. **Incomplete reference citations.** Include the names of all authors, complete article title, journal title, year of publication, volume number, and pages of cited article. **Do not use “et al.” in reference citations.**
13. **No outline of revisions.** For a previously denied proposal, which has been revised and resubmitted, the PI did not address reviewers’ concerns/comments and did not include, with the application, a summary of major changes.
14. **Safety statement missing.** Principal Investigator has failed to provide required risk assessment and mitigation strategies in their proposal.