USC Aiken *Connections* Award Guidelines

Overview

The *Connections* program was created by the University of South Carolina Aiken Center for Research Excellence to enrich the academic experience of our undergraduates through research opportunities in all disciplines. By providing access to faculty mentoring relationships and a professional research experience, USC Aiken enables students to creatively explore their interests at a more in-depth level than can be attained in the classroom.

Each *Connections* Award will be funded for up to $1,000 over a period of one year. Competition for this award will be through submission of a research, scholarship, or creative project proposal developed in collaboration with a USC Aiken faculty mentor. Selection is based on the project's educational and intellectual merit, the potential impact of the project, and the student's previous academic success.

Eligibility

Student eligibility:
➢ any discipline, any academic year
➢ undergraduates ONLY
➢ minimum GPA of 3.0
➢ good standing with the University (no academic or judicial probation)
➢ must not be also applying for a Magellan Scholarship
➢ must be mentored by a USC Aiken faculty member

Acceptable projects include:
➢ mentor-designed (students can work directly on a mentor's project)
➢ student-generated projects or questions
➢ service-learning and community-based research
➢ any combination of the above

Application process

Please note: The student must be the primary author of the proposal but is expected (and required) to work with his/her mentor during the proposal & budget writing process.

The proposal should include:

1. A clear, concise <u>two-page</u> project description. Be sure that the description includes

    ☐ Background information

    ☐ A clear statement of the goals and objectives

    ☐ Anticipated results and/or final products and their dissemination (i.e., how the work will be shared with others).

❖ Please remember that this portion may not exceed two (2) single-spaced pages. References may be an additional page; they are not included in the two-page limit.

2. An itemized budget and justification of anticipated expenditures. The budget is in addition to the two-page proposal. Please see below for additional budget details.

❖ To complete and submit proposal:
   ☐ Provide an electronic file to your faculty mentor.
   ☐ Faculty mentor will email the proposal to the Center for Research Excellence (cre@usca.edu)

> **ONCE AWARDED:**
> ***Connections* Award winners are *required* to present their results at USC Aiken's Scholar Showcase.**
>
> *Connections* awardees are **encouraged** to publish in professional, peer-reviewed journals OR present, perform, or otherwise showcase their work at professional, discipline-specific conferences and meetings.

Budget

➢ Maximum budget request: $1,000.

➢ *Connections* awards may be used for purchase materials and supplies, participant incentives, student salary, or travel related to the project. Note that student salary requests must also include fringe benefits.

➢ Materials and supplies purchased through this award remain USC Aiken property (*NOT the student's*).

➢ **Unallowable Costs**
   • Faculty or graduate student compensation
   • Tuition for non-research related programs
   • Salary for anyone other than applicant(s)
   • Alcoholic beverages

FOR MENTORS

1) Although your input is expected, please refrain from writing the proposal for the student. It is unfair to those faculty mentors who do allow their student to write their own proposal.

2) Proposal submission will be by email to the Center for Research Excellence (cre@usca.edu). The completed proposal and accompanying budget should be attached as a single Word or PDF document.

3) In addition to the attached *Connections* proposal, the submission email should include a brief statement from you regarding your role in the project.

4) Once received, you will receive a confirming email.

• Please call Michele Harmon (X3607) or Bill Jackson (X3601) if you have any questions.
• *Connections* proposals are not submitted or managed through USCeRA.
• Awards will be made available to the student through an existing University account.

Application Review Process

Applications from eligible students that are complete and responsive to these guidelines will be evaluated for merit by the Review committee. The Review committee will provide a prioritized list of recommendations for funding to the Center for Research Excellence, based on the quality of the proposals per the review criteria. Awards will be made based on review committee recommendations and available funds.

The following criteria will be used to assess proposals:
  ➢ Overall merit
  ➢ Student's clarity of explanation
  ➢ Student's readiness for project and/or the plan for gaining needed skills
  ➢ Student's anticipated plan for sharing the project results (examples: presentation, publication, exhibit, performance, etc.)

Applicants and mentors will be notified via e-mail of award decisions. See webpage for announcement date.

Award Administration

➢ Expenditures –Established University procedures must be followed in expending project funds. Special attention should be paid to policies and procedures relating to Purchasing, Travel, and Personnel. Compensation (of any form) for faculty and graduate students is not allowed. **All grant overages are the mentor's responsibility.**

➢ Compliance Issues - If the project includes the use of humans as research subjects (including surveys) or vertebrate animals, the faculty member is responsible for ensuring IRB or IACUC approval. The faculty member is also responsible for compliance with USC Aiken, state, and federal requirements relating to the use of biohazardous materials. Student proposing the use of biohazardous materials must receive training prior to initiating the project. Contact Bill Jackson (billj@usca.edu) to arrange a training session.

➢ Publications and Presentations - Any publications or presentations produced as a result of this award must contain an acknowledgment of USC's support such as: "This work is partially supported by a grant from the University of South Carolina Aiken *Connections* program."