



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS & OTHER SUGGESTIONS

1. What is SCICU?

South Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities is a non-profit corporation whose mission is to strengthen South Carolina's independent colleges and universities through collaboration, governmental advocacy, fundraising, and public engagement so that every student may choose, afford, and earn an independent college education that fits their personal values, professional and social aspirations, and approach to learning. The 21 member institutions are: Allen University, Anderson University, Benedict College, Bob Jones University, Charleston Southern University, Claflin University, Coker University, Columbia College, Columbia International University, Converse University, Erskine College, Furman University, Limestone University, Morris College, Newberry College, North Greenville University, Presbyterian College, Southern Wesleyan University, Spartanburg Methodist College, Voorhees University, and Wofford College.

2. What is the SCICU Student/Faculty Undergraduate Research Program?

A grant funding opportunity for undergraduate students who attend an SCICU member institution. The program is announced each year in November to engage students in professionally guided primary research, which will develop critical thinking, inquiry, and communication skills. Students who are full-time undergraduates and will not graduate prior to February of 2026 are eligible for funding.

3. Which disciplines are funded?

Proposals from all disciplines that are represented by SCICU member institutions are eligible to be evaluated for potential funding.

4. How are projects evaluated?

Evaluations of all SCICU Student/Faculty Undergraduate Research proposals are conducted by a panel consisting of inter-institutional faculty members from SCICU member institutions. All members of the evaluation team are active in research at their respective institutions. The evaluation team consists of several core members. However, the composition of this team changes based on the disciplines of the proposals received each funding cycle.

Panel members evaluate and rank the proposals based on the following:

- Research merit,
- Educational benefit,
- Appropriateness of proposed method or approach,
- Capability of the applicant and/or faculty sponsor to conduct the proposed activity, and
- Appropriateness of budget.

- 5. Does SCICU fund proposals for the production of artwork, books, machines, etc.?**
No. SCICU funds only research projects. However, if the project produces research that lays the groundwork for a creative project, then the proposal may be considered for funding.
- 6. Does SCICU fund equipment?**
SCICU's funds are limited, therefore, SCICU does not fund large equipment purchases. Small equipment such as hot plates, microscope lenses, pH meters, etc. may be considered for funding. Any equipment acquired for a student research project becomes property of the SCICU member institution.
- 7. Does SCICU fund computers/tablets/smart phones?**
No, SCICU does not fund computers, tablets, or smartphones.
- 8. Are projects that produce creative projects, such as a novel, production of artwork, or building of a machine, etc., considered for funding?**
Every proposal submitted is viewed with the criteria as stated taken into consideration. We sponsor only traditional research projects. If the research proposal lays the groundwork for the creative project, then the proposal may be considered for funding.
- 9. Other expenses that are not covered.**
SCICU funds cover only expenses directly related to research and student stipends. Housing, food, daily travel expenses (e.g., mileage or gas) and other personal expenses will not be funded. Student stipends are subject to tax deductions as determined by the institution.
- 10. Does SCICU fund the cost for participants?**
Yes. Often student researchers will want to pay (or otherwise reward) research participants. In such cases, the request must contain detailed and compelling information as to why the participant fee is important to the project. The reasoning will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Participants are paid \$5 per 30 minutes of participation in research. The maximum compensation per participant is \$50. Projects can request a maximum of \$1,000 in participant costs. When appropriate, the use of gift cards is encouraged.
- 11. How is the student stipend calculated?**
SCICU does not pay a flat stipend to the researchers. In the budget section, justification should be detailed as to the time the student will spend on each part of their project. The current pay rate is \$10/hour with a cap of \$4,000 per student.
- 12. Do faculty sponsors receive stipends from SCICU?**
SCICU only funds the students and the research expenses. **However, while faculty stipends are not permitted to be drawn from grant funding, the faculty sponsor of each funded project will receive a \$250 professional development grant.** Some member institutions pay a stipend for mentoring students in research. Contact your institution for details.
- 13. What is the process for proposal evaluation?**
Research evaluation is done by an inter-institutional panel formed of research-active professors from SCICU member institutions. The panel has several core members, however, composition changes based on the disciplines of the proposals received for each funding cycle. Each panel

member reviews 8-10 proposals in their discipline per funding cycle. Proposals are ranked based on research merit, educational benefit, appropriateness of the proposed method or approach, capability of the student applicant and/or faculty sponsor to conduct the proposed activity, and the appropriateness of the budget.

14. Does SCICU give priority to particular SCICU member institutions?

No. The panel evaluates all proposals based on the stated criteria.

15. Does SCICU require IRB and IACUC letters for research that involves human and animal subjects?

Yes, SCICU requires copies of IRB (Institutional Review Board) approval for all research projects that use human participants and IACUC approval for research projects that use animal subjects.

16. What is the policy for research projects that are conducted in laboratories outside of a member institution?

A collaboration letter from an outside organization (archives, labs, schools, etc.) is required along with a detailed plan that includes the location of the research should be submitted. SCICU funds research that takes place at SCICU member institutions. If needed, visiting archives or research facilities for parts of a project at a different institution will be allowed. Projects solely taking place at research locations outside of the member institutions are not funded.

17. Am I required to submit any progress reports?

Yes. Faculty sponsors are required to submit 2 progress reports, generally requested in June and September. These reports should be only a few sentences long to indicate if the student(s) is on track for the timely completion of the project. Reports are due to SCICU as stated in the guidelines.

18. Are funded students and faculty sponsors required to attend and remain for the entire Symposium?

Yes, funded students and sponsoring faculty members are expected to be present for the entire Symposium. If there is a compelling reason and/or unexpected issues that arise and the student or faculty member cannot be present for the entire Symposium, the faculty sponsor should contact SCICU (803-799-7122) and explain the reasoning prior to the date of the Symposium. Colleges should plan to excuse funded students and their faculty sponsors for both to attend the entire Symposium. Faculty and their funded students that do not provide an explanation to SCICU prior to the date of the Symposium will risk losing future funding for themselves and their college or university for one funding cycle.

DO:

1. Have students write their own proposals. The evaluators need to hear the students' voice when reviewing the proposals. The evaluators will turn down any proposal that seems to be mostly written by the professor.
2. Have student proposals include a meaningful, fairly objective means of measurement/analysis. In the Social Sciences and the Humanities, we cannot fund proposals that sound like: "I will tell you how I feel - about how I think they feel." Your means of measurement/analysis should go well beyond this to be worthy of SCICU research dollars. If a student does not use well-

- known and/or well-structured psychometric instruments, then at least have checklists and grids from well-developed bibliographies. That helps a lot.
3. Feel free to submit research proposals supporting creative activity. We can and will fund objective research supporting the writing of a novel or play, or the painting of a picture, or the composition of music. Since the funds are directed to research, we cannot fund the production of the novel, the picture, or the musical composition itself. For example, we can't and will not pay you to write a novel.
 4. Obtain all necessary IRB and/or Principal/Superintendent permissions ahead of time, or our funds will be contingent upon you getting them. We cannot fund human subjects and/or school children's research that does not have all necessary legal permissions.
 5. Have specific questions driving your research proposal.
 6. Have specific means to measure and analyze the data. In the humanities, this may be less straightforward, but it is still expected.
 7. Be specific in your budget breakdown. Budgets are more likely to be cut if there is not a clear justification.
 8. Do submit requests for creative activities. However, we will only support research related activities within these endeavors.
 9. Do get all necessary paperwork/approvals before submitting the proposal. Starting research will be conducted on school children requires a long process to get approved (e.g., IRB approval, principal and superintendent).

DON'T:

1. Do not attempt to use SCICU funds to restock general lab chemicals that should be readily available in your own institution's labs. Limited amounts of rather unique chemicals or specific biological supplies (directly related to the proposed research) are OK. If you need 50ml of a chemical, do not request funds to buy an entire liter of that chemical.
2. Do not "pad" the budget. We are more likely to approve leaner, more targeted budgets that don't have a lot of expensive equipment or supplies.
3. Do not request student stipend funds for 40 hours a week, all summer. We only fund students for the active research hours.
4. Do not expect continued funding of slight variations of the same general research project from the same professor year after year after year, with only the student names and slight variations in the research included in the proposal. Once again, we are much more interested in funding the unique research ideas/projects of the students, provided they are well-structured, modest in cost, have all necessary permissions, and have within them a meaningful means of measurement/analysis.
5. Do not request money to support the faculty member (e.g., travel, per diem, stipends, etc.). **While faculty stipends are not permitted to be drawn from grant funding, the faculty sponsor of each funded project will receive a \$250 professional development grant.**
6. Do not add FICA, Medicare or other tax withholding to the student's stipend.