

PARTICIPANT GUIDELINES

Monday
MARCH 23, 2026
9:00 AM – 2 PM

 **Bell Works**
Holmdel, New Jersey

 Independent
Colleges and
Universities
of New Jersey


Undergraduate
Research Symposium
strengthening communication, critical thinking and technical skills

ELIGIBILITY

The applying student(s) must be enrolled full-time pursuing a first undergraduate degree at the time of application. Only students enrolled at ICUNJ member institutions are eligible to apply. STEM majors are given priority in selection for funding, but all academic majors are encouraged to submit a proposal.

The applicant(s) must be capable of **completing all research work by February 20, 2026** and presenting their research finding at the ICUNJ Research Symposium to be held on **Monday, March 23, 2026**, at Bell Works in Holmdel, New Jersey.

Special Note: The Academic Dean at the institution of enrollment for the student(s) must approve the proposal thus confirming student access to equipment and resources to complete independent research.

QUALIFYING ACTIVITY

All proposals must be prepared and written by the student(s). Faculty members are encouraged to provide direction and assistance for a meaningful research experience.

Research must be conducted by the student(s) with faculty guidance. Students are expected to conduct their research in compliance with any guidelines or restrictions outlined by their college or university. ICUNJ funding is not an acceptance of responsibility for the scope of research or nature of the research project. The faculty sponsor and department dean should review any potential issues with the student(s) regarding any aspect of the research before approving application.

The primary focus of the Symposium is to support STEM related research. STEM projects will be given priority for funding. Independent research projects outside of STEM fields are welcome to apply and may be eligible for participation without funding assistance. Available space to present findings may become a limiting factor for the number of research projects accepted.

Should any proposal submitted to ICUNJ require funds from other grant programs, the dependency on other contributions should be noted as part of the original proposal. Please note if the additional funding has been approved or if the funding is pending. If funds are pending, the impact of absence of additional funds on the overall project should be outlined.

Grant proposals should be typed and professional in appearance. Packets should be **submitted no later than September 30, 2025**, to ICUNJ, 154 West State Street, Trenton, NJ 08608, Attn: Research Symposium Review Committee or via email, scholarships@njcolleges.org.

Application packets should be submitted in their entirety (with the exception of the reference form). A receipt will be sent to students acknowledging application submission.

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PROPOSAL CONTENTS

The application is to be prepared by the student(s) who will be conducting the independent research unless otherwise noted. The proposal includes **7 specific components**. An application will be considered incomplete if any element is not included. Incomplete applications cannot be considered.

1. **APPLICATION FORM** to be completed by student(s) – a separate form is required for each student who is part of the research project (all applicants are expected to participate in the culminating Symposium). Students should indicate research partners on application form who will be participating in the Symposium. Only those students noted with a completed application cover form will be mentioned in the URS Journal.
2. **PERSONAL STATEMENT** – each student is asked to provide some background information regarding their interest in research, college experience and career goals.
3. **DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH** (not to exceed 2 pages) – brief narrative of proposed project which should include each of the following:
 - Rationale for proposed research
 - Notation of relevant background literature (minimum of 3 literary sources)
 - Research procedures to be employed
 - Specific means of evaluation of findings
 - Significance of the potential findings

In preparing the narrative, the writer should assume the reader has little or no background in the specific research topic. Avoid the use of professional or technical jargon to the extent possible. Explain the rationale for the proposed research clearly and explicitly. Each grant request should demonstrate a specific focus and any evidence of preliminary work should be included to ensure that the research and its timetable are feasible.
4. **STUDENT GOALS AND ACTIVITIES** – provide an outline of expectations to be realized by conducting independent research and the methods to be employed to reach goals
5. **RECOMMENDATION FORM*** - a completed letter of recommendation form (a separate form is required for each student)
6. **FACULTY SPONSOR INPUT*** – acknowledges the support of the faculty member who will serve as a resource for the research
7. **RESEARCH PROJECT BUDGET** - itemized budget
Each budget item should be outlined and described. Faculty stipends are not to be included in the request. Student stipends are considered on a limited basis. At the discretion of the ICUNJ Research Review Committee, budget item maximums may be imposed on certain expenses.

Project budgets may be funded directly or as part of a scholarship award. Any funds provided that exceed the approved research project budget are to be applied directly to the student's account to meet other costs of attendance. Projects involving more than one student may be allocated to more than one student's account.

*Items may be provided by the same person.

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REVIEW & SELECTION

Proposals will be evaluated by a panel consisting of, but not limited to, inter-institutional faculty and professional staff, ICUNJ Business Trustees and professional staff. To ensure a level of conformity to the program goals, eligible proposals will be evaluated on the following criteria:

- Research Merit
- Educational Benefit
- Appropriateness of the Proposed Method or Approach
- Capability of Applicant and/or Faculty Sponsor to Conduct the Proposed Activity
- Appropriateness and Feasibility of the Proposed Budget

ICUNJ reserves the right to act to ensure broad participation by all its member institutions.

The award notification will be sent to the Faculty Sponsor with additional copies sent to the Academic Dean and University President. All funds will be distributed to the institution with instructions for distribution to the sponsoring department and for allocation to the student’s account as appropriate. Additional poster presentations will be permitted on a first-come, first-served basis and limited to a pre-determined number taking into consideration the total number of funded projects and space for presentations. Poster template and guidelines will be provided as opportunities are awarded.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Each student grant recipient and non-funded participant will be **required to submit by March 6, 2026, a one-page abstract** (summary) of their research and findings. In addition, the student will be required to present research findings at the ICUNJ Research Symposium. *Special Note: Participation as evaluators in the Symposium is included as a responsibility of sponsoring faculty members. Faculty sponsors should plan to attend to assist students with preparation for advanced learning opportunities.*

The presentation format will be completed as one-to-one, in-person interviews. The presenters will use posters to relay work and results. Judges will be asked to provide numeric scores and written comments to be combined and shared with students. No accommodation can be made for electricity or power.

PROJECT TIMELINE

August 20, 2025	Call issued for Research Proposals from Students
September 30, 2025	Deadline for All Proposal Submissions
October 31, 2025	Project Funding Decisions Announced. <i>(All applications will receive a response regarding funding.)</i>
January 16, 2026	Interim Progress Report Due <i>(Supervising faculty signature required.)</i>
February 20, 2026	Conclude Research
March 6, 2026	Abstract of research findings/results due to ICUNJ for inclusion in event publication.
March 23, 2026	ICUNJ Undergraduate Research Symposium – All funded applicants are required to attend. Symposium will be held at Bell Works in Holmdel, New Jersey.