Track 2- Guidelines and Rubric for SURF for Research-Focused Proposals

Track II welcomes proposals spanning a broad spectrum of disciplines outside of the arts and creative humanities covered in Track I. This includes social sciences, STEM fields (science, technology, engineering, mathematics), applied disciplines, and other humanities research that is primarily scholarly and analytical in nature rather than creative or artistic.

Proposals may involve experimental research, theoretical or computational studies, qualitative or quantitative analysis, fieldwork, or other rigorous scholarly investigations. The program encourages projects that advance knowledge, address significant questions, and demonstrate clear intellectual rigor.

Applicants should clearly describe the intellectual merit of their work and its significance within their discipline(s). Projects must go beyond typical coursework and demonstrate a thoughtful research plan with well-defined goals and scholarly value.

Proposal details:

- Proposals must describe a research project to be completed during the 8-week summer term that is original, feasible, and intellectually rigorous.
- The project should clearly articulate its research questions or hypotheses, methodology, and broader significance.
- Proposals should include a detailed project description, timeline, and expected outcomes.
- Applicants must demonstrate how their project exceeds standard coursework requirements and embodies scholarly inquiry.
- Projects may be interdisciplinary and incorporate multiple methods or perspectives.
- If fieldwork is required for the project, proposals should thoroughly discuss the feasibility and planning of travel and logistics
- We strongly encourage a plan for dissemination or presentation of the project results in the proposal

Document Formatting Guidelines

- Proposals and personal statements must be written in 12-point font with 1-inch margins.
- Document must be uploaded as a PDF Proposal is limited to two (2) pages.
- References do not count toward the page limit and can be completed on a separate page.
- Personal statement is limited to one (1) page.
- Any pages beyond these limits will be removed before the proposal is sent to reviewers.

Evaluation Criteria

Rubric for Project Proposal

Criteria	1 (poor)	2 (fair)	3 (good)	4 (very good)	5 (excellent)
Intellectual Merit	Proposal lacks clear research or creative inquiry; questions and significance are unclear or weak.	Some indication of inquiry and significance, but lacks depth or clarity in broader impact.	Research or creative inquiry is generally clear with moderate articulation of significance and broader impact, though some aspects could be strengthened.	Clear research or creative inquiry with good articulation of significance and impact.	Exceptional clarity and depth of inquiry; significance and broader intellectual impact well articulated.
Originality, Innovation, and Significance	Project is routine or derivative with little to no novelty or significance; no attempt is made at situating the project in the broader context of the discipline.	Some original elements present but limited innovation or broader impact described; does not completely situate the work in the context of the discipline.	Demonstrates some originality and innovation with moderate significance; background situates the work though with minor gaps or weaknesses.	Demonstrates originality and innovation with clear significance to field/discipline/community; the background is adequate but has some flaws	Highly original and innovative; project provides sufficient background (including citing relevant literature as needed) to situate the work and advances knowledge or offers new perspectives with strong significance.
Feasibility and Planning	Project scope unrealistic or poorly planned; lacks clear timeline or goals; unlikely to finish in summer.	Some planning evident but with unrealistic elements or unclear timeline/steps.	Project is planned with generally realistic scope and timeline; most goals are clear and achievable, though some details may need refinement.	Well-planned project with realistic scope, timeline, and articulated goals; likely completable.	Exceptionally thorough and realistic planning with detailed timeline and achievable goals.

Rubric for personal statement

Criteria	1 (poor)	2 (fair)	3 (good)	4 (very good)	5 (excellent)
Motivation and Strength of Student	Applicant shows little or no genuine motivation; faculty mentor indicates weak or questionable student commitment and character.	Some indication of motivation or enthusiasm, but lacks depth or consistency; mentor notes some strengths but with concerns about persistence or engagement.	Student demonstrates clear motivation and commitment; faculty mentor describes the student as generally strong with potential for success.	Strong and consistent motivation evident; mentor highlights student's solid strengths, dedication, and positive attributes.	Exceptional motivation and passion clearly expressed; mentor strongly endorses student's outstanding character, resilience, and capability.
Preparation, Readiness, and Skillset	Student is poorly prepared with insufficient relevant knowledge or skills; mentor indicates lack of readiness to undertake the project.	Some preparation and skill evident but with gaps or weaknesses; mentor describes readiness as limited or needing development.	Student has adequate preparation and skills for the project; mentor regards the student as mostly ready to begin work.	Well-prepared student with strong relevant skills and background; mentor affirms the student's readiness and suitability.	Exceptionally well prepared with advanced skills and knowledge; mentor views the student as fully ready and highly capable to excel.
Learning Goals and Impact	Learning goals are vague, unrealistic, or insignificant; mentor sees little potential for meaningful growth or impact.	Somewhat clear goals but limited in scope or significance; mentor notes moderate developmental potential.	Learning goals are clear and attainable with recognizable impact; mentor indicates positive growth opportunities.	Goals are well articulated, significant, and likely to have meaningful impact; mentor supports strong developmental benefit.	Learning goals are highly focused, ambitious, and transformative; mentor enthusiastically anticipates profound growth and impact.