

## Ralph Bunche Scholars College Research Proposal Guidelines

Proposal writing is a very important part of being an Scholar. It is the principal mechanism used to obtain funding future academic endeavors, especially for Scholars students that want to go to earn bachelors and graduate degrees. The proposal you are required to write and to submit is a key element of your Certification.

Your proposal should show reviewers:

- Which Scholars Professor you will be working with;
- What you plan to do in your research;
- Why this work is important;
- How you plan to carry out the research;

Your proposal will be evaluated by both your Professor and by the Scholars College. The evaluators will be experts in the background and motivation of your research, so you will have to provide information that will help them put the details in perspective and convince them that your idea is worth pursuing.

No two proposals are alike, and there is no general recipe, which guarantees a good proposal; however, most proposals do share –or can share– a few common structural features, as described below. A good proposal will anticipate and answer questions that an informed –and somewhat skeptical– person might ask, as illustrated by the example questions provided below. **These are not meant to be a checklist, but rather as a guide towards preparing a good proposal.** Consult your Professor regarding the contents of your proposal.

### Format

A proposal of two or three pages, carefully thought out and precisely worded, is sufficient to make all the important points. Use either *Arial* or *Times New Roman* fonts, a font size of 11 or 12, and 1 inch margins.

### Introduction/Background

What is the general area in which you will be working? What is the problem that you are trying to solve or to illustrate, and if applicable how did the problem arise? Why is it interesting or worthwhile? You may want to state, especially if it is in the social or physical sciences what will be the contribution or significance of your research if it is successful?

### Objectives

What do you aim to accomplish in your project? Are you filling in gaps of existing scholarship? Are you attempting to build on existing knowledge that you will later use in your studies? What will you measure, illustrate or show, and under what conditions; or, what will you calculate, model, or simulate? What are your starting assumptions or conditions, and what will be the result or product of a successful research project? What are the criteria for success? (In other words, how will you know when you have accomplished what you set out to do?)

### Approach

Specifically, how will you accomplish your objective? What will you do? What are the principal steps or milestones along the path? How long will each take? What libraries will you use? What steps promise to be the most difficult, and how will you overcome the difficulties? What equipment or other resources will you need? Which of these are inherited, and which will you

have to make or procure? Will completion of your project depend on results from other people in related tasks?

### **Work Plan**

Making a schedule of the principal activities and events is a good way of showing the readers that you have taken a systematic approach to planning your work.

### **References**

List all pertinent papers or reports that you have consulted to prepare your proposal. Use the format prescribed by the:

American Chemical Society  
<http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/CHEM/acsstyle.html>

Modern Language Association  
<http://www.mla.org/>

Chicago Manual of Style  
<http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html>

### **ADDITIONAL CRITERIA:**

**ALL PROPOSALS AND FINAL RESARCH PROJECTS MUST BE SUBMITTED BY THE SCHOLARS STUDENT TO THE LEAD PROFESSOR and THE RB SCHOLARS COLLEGE. TEAM PROJECTS WILL NOT BE ALLOWED.**

**NO STUDENT WILL BE CERTIFIED UNLESS THEY HAVE COMPLETED THE PROJECT.**

**IT IS UP TO THE STUDENT TO DETERMINE WHICH SCHOLARS COURSE and or WHICH SCHOLARS PROFESSOR THEY WILL USE TO CONDUCT THE PROJECT. THEREFORE THE STUDENT IS ENCOURAGED TO BEGIN THINKING ABOUT THE PROJECT UPON ADMISSION INTO THE PROGRAM.**

*\*Adapted from the proposal guidelines developed by Dr. William M. Whitney, Deputy Manager, Education Affairs Office, JPL, for the Caltech SURF program (<http://www.surf.caltech.edu/applicants/proposal.html>)*