

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

RESEARCH IN UNDERGRADUATE INSTITUTIONS (RUI) Single-Investigator and Collaborative Faculty Research Projects Research Instrumentation Grants Research Opportunity Awards

Program Announcement NSF 00-144

Question: What are the primary differences between this program announcement and the previous one for RUI?

Answer: This announcement is not very different except that it explicitly indicates the willingness of NSF to support collaborative research. (See question on C-RUI). It also intends to convey very clearly that RUI is not a separate program or set-aside budget, but that RUI proposals are submitted to the regular disciplinary programs of the Foundation, reviewed within the same process as other research proposals, and funded out of disciplinary program funds in competition with other funding requests. As in the previous announcement, RUI applicants have the special opportunity to make their case in the RUI Impact Statement, and the review of RUI proposals involves a "Special Note to Reviewers."

Question: Is the Collaborative Research in Undergraduate Institutions (C-RUI) program of the Directorate for Biological Sciences still active?

Answer: The Directorate for Biological Sciences is setting aside funds to support projects of the kind supported by C-RUI, but will no longer conduct a separate C-RUI competition, as projects of this kind are now explicitly included in the RUI Program Announcement. All NSF Directorates encourage and support multidisciplinary, collaborative research at undergraduate institutions as well as elsewhere.

Question: Do RUI proposals have any funding advantage over other proposals?

Answer: There are no funds that have been set aside specifically for funding RUI proposals, with the exception of collaborative proposals in biological sciences. However, in recent years success rates for RUI proposals have been very similar to the overall success rate for all kinds of proposals reviewed by NSF. Strength in both NSF merit review criteria is paramount for all proposals, and RUI investigators have some advantage in having the additional opportunity to make their case in the Impact Statement.

Question: Does the Impact Statement count as part of the 15-page limit for the Project Description?

Answer: No, both the Impact Statement and the RUI Certification are supplementary documentation, submitted through the proposal section called "Special Information and Supplementary Documentation."

Question: What factors might a PI consider in choosing whether to submit a proposal as a RUI or a regular research grant?

Answer: Possible advantages of submission under RUI are: 1) the special opportunity afforded to make one's case in the Impact Statement, 2) the commitment in the announcement to inclusion of individuals from predominantly undergraduate institutions in the slate of reviewers or panelists, and 3) the use by NSF of the "Special Note to Reviewers" to remind reviewers of the special circumstances of RUI researchers. However, advice on this question should be sought from the NSF program director of the research program to which the proposal will be submitted.

Question: Is it possible to submit a renewal application for a RUI grant?

Answer: Yes, with the obvious exception of a grant for the purchase of multi-user instrumentation. RUI grants operate under the same rules as any other research grants.

Question: What is an appropriate budget for a RUI proposal? What items may be included?

Answer: In general, the budget should be appropriate to the scope of the project. However, there are different practices in different programs for research grants, and it is therefore wise to consult the program director regarding the appropriate size of the budget. Guidance on allowable budget items is provided in the RUI Program Announcement and the Grant Proposal Guide.

Question: Do RUI proposals have to include undergraduate research assistants?

Answer: The inclusion of undergraduate research assistants is usually expected, but is not a requirement. In some disciplines NSF grants do not include funds for any research assistants. The important thing is to justify carefully the project personnel that are proposed.

Question: How is eligibility as a RUI institution/department determined by NSF?

Answer: Institutions self-certify and are responsible for accuracy. A slight change in the formula for determining eligibility was included in the new announcement on the advice of the May, 2000, RUI Workshop, which recommended averaging the number of PhDs over a longer period to "smooth out bumps." The upper limit for eligibility is now an average of 10 PhDs per year over the last 2-5 year period.

Question: How is the RUI activity managed within NSF?

Answer: RUI is fully integrated into the regular disciplinary programs of the Foundation, and RUI proposals are evaluated and funded by NSF programs in the disciplinary areas of the proposed research. RUI proposals are evaluated in competition with all other proposals submitted to the Foundation in the same area of research, using the program's usual merit review procedure and the standard NSF review criteria. However, use of some reviewers from predominantly undergraduate institutions for RUI proposals is expected, and reviewers are sent a "Special Note to Reviewers." As with other kinds of proposals, it is left up to the program officer to seek input from or joint review with other programs where appropriate, or to seek transfer of RUI proposals that are more appropriate to other programs. Overall, appropriate and timely review is the responsibility of the program officer. An NSF-wide coordinating committee will be appointed with the intention that all units in NSF understand the RUI guidelines and program goals.

Question: Given the decentralized nature of NSF and RUI, to whom does one turn if one has general questions about policy concerning RUI and ROA?

Answer: You should begin by posing the question to the program officer in your discipline, who will know whom to ask if he/she does not know the answer, such as a member of the RUI Coordinating Committee or staff of the Division of Grants and Agreements.

Question: Does getting a ROA supplement limit a researcher's eligibility for other supplements to their NSF grant?

Answer: No. Every supplement action stands on its own merit. However, the overall investment a program has made in an investigator may be a practical consideration in the funding of another supplement.

Question: How can I get to be a reviewer of RUI proposals?

Answer: Volunteer by sending your resume to the appropriate NSF research unit/program officer with a letter expressing interest in being a reviewer. However, you should not limit yourself to RUI proposals.