

Center for Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity

Research Apprenticeship Program (CURCA-RAP)

Frequently Asked Questions

What is CURCA-RAP (Research Apprenticeship Program)?

A collaboration between the Center for Undergraduate Research & Creative Activity (CURCA), faculty mentors, and Student Financial Services to provide work-study eligible, early-career students opportunities to gain mentored research or creative project experiences at Westfield State University.

This program allows students to make a meaningful contribution to a research or creative activity project while learning about the process of scholarship in their field of interest. Faculty will gain a full member of their research or creative team at no additional cost to the faculty mentor or their department.

What's the goal of RAP?

The goal of the program is to help facilitate relationships between incoming and current first-generation, low income, economically disadvantaged, commuter, or adult-learners who may otherwise not participate in applied experiences at WSU. Students are eligible for CURCA RAP at any point in their undergraduate or graduate careers, but the program is particularly intended to serve freshman and sophomore students who are just starting out in their fields of interests.

Can RAP be used to support an Honors project?

No, RAP is not associated with the Honors program and is not intended to support an Honors project or to serve as a segue to an Honors project. RAP is intended to provide ALL students, especially first and second year incoming, with the opportunity for faculty-mentored research or creative activity projects.

How does the program work?

Faculty mentors provide project descriptions for student research positions. CURCA will assist as needed and will facilitate posting project descriptions, vetting of students, and payroll associated with work-study.

Who is Eligible for CURCA RAP?

WSU undergraduate and graduate students who are eligible for federal work study are eligible to apply. For more information on work study benefits as well as determining eligibility please visit the Student Financial Services Website at: <https://www.westfield.ma.edu/tuition-financial-aid/federal-work-study> or contact Ms Simone Backstedt (sbackstedt@westfield.ma.edu)

Can participation be remote this semester?

Although in-person projects are recommended, some projects and situations may lend themselves better remotely. Students can participate in in-person or remotely depending on the project needs and the faculty mentor. Ultimately, the faculty mentor will have the final say.

How much are students paid?

Students will be paid MA state minimum wage (currently \$15/hr). The actual number of hours per week that students work will be determined by the student and faculty mentor. Students many NOT work during regularly scheduled class time, even if the class does not meet. Students may not exceed payment of \$2,000/academic year, this generally averages to 5-6 hr/week/semester. Student employees are paid every two weeks and may earn up to the amount of the work study award. **Additional hours beyond the work study award amount will not be paid.**

How do students keep track of their hours?

Students are responsible for logging into and out of Payroll and to complete a shareable spreadsheet with their supervisor. Supervisors are responsible for approving student payroll.

Where does the money come from?

Student funding will be covered through Federal work study. Students are paid minimum wage not to exceed \$2,000/year (or whatever their federal aid contract indicates).

When do students begin working?

Students may begin working as soon as they complete payroll requirements and you have been notified by payroll. No student may work before the hiring process has been completed and notification has been sent to you the supervisor.

When can students work until?

Students may work during the beginning of the semester up to the last day of classes.

What happens if I run out of work study funds for the semester?

Students can no longer continue to get paid after their work study funds are depleted.

What happens if two or more faculty members wish to hire the same student?

Students are hired on a first come/first serve basis. If students get hired for one work study position – they may not get hired for a second one consecutively. Therefore, students should be encouraged to apply only to those positions that they are seriously interested in.

Can a Department or multiple faculty share a student?

Yes, a department may choose to hire a student that is working on a department-based project or a project involving multiple faculty members with a shared project/collaboration.

Are there policies in place if a student employment does not work out?

Yes. Faculty members have a right to terminate a student's employment. Faculty members should make every effort to coach the student and offer them the opportunity to improve before termination of employment. However, some situations may warrant immediate termination. Please reach out to financial aid for guidance and notify financial aid of any situation that arises. Faculty members are responsible for bringing their concerns about job performance to the student's attention. Progressive discipline should be used when applicable, including verbal warnings, written warning, and finally discharge. Written documentation of each disciplinary

action should be maintained. Terminated students may not be replaced during the current academic term.

What is expected of me as a work study student?

You are expected to give regular, punctual, efficient and cooperative performance on any job that you accept. Work study positions are real jobs. Your faculty supervisor is counting on you to be there when you are scheduled. It is unacceptable for you to make a habit of being late or not showing up. Always contact your supervisor if you are unable to work. Consistent lateness or missing work is cause for termination. If you have an unexpected emergency, please make sure to call or inform your faculty/staff supervisor. You should arrange a mutually agreeable work schedule with your supervisor. Arrange a work schedule that does not interfere with your class schedule.

If I am a student who wishes to quit my work study job – can I do so?

You should give a written notification of at least two weeks if planning to resign from your CURCA-RAP position to your faculty supervisor.

Can I see job postings?

Yes. We're working on compiling a faculty/staff-mentored project list that will be announced on our CURCA "student tab" and through Financial Aid office.