

FROM: Randy Stevenson, Director of Graduate Studies, Political Science

TO: Political Science Faculty and Graduate Students

DATE: March 27, 2023

RE: Summer research mentorships

Each student who receives a stipend during the summer will be assigned to a summer research mentor and is expected to spend 80 hours during the summer working as a Research Mentee (RM). Summer RMs must spend this time on one (or a combination) of the following activities:

- A1. Working for their research mentor on faculty research activities.
- A2. Working on co-authored projects with their research mentor.
- A3. Engaging in training activities outside of the department, under the supervision of their research mentor.

Compared to research mentorships during the academic year, summer research mentorships are intended to provide flexibility to students in four ways:

1. Students will be given wide latitude to work with faculty mentors of their choice, provided the faculty members agree to serve in this capacity.
2. Students may seek additional financial support from faculty mentors to which they are assigned.
3. Students may arrange with their research mentor to engage in any or all the activities above while away from Houston.
4. Students may request additional funds from the department to support activities under category A3.

Additional summer financial support from faculty:

Student may ask potential summer faculty mentors for additional financial support during the summer. This financial support can take the form of additional stipend support, support for conference travel, student research funds, support for outside training, or other kinds of support.

This additional support may be conditional on the student engaging in activities (A1-A3) that go beyond the standard 80-hour requirement. However, if additional financial support is conditional on additional activities under category A1 above, these activities may not exceed 80 additional work hours. In addition, any such hours (for activities under A1) must be compensated at a rate of no less than \$25 per hour and no more than \$50.

Availability of additional departmental support for activities under category A3:

Limited funds may be available from the department to support summer research activities under category A3. As part of their summer plans (including designation of their desired research mentor), students may request such funding from the department.

Process:

Each spring semester, the Director of Graduate Studies will send an announcement to faculty and students asking students to (1) reach out to the specific faculty to whom they would like to be assigned as a research mentee and come to mutually agreeable *summer mentorship plan*; (2) communicate this summer mentorship plan in writing to the DGS and the departmental administrator by a specific date.

The summer mentorship plan should explain which of the allowed activities in which the student will engage (A1, A2, A3, or the mix of these activities), any financial support the faculty will provide and any relevant contingencies, any specific requirements about where or when any activities must take place (in the absence of such detail, it is presumed the student is free to engage in the required activities where and when they prefer), and any requests (and justifications) for additional departmental support. The DGS and department administration will subsequently confirm these arrangements with relevant faculty.

Importantly, a *summer mentorship plan* should be submitted even if it does not include additional financial support from faculty members or a request for additional departmental funding (i.e., when a student and faculty member simply prefer for the student to be assigned as mentor and mentee without other arrangements). Students who do not submit a summer mentorship plan by the due date in the announcement will be assigned to research mentors at the discretion of the DGS. Further, students assigned to research mentors in this way may face less flexibility with respect to when and where activities under category A1 may be undertaken.

If a summer mentorship plan includes a request for additional departmental funds, the proposal should include the specific amount requested, an explanation of the activities (in A3) that will be supported, an itemized budget, information about any other funding applications to support the activities, and an explanation for how these activities will further the student's research and training. If these activities (or any other features of the plan) are contingent on departmental funding, the student should provide an alternative plan in case additional funding is not allocated.¹

If a plan includes a request for additional departmental funds, the DGS, in consultation with the graduate committee, will decide how much of the requested amount to allocate. Any decision to allocate additional departmental funds must also be approved by the departmental chair.

With the exception of requests for additional departmental funding, summer mentoring plans agreed to by both students and faculty will be implemented once the DGS affirms that they comply with this policy. However, in the case that the DGS, in consultation with the graduate committee and Chair,

¹ These alternatives may be quite brief. However, in the case that the necessary funding is not allocated, the DGS may ask for additional detail.

believes that a specific proposed summer mentorship plan is not in the best interest of the student or of the faculty as a whole (e.g., assigning too many students to the same faculty member), a plan may be disapproved and students asked to submit an alternative. If an alternative is not provided in a timely manner, the student will be assigned to a research mentor at the discretion of the DGS.

Faculty summer research mentors will provide the usual evaluations of their research mentees at the end of the summer, and these will be included, in the usual way, in the determination of good standing and yearly evaluations.