

SPArCS: Student-led Projects in the Arts, Creative Activity, and Scholarship**Application Period: February 1-March 1 2026, 11:59 pm**

Applications and faculty recommendations must be submitted electronically using the online application system link: nau.edu/sparcs

The Student-led Projects in the Arts, Creative Activity and Scholarship (SPArCS) award program is soliciting applications from full-time NAU undergraduate students for research, scholarly, or creative projects in the arts, humanities, letters, photography, and film. The program encourages undergraduate students in these areas to pursue academic interests outside of their regular coursework by providing funding that will enable them to work on special projects of their own and benefit from hands-on learning opportunities at residencies, workshops, and field sites or in studios, libraries, archives, museums, etc.

Eligibility:

- Enrolled as a full-time student in an undergraduate program for the semesters they are receiving the award. If the student works on their SPArCS project during the summer, enrollment as a full-time student in spring and fall is required; the student does not need to be enrolled in summer courses
- In good academic standing at the time of application and during the period in which the project is funded.

Funding:

Students will be able to request funding for student-led projects in the arts, creative activities, and scholarship. Proposals with one or two applicants can request up to \$5,000 and proposals with three or more applicants can request up to \$7,500. Funding may be used to pay an hourly rate to the student, purchase materials relevant to the project, and cover travel expenses related to the project, including travel to present the outcomes of the work. **Funds not expended during the award period will be forfeited.**

Funds cannot be used to replace existing funding for undergraduates already involved in research, scholarly, and creative activities. This program is not intended to fund students working on faculty projects; it is intended to support student-initiated projects. More than one proposal for the same project will be considered as one application.

Award Period

Awards can be activated as early as June 1, 2026-May 7, 2027. If you will be graduating in December, all funds must be spent by your graduation date. Award notification will be made by **April 6, 2026**.

Submission Process

The student initiates the application process, completes all sections of the application described below, and submits the required documents through the online application system. The faculty mentor and one additional reference must review the application portfolio and complete the recommendation section prior to the deadline.

1. Download the Application Template as a Word document and download the Budget Template as an Excel document.
2. Complete the application as outlined in this document.
3. Upload the completed Application and Excel budget into the online application system.
4. Provide your faculty mentor's name and email address in the system to generate an automatic request for them to fill out a recommendation form. You will need one additional recommendation from a faculty, staff, or field-specific expert who can speak to the relevance and feasibility of your project and the viability of your timeline. It is the student's responsibility to verify that both recommendations are submitted by March 1 at 11:59 pm.
5. Formatting (applies to the entire application):
 - Font: Any standard font (e.g., Times New Roman, Arial, Tahoma, etc.) may be used
 - Type size: 12-point or larger
 - Spacing: Text may be single- or double-spaced; it must also be consistent throughout document
 - Margins: Page margins must be no less than one-half inch on all sides

Complete application must be submitted through the online application system by March 1, 2026, 11:59 pm.

Applications will be assessed on the significance of the proposed work, quality of the proposal, feasibility of the proposed timeline, educational benefit to the student, diversity of disciplines represented in the proposed work, and, where applicable, the inclusion of community engagement.

Academic Integrity

NAU expects every student to firmly adhere to a strong ethical code of academic integrity in all their scholarly pursuits. The primary attributes of academic integrity are honesty, trustworthiness, fairness, and responsibility. As a student, you are expected to submit original work while giving proper credit to other people's ideas or contributions. Acting with academic integrity means completing your assignments independently while truthfully acknowledging all sources of information, or collaboration with others when appropriate. When you submit your work, you are implicitly declaring that the work is your own. Academic misconduct may result in serious disciplinary consequences. All students are encouraged to complete NAU's online academic integrity workshop available in the E-Learning Center and should review the full [Academic Integrity policy](#). Any incidents or submissions that violate academic integrity expectations will be handled in alignment with processes outlined in this policy, with Office of Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity personnel serving in the faculty and chair roles and Provost's Office leaders serving in the associate dean role.

Role of the Faculty Mentor

It is the role of the faculty mentor to help students refine and grow their grant writing skills. Mentors should not write or rewrite any portion of a student's proposal, which may be considered academic misconduct on the part of the student. While a mentor may give an example of how they might correct or improve a sentence, it is important that the student then put their thoughts into their own words. It is also important that the mentor identify any possible academic integrity issues in a student's proposal and help them learn to give credit to the sources they have used.

Generative Artificial Intelligence

Any work submitted by students is expected to be entirely generated by the student(s) themselves, working individually or in a group. Do not submit content generated using AI tools like ChatGPT or CodePilot for your application. Violations of this policy will be considered academic misconduct.

The Application Components (must be submitted in the order listed below):

The proposal should provide a clear and concise description of the proposed project and **must include the following section headings in the order shown below**. If a given section does not apply to a proposed project, the section heading should still be included, followed by the text "Not Applicable."

1. Project Summary

Describe the project's intention, what you hope to accomplish, and how it will benefit your creative practice and/or scholarly goals, that includes an overall statement on the background of the project, potential importance, general overview of the methods, and expected outcomes. The project summary is limited to 100 words.

2. Project Narrative (a through c may not exceed 500 words)

Write a narrative that will help reviewers understand your proposed artistic or scholarly project. It's important to give readers a clear and concise description of the proposed project, not only about what you would like to accomplish but also its potential impact for you (i.e., your self-development), your discipline, and, if applicable, the university and the community.

- a. **Introduction.** Describe the purpose and relevance of the project (i.e., the how, what, and why of the project, which can include but is not limited to aesthetic enjoyment, social justice, community building, therapy, political/civic impact, etc.). Consider the following questions, though not all may be applicable:
 - What are your key ideas and goals within your work or creative practice?
 - What is the thematic focus of your work (goal, purpose, intention, exploration)?
 - What is the content of your work and what are your main influences (cultural, historical, theoretical, art historical, personal, biographical/lived experiences)?
 - What form, style, genre tradition, materials, medium, and/or techniques will the proposed work engage with?
- b. **Impact.** Describe the benefit of the proposed work to your development as a fine/performing/creative/literary artist and/or humanistic scholar, and what kind of impact – artistic, intellectual, communal, civic, social, political, etc. – you hope your project will have. Consider the following questions, though not all may be applicable:
 - In what way does your proposed project augment the coursework you are completing for your degree?
 - How does your past work inform your proposed project?
 - How does your project take an imaginative approach to form and/or content?

- What strategies will you employ to achieve the desired impact?
- What new connections will you seek to provide expertise and critical feedback on the project?
- How does your proposed project relate to something happening in the larger world?

c. **Expected Outcomes.** Describe what you expect to find, learn, and disseminate as a result of conducting this project. Consider the following:

- What will you learn/accomplish that you couldn't have without funding support?
- How will this project contribute to your future plans as a visual artist, writer, musician, composer, actor, designer, filmmaker, etc.?

3. Process

Describe the process in detail that will be used and what the final work will look and/or sound like.

4. References List (if applicable).

5. Roles of the Participants

Describe the expectations and responsibilities of the student and those of the faculty mentor. All applicants will need a faculty mentor who agrees to provide mentorship to the student for the duration of the project.

6. Dissemination Plan

All work will be presented at the OURCA Reception and at the Undergraduate Symposium in April.

***Optional:** Students are encouraged to present their project to additional audiences through an exhibition, public reading, presentation, public performance, screening, workshop, publication, or other type of event. If you choose to pursue this option, discuss the venue, the specific audiences/communities you hope to engage with, and when the event will take place. If you plan to publish your work, what venue will be targeted? Should financial support be needed, those funds can be also requested in the budget. What will you need for successful execution of the event?*

7. FOR PROJECTS WITH A COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT COMPONENT ONLY. NAU is committed to engaging the local and regional community in a mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources to enrich scholarship, research, and creative activity. If your proposed project engages the local or regional community, then your project will be considered for an additional \$500. Examples of eligible community engagement include but are not limited to: working with a local business or government entity to address one of their specific needs; disseminating the outcomes of your project in a local or regional setting beyond that of a traditional conference; or incorporating a service or knowledge exchange with a local or regional partner (e.g., hosting a workshop/event at a local school).

Please answer these questions (max 300 words):

- With which community do you plan to work?
- What are the steps you plan to take to engage this community?
- How do you plan to measure success for both your project and the community?

8. Timeline

Describe when the various phases of the project will be conducted. Sufficient time should be allocated for writing up the final report upon completion of the project. The timeline template is included in the application form on the SPArCS website.

9. Preparation (250 words max)

Describe how your past activities, achievements, and experiences make you qualified to see your proposed project through to completion. In what way will it contribute to your artistic and professional growth and future plans? If other students will be involved, include their respective qualifications as well. **Do NOT include any student names in this section.**

10. Portfolio (uploaded as a separate document).

- Visual/Creative Media Artists:
 - Up to 5 images representing your best work
 - Up to 15 minutes of video or a web link, e.g., YouTube, Vimeo, etc.
- Performing Artists:
 - Up to 15 minutes of a performance/production/composition of original work
- Literary Artists:
 - Up to 5 pages (single or double-spaced) of samples/excerpts of original work (prose/poetry/script, etc.)
- Humanities students:
 - Up to 5 pages (single or double-spaced) of samples from class projects or papers pertinent to the topic of the proposed project

- e. Index numbered to correspond with images, video, link (title, medium, dimensions, date) or text, each of which is accompanied by a single sentence describing how the samples provided have prepared you for your project

11. Budget (uploaded as a separate document)

There is no "typical" amount of funding per project as each will have different funding needs. Budgets should be developed according to the needs of the project. Project budgets may not exceed \$5,000 for one or two students or \$7,500 for three or more students for an academic year project. **Budgets must be submitted using the budget form provided on the SPArCS website and all expenses must be justified.**

- a. **Personnel:** Funding may be requested for up to 15 hours/week for a maximum of 15 weeks during the fall and/or spring semesters, depending on the needs of the project. Teams of three or more are eligible for additional funds to ensure all grant members receive fair and equitable pay for the time required for the project. Therefore, if personnel requests vary among team members, the team must explain the reason for the variation in the budget justification. During the summer (June 1-August 25), funding may be requested for up to 40 hours/week for up to eight weeks. Students will not be required to register for summer classes. The hourly wage is \$16.50 per hour. All personnel costs must be justified in terms of the number of hours each specific project task and activity will take to complete. (See examples provided on the budget template spreadsheet.)
- b. **Operations/Equipment:** All purchases will need to receive prior approval by OURCA staff. Funding may be requested for necessary **expendable** project supplies and contractual (e.g., service-based) expenses. Operations expenses must be itemized and clearly justified. Non-expendable equipment purchases will remain the property of OURCA after the project has concluded. If you plan to reimburse research participants, you can use gift cards but not cash.
- c. **Travel: Up to \$1,500** of funding may be requested for travel expenses associated with site-based work (i.e., attending a summer residency/workshop, visiting an archive, library, national park/monument, gallery, museum, etc.) and to present the results of the project at a conference, professional meeting, or training. All travel expenses should be justified by category of expense (e.g., transportation, lodging, registration fees).

NOTE: To receive travel reimbursement for the use of a personal vehicle, or to use an NAU vehicle, you must become an NAU authorized driver and pass an online defensive driving course; information is located on the [NAU Facility Services Safety & Training](#) website.

The SPArCS program does not require or encourage cost-sharing, matching, or in-kind contributions. Projects that include outside support will not be given a more favorable review than projects relying solely on SPArCS program support. However, if a project relies heavily on outside support, applicants must describe these outside contributions in the green columns of the budget form and in the budget justification so that the reviewers are clear that the applicant has the necessary resources to carry out the work.

12. Faculty Mentor/Department Recommendations

Two recommendations are required for each application:

- a. one by the faculty mentor
- b. one by a faculty member, an administrator/staff person in your department/school, or a field-specific expert who can speak to the relevance and feasibility of your project. This recommendation should not focus on the qualifications of the student. Rather, it should address the project's potential impact as an expression of learning and development within the discipline, the viability of the expected outcomes, the efficacy of the timeline, and whether the budget is sufficient to support the completion of the project.

Students will submit email addresses for both recommenders in the online application system. Once the emails have been submitted, the recommenders will receive an online request for the recommendation. Students should provide sufficient notice to the recommenders. The recommendations **must be completed after** reviewing the final version of the application materials.

The Application Process: Who does what?

Activity/ Responsibility	Student	Faculty Mentor
Develop the idea for research, scholarly, or creative project	Students can find ideas for projects from a variety of sources such as courses they have taken, scholarly interests of a faculty member, or ideas of their own that they would like to explore further. Students may work within or outside of their major field of study.	A faculty mentor with a general area of interest may encourage a student to pursue a project in that area, but the formulation of the project itself should be primarily the student's responsibility . The faculty member may provide feedback and constructive criticism during the formulation of the project and proposal.
Review program guidelines and download application forms	The student should carefully read the Request for Proposals (RFP) guidelines and download the application forms from the SPArCS website. The student should forward a copy of the program guidelines to the faculty mentor.	Faculty mentors should identify and encourage outstanding students to apply. The faculty mentor should review program RFP guidelines to understand the role of the faculty mentor in advising the student throughout all phases of the application process.
Collaboration	The discussion between student and faculty mentor should lead to an agreement on the nature and scope of the project, the method of inquiry or creative activity, and expected outcomes. Discussions should also include a proposed budget and timeline for completing the project. Students and their faculty mentors should expect to meet multiple times during the application process.	
Complete the application	The student prepares all elements of the application described above.	The faculty mentor reviews the project description, timeline, and budget in the document to ensure that the proposed work can be performed and supervised within the space, time frame, or level of support indicated.
Submit the application	The student sends a request to faculty for recommendation through the application system and uploads the required documents no later than 11:59 PM on March 1. Late or incomplete proposals will not be accepted.	The faculty mentor reviews the final version of the application. The mentor then completes the mentor recommendation no later than 11:59 PM on March 1. Late or incomplete proposals will not be accepted.

Role of the Faculty Mentor

1. Provide guidance to the student in all aspects of project management.
2. Mentor the student throughout the project period and meet with the student a minimum of every two weeks.
3. Oversee the implementation of the project as described in the original grant application and any approved subsequent amendments or modifications.
4. Oversee this project for its entirety.
5. Actively mentor the student during the summer, if applicable.
6. Monitor the student's budget. Our department will not approve any expenses in excess to the awarded grant funding. Any overage may be the responsibility of the student or the mentor's department.
7. Understand that this award has been granted to the student(s) on the initial proposal and cannot be transferred to another student should the grantees no longer be able to carry out the project.
8. Understand that the student is required to present at the Undergraduate Symposium in April.
9. Agree to assist the student with IRB, IUCAC, or Field Safety Checklist, if applicable.
10. Agree to attend the Faculty Mentor orientation meeting or watch an online video of the meeting.

Proposal Review

The review committee is made up of faculty from NAU departments/schools in the arts, humanities, and creative media/film. Because review committee members vary in their areas of expertise, applicants must use clear non-technical language and refrain from including unexplained jargon specific to their field of study in their project descriptions; your proposal will be reviewed by at least one faculty member *not* from your department/school.

The review committee scores each proposal, paying close attention to the project's concept, faculty and student roles, impact, and dissemination, along with the feasibility of the budget and timeline. Applicants may request copies of their reviews after decisions have been made.

Terms and Conditions of Award

Students may not receive more than 2 SPArCS awards per undergraduate academic career.

1. **Mandatory Awardee Meeting:** Recipients are **required** to attend an information meeting following the announcement of award recipients in April and May 2026. Faculty mentors have their own awardee meeting.
2. **Award Activation Documents:** All documents requested in the award letter (e.g., signed award acceptance and faculty acknowledgment forms, proof of academic standing and full-time status) must be on file with the Undergraduate Research Coordinator **prior to beginning the project** to activate the award. Institutional Review Board or Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee approval, a field research safety, or any other project-specific conditions plan must be completed before the student can start that portion of their research.
3. **Full-time Student in Good Standing:** Recipients must be full-time students in good academic standing with NAU during each semester of financial support. It is the student's responsibility to provide documentation of this requirement for the award to be activated and continued during the year.
4. **Academic Credit:** Recipients can enroll for up to three credit hours per semester of undergraduate research, independent study, internship, fieldwork, or another appropriate course for academic credit for every semester that they receive funding. Exception: if the project starts in the summer, students are not required to be enrolled in a course.
5. **Dissemination of Results:** SPArCS recipients are **required** to present at the NAU Undergraduate Symposium and at the OURCA Reception. Additionally, awardees are encouraged to make presentations at other public venues or professional meetings and should mention all such presentations in the interim progress and final reports described below. Any posters, publications, or presentations should credit or acknowledge the funding for the project to the SPArCS Award.
6. **Project Reporting:** Two one-on-one meetings and two reports are required from recipients:
 - a. **One-on-one meetings** with the SPArCS Coordinator each semester: October and February
 - b. **Interim progress report** (due December 11, 2026)
 - Use the template provided on the SPArCS website.
 - o Describe and assess progress toward outcomes compared to the timeline included in the application
 - o Review (and revise) the project timeline and/or the budget, if warranted
 - Include photos of you working on your project, if available.
 - c. **Final report** (due May 7, 2027)
 - In an online survey
 - o Explain the extent to which the goals and objectives of the project were achieved
 - o Describe the outcomes/results of the project and how they were disseminated
 - o State how the project benefited you and your growth as an arts or humanities student
 - o State how the project benefited your department/school, the community, or other stakeholders, if applicable
 - o Summarize how the award funds were used (e.g., proposed budget vs. actual expenditures)
 - Include, if available, photos of you working on your project, or presenting your results
 - Complete the online questionnaire about your experience

These last two steps may or may not apply to your project.

7. Institutional Review Board: Applicants proposing projects that involve human subjects **must contact** the Institutional Review Board (IRB)

- a. **Read the materials on the IRB web pages before you complete your IRB application:** [Institutional Review Board](#) and follow links to additional pages.
- b. Build sufficient time for IRB approval into your plan.

- c. Obtain Letters of Authorization to conduct research at off-campus locations in advance.
- d. Work closely with your faculty mentor.
- e. For additional questions, contact the IRB office at 928-523-4340, irb@nau.edu.

8. NAU Field Safety Checklist: Recipients whose projects involve field work off campus must complete the [NAU Field Research Safety Checklist](#) to activate their funding. This document includes details regarding dates of travel, location, and description of activities, emergency procedures, physical demands of the work, assessment of risks associated with the activity or physical environment, and methods for mitigating those risks. The form should be completed in collaboration with **the faculty mentor, who then signs it as the “University Contact.”**

Questions? Contact the Office of Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity at ug-research@nau.edu (with “SPArCS Question” in the subject line), 928 523-5569, or by appointment.