

URI MARC U*STAR PROGRAM HANDBOOK

MAXIMIZING ACCESS TO RESEARCH CAREERS UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT TRAINING IN ACADEMIC RESEARCH



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URI MARC U*STAR The Maximizing Access to Research Careers (MARC) Undergraduate Student Training in Academic Research (U*STAR) program is a research and professional development program supported by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) / National Institute of General Biomedical Sciences (NIGMS) for [undergraduate students from underrepresented backgrounds](#). The main goal of the program is to enhance the pool of underrepresented students earning baccalaureate and Ph.D. or M.D./Ph.D. degrees in biomedical research fields and ultimately to contribute to the diversification of the nation's scientific workforce.

Please note: this handbook is updated periodically. Changes in policies or rules that affect this handbook's provisions will be made available to URI MARC U*STAR trainees through email.

Last update: August 2021

MARC PROGRAM TEAM

Welcome Message

*Congratulations on your acceptance to the University of Rhode Island MARC U*STAR program! This handbook serves as a starting point for trainee responsibilities as well as frequently asked questions. Not all information will be found in the handbook. Please reach out to the Principal Investigator (PI) or Program Coordinator (PC) if you have additional questions or concerns not addressed here.*

Contact Information



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ABOUT URI'S MARC U*STAR PROGRAM

Eligibility

MARC trainees must satisfy the following criteria:

- Possess a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or greater
- Be enrolled in a STEM or related B.S. program at URI
- Maintain full-time student status (a minimum of 12 credit hours/semester)
- Intend to pursue a graduate degree in the biomedical research field

Note: this program is not intended for students interested in pursuing M.D.

- Qualify as an underrepresented student in the biomedical sciences, per NIH guidelines ['Populations Underrepresented in the Extramural Scientific Workforce'](#)
- Commit to program full-time for two years (24 months), with official NIH appointment beginning between June 1-September 1 of year one
- Be a citizen or permanent resident of the United States (read more [here](#))

Benefits

During the two-year program, MARC trainees will receive:

- Competitive monthly stipend, up to 24 months appointment (\$1,137)
- Academic year tuition support (\$9,600)
- Funding for a 10-week summer research experience at an external research-intensive institution (up to \$3,500 per trainee)
- Funding for scientific conference attendance, such as the Annual Biomedical Research Conference for Minority Students (up to \$1,000 per trainee)
- Personal, professional and career development through scheduled meetings, workshops, dedicated faculty mentor guidance, and peer support

Requirements

MARC trainees are considered full-time undergraduate researchers and must:

- Perform approximately 12-15 hours of research per week in their faculty mentor's laboratory during the academic year
- Perform full-time research for 10 weeks as part of the summer research experience (SRE) at a research-intensive institution *other than the University of Rhode Island*, during the summer between junior and senior year
Note: trainees cannot participate in any other training program during the summer months/SRE
- Submit monthly lab logs to the MARC Program Coordinator in order to receive stipend for the following month
- Schedule and attend one-on-one monthly meetings with Program Coordinator
- Attend all MARC trainee meetings (scheduled weekly or biweekly, year round)

- Attend all MARC-related events that do not conflict with classes
- Maintain cumulative GPA of 3.0 or greater and submit final grades to Program Coordinator (PC) at the end of each semester
- Maintain full-time student status (a minimum of 12 credit hours/semester)
- Complete at least 8 contact hours of Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) training during the first year of the program, in consultation with the faculty research mentor and the MARC Principal Investigator (PI) and PC
- Carry oneself with appropriate and respectful demeanor toward fellow MARC trainees, PI, and staff, and all university faculty, staff, vendors, and guests
- Respond in an appropriate time frame to all MARC-related emails or requests (within 48 hours) from the PI, PC, faculty mentors, or program staff

Note: MARC trainees are not allowed to participate in other NIH funded programs, full- or part-time, while appointed during the two-year program. See URI MARC U*STAR TRAINEE INFORMATION for more details.

URI MARC U*STAR TRAINEE INFORMATION

Contract of Commitment

All new and returning MARC trainees must read and sign the Contract of Commitment, which outlines program requirements and expectations during the two-year training period (see Appendix A). A copy of the Contract can be obtained from the Program Coordinator (PC).

New Trainee Paperwork

After acceptance in the program, new trainees should make arrangements to meet with the PC to complete the New Trainee Checklist (see Appendix B), including providing their URI email address,

NIH eRA Commons

The official appointment as a MARC trainee is completed through the NIH eRA Commons Portal, between June 1 - September 1. The PI or PC will invite new trainees to [register on xTrain and create an eRA Commons Login](#). New appointments will be reviewed by the PI before being submitted to NIH for agency approval. MARC trainees appointed after 2020 will have to register for an ORCID ID and link it to their x-Train.

Trainees are required to share their eRA Commons Username with the PI or PC and must be reappointed for year two. We recommend you save your password in a secure location for future reference. Note: Trainees cannot receive their monthly stipend or tuition support until their NIH appointment has been submitted and approved via xTrain.

MARC Website

All new trainees must write and submit a short biography (100-200 words) and professional headshot to the PC two weeks prior to their official appointment. The biography and photo will be added on the [MARC website](#). You can arrange to have a professional headshot taken by contacting the PC.

RCR Training

All MARC trainees must complete Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) training within their first year. Training can be completed by attending University-hosted RCR workshops, as part of specific courses, e.g. CMB240, as well as online through CITI training. All certificates should be emailed to the PC. MARC trainees are required to complete eight (8) in-person training hours in year one, and an additional three to five hours of in-person training hours in year two. Visit about.citiprogram.org for details.

Trainee Behavior and Conduct

MARC trainees are expected to conduct themselves appropriately and respectfully while appointed in the program; maintain full-time student status; maintain cumulative GPA of 3.0 or greater; treat their fellow trainees, faculty mentors, URI faculty, staff, students, and guests with respect; attend all MARC related meetings, events, and activities; submit monthly lab logs and SRE/graduate school related materials in a timely manner; and respond to all MARC-related communication within 1-2 business days.

Per NIH policy, URI MARC U*STAR trainees are not allowed to participate in other NIH funded programs, full- or part-time, while appointed during the two-year program. Additionally, trainees are restricted to university policies regarding student employment: web.uri.edu/enrollment/student-employment-policy/

*Failure to comply with URI MARC U*STAR program requirements will result in formal warnings and potential dismissal from the program.* The following outlines the process:

1. A first warning will be communicated by the MARC PC and PI via email to the trainee and their faculty research mentor.
2. The trainee is required to respond within 24-48 hours to set up a meeting with the MARC PC, PI, and their faculty research mentor.
3. Within one week following this meeting, the trainee will email the MARC PC, PI, and their faculty research mentor with a plan to address the concerns
4. Should the trainee continue to not meet program requirements, a second and final warning will be communicated by the MARC PC and PI via email to the trainee and their faculty research mentor, and steps 2 and 3 above repeated.
5. After two attempts to meet and resolve the issue(s), failure to comply with URI's MARC U*STAR program requirements will result in dismissal from the program.

Requesting Personal Time Off

Trainees should formally submit requests for personal time off (i.e. for vacations) in writing to their faculty mentor and the PC a minimum of two (2) weeks in advance of the anticipated time off. If trainees must take sick/personal time off, first communicate directly with your faculty mentor. Please also schedule a meeting with a member of the MARC team to connect about your needs and campus/community resources, should you need to take extended time off from research and/or MARC responsibilities. Include personal/sick/planned time off in your monthly lab logs and submit to the PC.

Campus Resources and Support

Trainees are encouraged to work with their faculty mentor, PI, and/or PC when facing academic, research, personal and/or professional challenges to receive support. Visit the [URI Gateway](#) and below for examples:

Academic Advising

Advising by Major, Curriculum Sheets, Transfer Credit Forms, and More

Offices located in Roosevelt Hall

Phone: 401.874.2993

Website: web.uri.edu/advising/

Academic Enhancement Center (AEC)

STEM Tutoring, Writing Support, and Skill Development (Studying, Organization, Test-taking Skills, etc.)

Located at Roosevelt Hall, 4th Floor
(Writing Center in Room 009)

Phone: 401.874.2367

Website: web.uri.edu/aec/

Counseling Center

Short-term One-on-one Counseling, Group Counseling, Off-campus Referrals

Note: URI's Counseling Services are free

Located at Roosevelt Hall, Room 217

Phone: 401.874.2288

Website: web.uri.edu/counseling/

Disability, Access, and Inclusion

Accommodations, Education and Support Programs, Documentation Guidelines

Located in the Memorial Union, Room 302

Phone: 401.874.2098

Website: web.uri.edu/disability/

Enrollment Services

Financial Aid, Billing, Tuition Questions

Located in Green Hall

Phone: 401.874.9500

Website: web.uri.edu/enrollment

Gender and Sexuality Center

Education, Engagement, and Support

Located at 19 Upper College Rd

Phone: 401.874.2894

Website: web.uri.edu/gender-sexuality/

Health Services

Medical Care, Insurance, Mental Health & Wellness, and Health Education

Located in the Potter Building, 6
Butterfield Road

Phone: 401.874.2246

Website: web.uri.edu/healthservices/

Multicultural Student Services

Promotes Social Justice, Learning, and Personal and Cultural Development

Located at 74 Lower College Road

Phone: 401.874.5829

Website: web.uri.edu/mcc/

Psychological Consultation Center

Individual Assessment, Therapy

Note: The PCC offers services to URI students for a small fee

Located in the Chafee Building, Suite 100, 142 Flagg Road

Phone: 401.874.4263

Website: web.uri.edu/pcc/

Rhody Outpost

Food Pantry (Toiletries, Household & Cleaning Supplies), Meal Sharing Program, Students First Fund

Located at St. Augustine's Episcopal Church, 15 Lower College Road
Phone: 401.874.5633 (for the main Dean of Students Office)

Website: web.uri.edu/rhody-outpost/

Women's Center

Violence Prevention and Advocacy Services, Resources for Pregnant & Parenting Students, Work Life Balance

Located in the Gender & Sexuality Center, 19 Upper College Rd
Phone: 401-874-4397

Website: web.uri.edu/womenscenter

Additional campus resources can be found on the URI website at <https://web.uri.edu/>:

- Center for Career and Experiential Education (CCEE)
 - Information Technology Support (ITS)
 - Library/Reference & Research Help
 - Student Complaint Procedures
 - Veterans and Military Affiliated Students
- and more!*

UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH

Finding a Research Faculty Mentor

*URI MARC U*STAR Suggested Guidelines for Finding a Research Laboratory*

For MARC trainees who do not have a home laboratory prior to starting the program, the following advice will assist in your search:

- The following is a list of official MARC faculty research mentors: web.uri.edu/marc/people/. Review the list of faculty, read about their research programs, and read/browse a paper from their lab. Identify three to five faculty with research programs of interest to you.
- If you know of a faculty research mentor whose name is not on this list, that is okay. Reach out to PI Howlett or the Program Coordinator to discuss.
- The MARC program is an experiential research program. The research that you perform during your time in the MARC program is unlikely to be the research you will be doing in 3 years. That is okay. **Be flexible around your research interests.** The research area is less important than technical and professional skill development. Some advice about lab selection:
 - ✓ Find a lab that is active, hard-working, social and fun
 - ✓ Find a mentor who is approachable and responsive and who is likely to fully support your career development, which will include writing letters of recommendation for graduate school
- Draft an email to each of the 3-5 faculty research mentors you identified. **The MARC team can help you, if needed.** The following are items to consider:
 - ✓ Your email should be polite/professional, e.g. Dear Dr. or Professor
 - ✓ Briefly describe who you are, e.g. “I am a rising junior, majoring in Cell and Molecular Biology... I am a NIH-funded MARC trainee looking to perform research during my junior and senior years...”
 - ✓ It should be personalized, e.g. “I see that you are performing research on neurodegenerative disease. I have always been fascinated by neurodegenerative disease...”
 - ✓ Keep your email concise, somewhere between 100-200 words
 - ✓ End the email by requesting a meeting to discuss the mentor’s research and the possibility of you joining their lab
- During your meeting, ask about specific projects and discuss expectations for undergraduate research

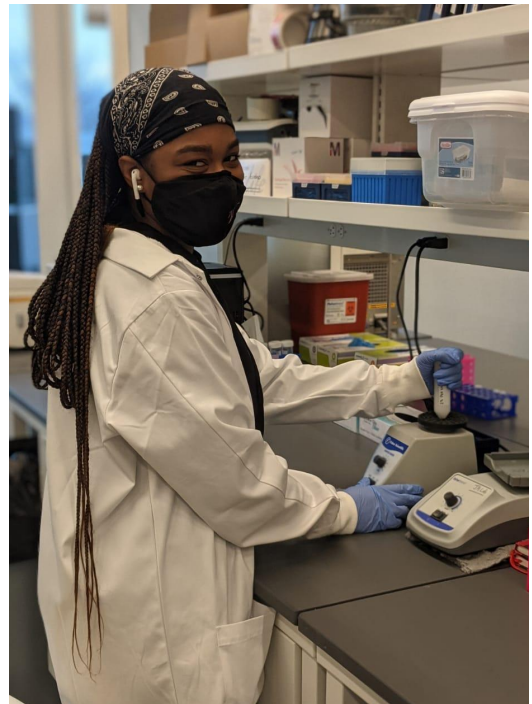
- Ideally, if you start the MARC program during the summer prior to starting your junior year, you should have identified a home laboratory by the beginning of the fall semester

Best Practices for Working in a Lab

Gaining hands-on, biomedical research experience as an undergraduate student is a wonderful and unique opportunity. We strongly encourage you to make the most of it.

The following are general guidelines for approaching experiential learning in a research lab:

- **Be curious. Ask questions.** You will have a lot to learn and asking questions is an essential part of the learning process.
- **Be professional and dependable.** Approach research similar to how you would approach a job. Show up on time and work hard.
- **Read the literature.** Ask your faculty mentor for essential lab reading. Learn how to use PubMed and how to search for literature relevant to your project.
- **Prioritize your research.** It's highly likely that you will have several commitments during the two-year program. Your research project should be one of your top priorities.
- **Don't be bored.** Make the most of your time in the lab. Stay active and busy. Ask your colleagues how you can help.
- **Proactively learn new methods.** Laboratory skills are transferable and building a portfolio of research skills is a key part of your professional development. The more research methods you become proficient at as an undergraduate, the stronger a candidate for graduate school you will become.
- **Schedule regular meetings with your faculty research mentor.** Prepare for these meetings (weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly) with organized data/results from your experiments and a list of questions.
- **Talk to your colleagues - graduate students or postdoctoral research fellows - about their career paths.** Your personal and professional development is an integral part of the MARC U*STAR program. Network early and often.



In addition to the guidelines above, all trainees and their mentors will complete the “URI MARC U*STAR Mentor-Mentee Compact” which outlines expectations, major goals, scheduling, and more (see Appendix C).

Monthly Lab Logs

All MARC trainees are required to submit monthly lab logs, due the 15th day of the following month, i.e. September lab logs are due October 15th. Lab logs should be completed in full and signed (electronically or hard copy) by the designated faculty mentor. Lab logs can be submitted electronically to the Program Coordinator via email. A copy of the current Lab Log can be obtained from the Program Coordinator (see Appendix D).

Note: Submitting your monthly lab log late may result in next month’s stipend being processed late.

Required Summer Research Experience (SRE)

See [EXTRAMURAL SUMMER RESEARCH EXPERIENCE](#) for instructions on finding a T34 funded institution/placement, expectations and requirements.

Presentations and Conferences

MARC U*STAR trainees are required to attend and present their research at national and regional scientific conferences as part of their professional development.

Examples of conferences include:

- The Annual Biomedical Research Conference for Minority Students (ABRCMS), www.abrcms.org/
- The Society for Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics and Native Americans in Science (SACNAS), www.sacnas.org/
- Rhode Island IDeA Network of Biomedical Research Excellence (RI-INBRE) Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship (SURF) Conference, web.uri.edu/riinbre/training/



Note: additional funding for scientific conference attendance may be available through your mentor's lab and/or college. Contact your mentor and PC to determine the appropriate staff within your PI's college (Engineering, Pharmacy, or Environment and Life Sciences).

NIH/MARC U*STAR Grant Acknowledgment

All MARC U*STAR trainee materials, scientific manuscripts and poster presentations, including print and electronic, are required to include the following NIH MARC U*STAR acknowledgement. Trainees should contact the Principal Investigator or Program Coordinator with questions.

*The research reported in this [abstract / poster / presentation] was supported by the URI MARC U*STAR grant from the National Institute of General Medical Sciences of the National Institutes of Health under grant number T34GM131948.*

MARC TRAINEE FUNDING

Stipends

Upon receiving a MARC trainee's lab log on the 15th of the month, the PC will sign and submit the trainee's Invoice Voucher (IV) for the following month's stipend. Stipends are processed by the University's Payroll and will either be mailed by check to the trainee's permanent residence or received through direct deposit. To set up direct deposit, contact the PC.

Tuition/Fees

During the fall and spring semesters, trainees will receive \$4,800 in tuition support, an academic year total of \$9,600, which will be administered and applied to the trainee's account directly through Enrollment Services.

Conferences & Travel

MARC trainees will receive up to \$1,000 annually to help defray the costs of conference registration, travel, and/or lodging. The College of the Environment and Life Sciences, College of Pharmacy, and College of Engineering may have additional travel funds/scholarships available for trainees. Trainees should communicate with their faculty mentor, the Principal Investigator, and Program Coordinator as early as possible should you wish to attend/present at multiple conferences in one year.

Summer Research Experience (SRE)

All trainees must complete their 10-week SRE at an external research-intensive institution other than the University of Rhode Island. SRE sites must be reviewed and approved by the Principal Investigator and Program Coordinator. URI MARC will allocate up to \$500 for travel funds per trainee (\$700 for trainees traveling to Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Guam, or other US territory) as well as up to \$3,000 per trainee to help defray the cost of the 10-week SRE.

See EXTRAMURAL SUMMER RESEARCH EXPERIENCE for instructions on finding a T34 funded institution/placement, expectations and requirements.

Stipends/Tuition Taxability

The University of Rhode Island will not deduct funds from the stipend or pay any additional amounts, such as social security taxes. The stipend may be considered taxable income and you may find it helpful to consult the US Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Tax Topic 421: Scholarship and Fellowship Grants, available at www.irs.gov.

Specific questions regarding the taxation of this stipend and personal tax liability should be referred to the IRS and/or your personal tax advisor. The University will not respond to questions regarding your personal tax issues.

NIH Stipend Policy ([11.2.10.6 Taxability of Stipends](#)):

Section 117 of the Internal Revenue Code (26 U.S.C. 117) applies to the tax treatment of scholarships and fellowships. In general, degree candidates may exclude from gross income (for tax purposes) any amount used for qualified tuition and related expenses such as fees, books, supplies, and equipment required for courses of instruction at a qualified educational organization. Non-degree candidates are required to report as gross income any monies paid on their behalf for stipends or any course tuition and fees required for attendance.

The IRS and Treasury Department released regulations in January 2005 (Revenue Procedures 2005-11) clarifying the student exception to the FICA (Social Security and Medicare) taxes for students employed by a school, college, or university where the student is pursuing a course of study. NIH's understanding is that these final regulations do not apply to or impact Kirschstein-NRSA programs or awards.

The taxability of stipends in no way alters the relationship between Kirschstein-NRSA fellows and sponsoring institutions. Kirschstein-NRSA stipends are not considered salaries. In addition, recipients of Kirschstein-NRSA individual fellowships are not considered to be in an employee-employer relationship with NIH or the sponsoring institution solely as a result of the Kirschstein-NRSA award. The interpretation and implementation of the tax laws are the domain of the IRS and the courts. NIH takes no position on what the status may be for a particular taxpayer, and it does not have the authority to dispense tax advice. Individuals should consult their local IRS office about the applicability of the law to their situation and for information on their tax obligations.

[11.2.10.7 Form 1099](#)

Although stipends are not considered salaries, these funds are subject to Federal and, sometimes, State income tax. Such income may be reported by the sponsoring institution on IRS Form 1099, Statement of Miscellaneous Income. Normally, the business office of the sponsoring institution will be responsible for annually preparing and issuing IRS Form 1099 for fellows paid through the institution (fellows at domestic non-Federal institutions). Sponsoring institutions are not required to issue a Form 1099, but it is a useful form of documentation of funds received and it serves as a reminder to the fellow that some tax liability may exist. Fellows are reminded that, even if the sponsoring institution does not issue a Form 1099, they still are required to report

Kirschstein-NRSA stipends. For fellows training at a Federal or foreign laboratory and receiving a stipend from the NIH, PMS will issue a Form 1099.

For individual guidance on taxability of stipends, we recommend the following Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Sites* in Washington County, Rhode Island:

- Tri-County Community Action South
Address: 1935 Kingstown Road, Wakefield, 02879
Phone: 401-519-1915
- JonnyCake Center of Peace Dale
Address: 1231 Kingstown Road, Peace Dale, RI 02879
Phone: 401-789-1559
- Westerly Area Rest and Meals, Inc
Address: 56 Spruce Street, Westerly, RI 02891
Phone: 401-596-9276
- Westerly Education Center
Address: 23 Friendship Street #1528, Westerly, RI 02891
Phone: 401-639-1969

For a list of state-wide VITA program, visit www.unitedwayri.org/get-help/tax-prep/
For out-of-state VITA programs, contact your local United Way

Note: Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, some Rhode Island VITA sites may be operating virtually, (i.e. drop-off documents for tax preparation, e-signatures for returns and filing, etc.). Please contact the site to learn how they are handling services and returns this year.

MARC CALENDAR OF EVENTS

All URI MARC events will be communicated via email and sent to trainee's URI email accounts. Trainees will be sent calendar invitations to MARC events regularly and are expected to RSVP within 24 hours.

Fall 2021

- Weekly MARC Trainee Meetings: Tuesdays 10:00-11:00am, Avedisian Hall, 205
- URI MARC U*STAR Information Sessions (2), TBD
- ABRCMS Abstract Submissions Due September 10, 2021
- August Lab Logs Due September 15, 2021
- September Lab Logs Due October 15, 2021
- ABRCMS Poster Submissions Due October 22, 2021
- [SACNAS: The 2021 National Diversity in STEM \(NDiSTEM\) Digital Conference](#) (October 25-29, 2021)
- [ABRCMS: The Virtual Experience](#) (November 10-13, 2021)
- October Lab Logs Due November 15, 2021
- November Lab Logs Due December 15, 2021
- December Lab Logs Due January 15, 2022

Spring 2022

- Biweekly MARC Trainee Meetings, TBD
- January Lab Logs Due February 15, 2022
- February Lab Logs Due March 15, 2022
- March Lab Logs Due April 15, 2022
- MARC Symposium, Date TBD - April 2022
- April Lab Logs Due May 15, 2022

MARC Sponsored Events

- 2022-2024 MARC Trainee Recruitment: all current trainees are required to participate in a minimum of one recruitment activity, such as an information session during the fall 2021 semester

CONFERENCES AND TRAVEL

URI and NIH Policies

The URI MARC U*STAR program allocates up to \$1,000.00 per trainee per year in funding for registration and travel to attend scientific meetings and/or conferences. In most cases, this amount will not be sufficient to cover the full costs of meeting travel, housing, and registration. Trainees are strongly encouraged to explore additional mechanisms to support these costs. For example, the College of the Environment and Life Sciences regularly announces the availability of funds to support registration and travel to attend scientific meetings. Other colleges may also support undergraduate participation in scientific meetings. In addition, most scientific societies (who typically organize these scientific meetings and/or conferences) will provide funding for URM students to help defray meeting costs. Typically, in order to be eligible for this funding, trainees will need to present an oral or poster presentation at the meeting/conference.



Poster Printing

The URI MARC U*STAR program allocates training related expenses for trainees who need to print and present posters at in-person conferences and symposiums. The NIH MARC U*STAR acknowledgment must be clearly present on the poster (see [NIH/MARC U*STAR Grant Acknowledgment](#)). Trainees can work with the PC to discuss printing options that best meet their needs.

EXTRAMURAL SUMMER RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Summer Research Experience (SRE)

URI MARC U*STAR trainees are required to spend at least one summer - typically the summer between your junior and senior years - in a research training experience at a research-intensive institution *other than the University of Rhode Island*.

Preferable sites are institutions with NIH-funded T32 predoctoral graduate training programs. For example, Brown University currently has multiple active NIH T32 graduate training programs including programs in Environmental Pathology, Neuroscience, and Biological Data Science.

The National Institutes of General Medical Sciences (NIGMS - a distinct institute within the NIH) maintains a searchable list of [NIGMS-funded T32 programs](#). Other NIH Institutes and Centers also support the T32 predoctoral training program in various research areas. For a query search to identify such programs, visit the NIH Research Portfolio Online Reporting Tools ([RePORT](#)) website.

The URI MARC U*STAR program will provide additional funds to each trainee for the SRE to help defray living and travel costs, e.g. housing and flights. This will allow the host institution to select a T34 trainee at no cost. MARC trainees will continue to receive their monthly stipend during the SRE.

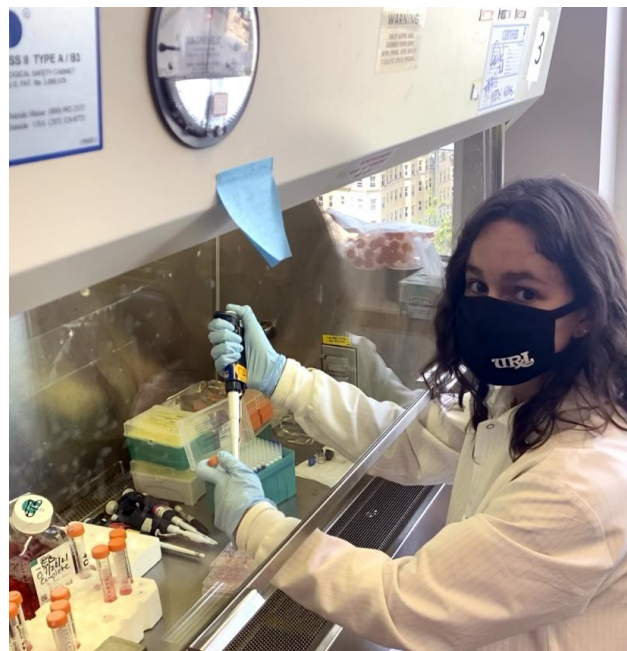
Finding an External Summer Research Experience (SRE)

During the fall semester of your junior year, trainees should discuss the SRE with your faculty research mentor and graduate students and/or postdoctoral research fellows within their lab. It is highly likely that your faculty research mentor will have colleagues and/or collaborators at external research-intensive institutions. Ask for recommendations for where you should perform your SRE.



In addition, you are strongly encouraged to independently explore options for the SRE using the searchable list of [NIGMS-funded T32 programs](#) and [RePORT](#).

Trainees should compile a list of 3-5 faculty associated with one or more of these T32 graduate training programs to reach out to and to discuss the possibility of performing a SRE under their guidance. The URI MARC U*STAR team will assist with this process. This process must be completed by the end of the fall semester of junior year.



Trainees should not apply to other summer research programs. You are already part of an NIH-funded training program and cannot simultaneously participate in more than one program.

The total amount of additional support available to each trainee for the SRE is \$3,500. The trainee will be responsible for costs associated with the SRE exceeding this amount.

Trainees are responsible for securing housing and booking flights for the SRE. The URI MARC U*STAR team will assist with this process.

Trainees cannot receive additional support from any other federally-sponsored award during the SRE. If trainees receive complementary housing and meal support, they would not incur costs for reimbursement.

SRE Research Presentations

Upon their return to URI following the required, external SRE, trainees will be required to present their research findings in an oral scientific presentation, which will be organized by the MARC U*STAR team.

GRADUATE SCHOOL APPLICATIONS

Taking the GRE

MARC U*STAR trainees should research the program/institution for which they wish to apply to see if the GRE (or MCAT) is required.

Note: many colleges and universities are moving away from GRE requirements for graduate programs due to increasing evidence that 1) GRE scores are not a particularly strong predictor of success in graduate student and 2) the use of GRE scores in graduate school admissions has likely contributed to the underrepresentation of multiple demographic groups in STEM professions. The URI MARC U*STAR team recognizes the limitations of and obstacles imposed by standardized admissions tests, such as the GRE, and recommends MARC trainees contact programs directly if they have questions about program requirements and/or graduate admissions process.



Writing Your Personal Statement

MARC U*STAR trainees are expected to begin drafting their personal statements for graduate school by fall of their first year. Program staff will lead trainees through various exercises and activities to support students in the creative writing process. Trainees will experience peer-review feedback through one-on-one and small group writing sessions during scheduled MARC meetings. Trainees are also encouraged to work with campus resources, such as the writing center, to receive additional support when directed by the program PI and/or PC.

Writing Your Academic Resume/CV

MARC U*STAR trainees are expected to update their academic resume/CV as soon as they are appointed, adding their MARC trainee title, lab details, and project topic. Trainees should update their resume/CV every semester while in the two-year program, including relevant skills, experience, presentations, and/or publications.

MARC U*STAR trainees are required to submit their resume/CV to the PI/Program Coordinator before they apply to their summer research experience as well as graduate programs.

Letters of Recommendation

MARC U*STAR trainees are encouraged to request letters of recommendation for SRE and/or graduate applications. Program staff, including your faculty mentor, the PI, and/or PC are available to assist with one-on-one support if you have questions, need sample materials, and more.

Tips for Asking Professors/Mentors to Write a Letter of Recommendation

- Choose a professor with whom you've had personal interactions. For example: Did you sit in the front row or frequently contribute to discussions in a class you were passionate about? Did you visit a professor during office hours to learn more? Have you had outside-of-the classroom interaction, such as academic advising, mentoring, research experience, etc?
- You're likely going to have to submit your CV and/or transcript with your applications for summer research experiences, so make sure that your recommenders can say something personal about you that isn't reflected elsewhere, like your dedication and hard work to succeed in a difficult class, your ability to work well with others in class or lab, your passion for the field of study, etc.
- You can choose to ask your recommender in person or via email. If you ask in person, make sure to give them the option of letting you know later (so they do not have to respond on the spot). If you ask via email, be sure to include information about yourself, a little bit about why you need a letter of recommendation, and why you chose to ask that particular professor. For example, did you demonstrate a particular skill or trait well in that professor's course?
- Ask if your professor feels like they can write you a strong/positive letter. Try to avoid simply asking your professor to write you a letter of recommendation- you want to be sure that your professor feels that they can write a good review for you. Also make sure that you give professors the opportunity to politely decline your request- you're better off getting a letter from someone who can write a positive review rather than a lukewarm recommendation.
- If your professor agrees to write you a recommendation, make the process as easy as possible for them to write you a strong letter! You may choose to set up a time to meet during office hours so you can have a conversation about your goals for summer research experiences, graduate schools, post-bacc opportunities, etc.
 - Provide your letter writer with the information they need about you and about the programs you are applying to.
 - Consider giving them a folder with things like a summary, your CV, unofficial transcript, a short list of accomplishments or qualities you might

like them to highlight about you, or anything else that might help them write you a strong letter. Always provide them with a simple table or list of the programs you are applying to and the specific requirements of each, including important deadlines/due dates.

- If letters must be sent via regular mail, you are encouraged to include pre-addressed labels and a stamp for convenience.
- Ask for all of your letters by one “due date”—this keeps it simple for your letter writers, and relieves stress on you! Make sure to check your earliest due date, and ask that your letters be completed at least two to three days in advance.

Applying for Ph.D. or M.D./Ph.D. Programs

ALUMNI EXPECTATIONS

NIH Reports and Communication

MARC U*STAR Trainees who graduate from the University of Rhode Island are to provide their contact, work, and/or education information to the PC Coordinator on an annual basis. The PC will reach out via email to MARC alumni to submit updates.

Program Evaluation and Assessment

Graduates of the URI MARC U*STAR program are expected to participate in a “senior exit interview, as well as complete a formal participant survey, administered electronically after graduation. The annual evaluation is critical for continued funding and support from the NIH, CELS, and URI for the URI MARC program. Graduates and trainees are expected to respond to requests for information in a timely manner for the annual NIH report (RPPR).



Events & Other Opportunities

URI MARC U*STAR alumni will be invited to present to current trainees on various topics, as well attend the annual symposium. Alumni may be invited as select guest speakers to the annual symposium and college or university events.

Appendix

Appendix A: New Trainee Checklist

Appendix B: Contract of Commitment

Appendix C: URI MARC U*STAR Mentor-Mentee Compact

Appendix D: Sample Monthly Lab Log