Undergraduate Research Scholars Program (URSP) is an opportunity that is offered at George Mason University that fully funds undergraduate research projects. With a mentor to guide the way, Mason undergraduates have the chance at high levels of experience while developing excellent professional and job related skills. Firstly, you would have to a student at George Mason. Secondly, you must choose your project title, when the project would be taking place, and find a project mentor. Next, you would have to fill out the URSP application online. The application consists of 3 steps: 1) the student enters their own personal information 2) project title, semester and year, and the mentor(s) that will be accompanying you 3) the student’s proposal for their project. After all that is completed you would wait upon approval, and if you were approved you would have to enroll in UNIV 495 (a class offered at George Mason) then you would be on your way. On the website under “Find a Mentor” there is also a contact list for different majors. The contact for Computer Science is Dr. Huzefa Rangwala. There are also two different kinds of research projects that are offered, Traditional and Intensive. Under the Traditional URSP the total project gets awarded $1,500, a $1,000 stipend for the student and a $500 stipend for the mentor and a minimum of 144 hours is required. The Intensive URSP the total project gets awarded $5,000, a $4,000 stipend for the student, $500 for materials and supplies, and a $500 stipend for the mentor and a minimum of 360 hours is required.

One of the current project taking place this Fall of 2016 is titled “Simulating Morphological and Behavioral Evolution of Virtual Organisms”. The student of the project is Anson Rutherford, a Computer Science major. The mentor is Sean Luke, a Computer Science professor. Most professors have their own websites (Luke’s being cs.gmu.edu/~sean). Information and history on the professors can be found on their websites. Sean Luke has worked on many different programs that he has been credited for and they are listed on his website. He also made a program called “FlockBots” which simulated different flocks of bots flying together almost like birds do. This makes him a great mentor for virtual organisms because he has already had experience in this field.

Engulfed in a project of interest to earn some school credit and being compensated? Sign me up! The URSP sounds like a great opportunity that is offered to George Mason Students. Not only does this give you the chance to increase your knowledge and gain much needed skills but this also would look very good on a resume for graduate school or even amazing job opportunities. This way of pursuing scholarship is appealing to me because it’s a great way to open doors to future opportunities.