

# Blazer Summer Research Institute Program Guidelines

## Program Description:

The Blazer Summer Research Institute (BSRI) is a competitive program for VSU faculty and undergraduate students that is internally funded by **Academic Affairs, University Advancement, and private donations**. The goal of the BSRI program is to support undergraduates engaged in faculty led student research projects during the summer term, which aligns with VSU's Strategic Plan Goal 2 and Academic Affairs Strategic Plan Goal 2.3. Through engaging in undergraduate research and creative inquiry, during the BSRI, students will:

- critically analyze data or sources through inquiries in research and/or creative endeavors.
- demonstrate how their project applies what they are learning in the classroom to a real-world problem or scenario.
- be knowledgeable of ethical issues and/or laboratory emergency and safety guidelines associated with a specific field or topic.
- articulate the relevance of their work to members of a general audience and succinctly describe how their research fits into the larger body of knowledge.
- demonstrate information literacy through evaluation of data and relevant sources, including analysis of accuracy, credibility, and bias.
- experience mentorship as one component of undergraduate experiential learning.
- learn how to collaboratively build or maintain a team to conduct research or creative projects, especially for those involving multiple undergraduate students.

## Definition of Research from the VSU Office of Sponsored Programs and Research Administration:

Research and creative activity are broadly defined as any creative, critical, scholarly, and/or empirical activity that expands, clarifies, reorganizes, or develops knowledge or artistic perception. Research is more specifically defined as a systematic process of investigation or study that will produce facts or theories or will demonstrate or apply such knowledge to problem-solving within the discipline or in society.

## Award Information:

It is anticipated that 5 to 10 awards will be made this year, depending on funding availability. Maximum award amounts are as follows, however faculty are not required to request the full amount of funding:

- One faculty member with one undergraduate student - \$5,000
  - \$1,000 scholarship for student
  - \$4,000, which could include faculty compensation (maximum of \$2000) or any other allowable expenditures as described below
- One faculty member with two or more undergraduate students - \$5,500
  - \$1,500 scholarship divided equal between all student participants
  - \$4,000, which could include faculty compensation (maximum of \$2000) or any other allowable expenditures as described below.
- Two faculty members with two or more undergraduate students - \$5,500
  - \$1,500 scholarship divided equal between all student participants
  - \$4,000, which could include faculty compensation (maximum of \$3000 to be divided equally between faculty) or any other allowable expenditures as described below.

***The BSRI Steering Committee strongly encourages interdisciplinary proposals involving two faculty with two or more students from different disciplines and majors.***

## Eligibility:

All full-time faculty at the instructor, lecturers/senior lecturers, clinical supervisors, assistant professor, associate professor, or professor level are eligible for BSRI funding, including those with administrative assignments such as department heads or associate/assistant deans. Full-time temporary instructors (limited term instructors), visiting faculty, part-time personnel, and Deans are not eligible for BSRI funding.

### **Program Timeline: (Visit BSRI website for more information on additional dates)**

- Applications Open: October 15, 2021
- Applications Deadline: December 15, 2021 by 5:00 PM EST
- Award Announcements: February 15, 2022
- Kick-off Meeting: April 29, 2022
- Institute Dates: June 6 to July 29, 2022
- Final Presentations by Students: July 29, 2022
- Final Reports Due: August 30, 2022 by 5:00 PM EST

### **Allowable Expenditures:**

BSRI funds may be used for the following types of expenditures to support research or creative activity:

- Summer compensation for faculty (including employer's share of fringe benefits on summer compensation);
- Supplies and materials that are directly related to the conduct of the project, such as postage, photocopying, datasets, illustrations and photographs, art and performance supplies, chemicals and other expendables, software, and small equipment items (<\$1,500 per unit), etc.;
- Contractual services provided by an external vendor, such as transcription services, data entry assistance, analytical services, editing and indexing services, etc.;
- Telecommunications costs for telephone surveys or for Internet survey services;
- Equipment and software (>\$1,500 per unit) that is specific to the proposed project, not normally provided by the department or other university departments, and/or is not an appropriate request for the University's equipment pools (requires explanation with signature of department head); or
- Research participant payments.

### **Ineligible Activities:**

BSRI funding is not intended to support the following:

- Faculty development activities, such as learning a new technique, language, or methodology or completing a thesis or dissertation;
- Departmental curriculum development, such as preparation of curriculum materials, curriculum modifications, and student interest surveys;
- Tuition, fees, or costs associated with credit-bearing courses, including study abroad and study away programs;
- Travel expenses for conference, symposium, or other venue associated with presentation of research outcomes;
- Expenses related to professional or public service or provision of consulting services;
- Projects judged to be profit-oriented, such as production of a textbook or development of works intended for sale, expenses associated with compensated consulting work; or
- Institutional research (i.e., studies related directly to the operation of the University that are not generalizable and have little application beyond VSU).

### **Review Process and Evaluation Criteria:**

*Late proposals will not be accepted.* In order to be eligible for review, a proposal must be complete and in a single package (a single PDF file). All applications must be submitted by the deadline of December 15, 2021 at 5PM EST to Dereth "Jan" Drake, Co-Coordinator of Undergraduate Research and Professor of Physics, [djdrake@valdosta.edu](mailto:djdrake@valdosta.edu). Questions about eligibility for review will be decided by the BSRI Steering Committee upon proposal submission. The review process is as follows:

1. All eligible proposals will be forwarded to the executive committee from their respective colleges for evaluation.
2. The BSRI Steering Committee will then independently review eligible proposals and assign a preliminary score to each based on the criteria below. Preliminary scores will be averaged for each proposal and a preliminary ranking will be established.
3. The committee will meet face-to-face to discuss the applications, using the preliminary rankings and executive committee recommendations to guide discussion.

4. Following the group discussion, committee members will independently finalize their scores. A final average score will be calculated for each proposal and a final rank order established.

The maximum proposal score is 100 points. Proposals will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

- Alignment with goals and objectives for the BSRI and with the VSU strategic plan (maximum 20 points)
- Student learning outcomes clearly articulated and appropriate for the length of the program (maximum 15 points)
- Clarity and appropriateness of the research/project design and procedures (maximum 30 points)
- Appropriateness of the budget and strength of the budget justification (maximum 15 points)
- Narrative written by each student participant of their expected activities during the program (maximum 20 points)

Only those proposals with an average score of 70 and higher will be eligible for funding. Awards will be made in rank order until available funds are exhausted or until all proposals scoring 70 or higher are funded, whichever occurs first. Funding of any proposals below the 70 score will be decided by majority vote, and the committee may require changes to the proposed project as a condition of award. The committee may also allow funds to lapse if remaining proposals are not deemed appropriate for undergraduate students during the eight-week term. At all times, the committee's decisions will be based on proposal quality without regard to discipline, department, college, or faculty rank/status represented. Following the selection process, all applicants will be informed of funding decisions and the final average proposal score will be provided to each applicant. The funding decisions of the BSRI Steering Committee are final and cannot be appealed.

#### **Other Terms and Conditions of Award:**

- All BSRI funds must be expended in accordance with University policy and procedures.
- All equipment purchases must be completed by the start of the program on June 6, 2022.
- If a proposal is withdrawn before the Undergraduate Research Council makes a final funding decision, the submission is not counted.
- Awards may not be deferred to a future fiscal year.
- All student participates in the BSRI must:
  1. Be present on the final day of the program and throughout all student presentations
  2. Submit weekly progress reports to committee representative
  3. Participate in the following half-day workshops;
    - a. Week 2 of the program – Using library resources to develop information literacy
    - b. Week 4 of the program – BSRI Faculty and Student Social at CELT House
    - c. Week 6 of the program – Preparing a high-quality presentation with resources from the New Media Center
- All faculty members who participate in the BSRI must:
  1. Be present throughout all student presentations on the final day of the program.
  2. Participate in the summer CELT retreat on undergraduate research. More information will be provided on the CELT and BSRI websites later in the Spring semester.
  3. Faculty members are not required to participate in the half-day student workshops listed above, but they are strongly encouraged.
- BSRI recipients must acknowledge support of the research/creative activity by the Valdosta State University Blazer Summer Research Institute in any publication or presentation of results.
- In the event a project funded by the BSRI program generates *unanticipated* sales or royalty income for the faculty member at any time in the future, the faculty member agrees to report such income to the BSRI Steering Committee and to reimburse the University the amount of the award from the first proceeds received.

**Questions about the BSRI should be directed to Dereth “Jan” Drake, Co-Coordinator of Undergraduate Research and Professor of Physics, [djdrake@valdosta.edu](mailto:djdrake@valdosta.edu), ext. 4852.**