

**work-study
research
assistant
program**

2024-25 Program Handbook

UConn

ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS

OFFICE OF
UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH

Important Dates

Friday, August 23, 2024	Fall 2024 Work-Study Begins
Monday, August 26, 2024	Fall Semester Begins
Scheduled between October 21 and November 22, 2024	Fall check-in meetings with OUR advisor
Thursday, December 12, 2024	Fall Work-Study Ends
Friday, December 13, 2024	Spring 2025 Work-Study Begins (for students with full-year work-study awards)
Sunday, December 15, 2024	Fall Semester Final Exams End
Wednesday, December 18, 2024	Faculty Mid-Year Report Due
Friday, January 17, 2025	Spring 2025 Work-Study Begins (for students with a Spring-only award)
Tuesday, January 21, 2025	Spring Semester Begins
Scheduled between March 3 and April 11, 2025	Spring check-in meetings with OUR advisor
Thursday, May 1, 2025	Student End-of-Year Reflection Due
Friday, May 9, 2025	Spring Work-Study Ends
Saturday, May 10, 2025	Spring Semester Final Exams End
Thursday, May 15, 2025	Faculty End-of-Year Report Due

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Welcome Letter

Welcome to the 2024-2025 Work-Study Research Assistant Program! We are excited for the upcoming academic year, and we are committed to ensuring that research experiences through work-study remain available and valuable learning opportunities for UConn students. Last year's research assistants reported developing a range of research skills as well as a greater depth of understanding about topics that interested them. Faculty participants told us about the many ways their research assistants contributed to their labs, groups, and projects. We look forward to many more positive research experiences this year!

Students: We hope your research position will provide you an opportunity to learn about the process of research, to explore your interests, and to develop your skills and knowledge. Access to research opportunities is one of the many reasons to attend a research university like UConn, and we hope this experience will help you determine the role you would like research to play in the remainder of your undergraduate career as well as in your next steps after graduation. What you get from this experience is contingent on what you give; you will maximize your learning by asking questions and by seizing every opportunity to observe or try something new.

Faculty: We hope your research assistant will become integral to your research pursuits, offering you valuable support while learning through practice and experience. We encourage you to plan for regular meetings or other communications with your research assistant and to ensure that he or she learns about the broader context and significance of your work as well as the specific tasks or techniques it involves.

The Office of Undergraduate Research is a resource for both students and faculty. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions or suggestions; your feedback will help us improve the program moving forward and enhance our efforts to engage students and faculty in collaborative academic inquiry.

Best wishes for an excellent year!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Micah Heumann". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the right of the word "Sincerely,".

Micah Heumann
Director, Office of Undergraduate Research

The Office of Undergraduate Research

What is the Office of Undergraduate Research?

The Office of Undergraduate Research (OUR) is one of UConn's Enrichment Programs (EP). All EPs are designed to help students make the most of their undergraduate experience; the OUR helps undergraduates from all majors and UConn campuses develop individual strategies to engage in research or creative projects. The OUR offers student advising, workshops, undergraduate research funding programs, and opportunities for students to share their research and creative work. The OUR supports students through the full cycle of inquiry: exploring the unknown, creating new knowledge, and sharing discoveries. Learn more about all the services we offer by visiting our website: ugradresearch.uconn.edu.

Where is the Office of Undergraduate Research?

The OUR staff offices are on the first and fourth floor of the Rowe Center for Undergraduate Education. All EP and OUR staff are currently working on hybrid schedules, so it's best to contact the individuals below via email. Alternatively, WebEx appointments can be made through the Nexus system (nexus.uconn.edu).

- Micah Heumann, OUR Director: micah.heumann@uconn.edu, Rowe 407
- Jodi Eskin, OUR Program Coordinator: jodi.eskin@uconn.edu, Rowe 110
- Anabel Perez Malone, Enrichment Programs Administrative Manager: anabel.perez@uconn.edu

What is the Work-Study Research Assistant Program?

The Work-Study Research Assistant Program is one of the funding programs administered by the OUR. Through this program, students who have received a Federal Work-Study award as part of their UConn financial aid package can earn that award by working as research assistants to UConn faculty and postdoctoral scholars. These are not simply clerical or lab upkeep positions – students participating in this program are substantively engaged in a project and learn about the nature of scholarly inquiry in the academic field. Even tasks that seem basic (entering data, preparing reagents, searching the literature, scheduling human participants) are critically important to the success and integrity of the overall project.

Federal Work-Study and Student Employment Policies

Eligibility for Work-Study

Federal Work-Study is awarded as part of a student's financial aid package. Awards are based on financial need and fund availability. Any changes in a student's financial aid package may result in a decrease in Work-Study funding and may require the student to be removed from the Work-Study payroll.

Students must be enrolled full-time at the end of the semester's Add-Drop period in order to maintain eligibility for Work-Study. Typically, a student's enrollment status will be confirmed on the tenth day of the fall and spring semesters. Students enrolled less than full-time on "Day 10" will have their Work-Study award canceled for that semester. Exceptions may be made for students with waivers from the Center for Students with Disabilities.

If a student withdraws or is dismissed from the University at any point during the award period, s/he will be removed from the Work-Study payroll, and the Work-Study award will be canceled for the remainder of the academic year.

Note: The receipt of a private scholarship after the beginning of the fall semester may impact a student's eligibility for federal work-study. Students are required to notify Financial Aid of any private scholarships immediately upon learning of the award.

Earning Work-Study Funds

If a student is enrolled full-time and awarded Federal Work-Study for the entire academic year, the student's award is typically divided equally between the fall and spring semesters. The student's earnings for the fall semester will be limited to the fall portion of the award. Any unearned portion of the fall award will be carried forward into the spring semester. Students may begin earning the spring portion of the award during the winter break, provided the student will be enrolled full-time during the spring semester.

Students may only earn their Work-Study funding between the following dates, and only once they have been authorized to begin work:

- **Fall 2024 Work-Study: 8/23/24-12/12/24**
- **For full-year work-study awards, Spring 2025 Work-Study: 12/13/24-5/9/25**
- **For spring-only work-study awards, Spring 2025 Work-Study: 1/17/25-5/9/25**

Work-Study awards *may not be* carried over from year to year even if they are not earned in full.

Work-Study Balance Tracking

The OUR staff will monitor Work-Study earnings and alert the student and faculty supervisor when the student is approaching their earning limit. The student **should not** work hours that will bring their total gross earnings beyond the authorized amount for the fall semester or for the year. Although students are typically awarded Work-Study for the entire year, they may not earn more than one-half of the award amount during the fall semester. It may be necessary to adjust a student's work schedule so that they do not exceed their remaining authorized amount.

To assist faculty in monitoring reported hours and Work-Study earnings, EP/OUR staff will share updates via email beginning in October. Staff will email student/faculty pairs the week following the Pay Period End. The email will provide information on the hours reported in that pay period and the total earnings to date. If a student or faculty member has questions at any time regarding a student's remaining work-study award balance, please contact Anabel Perez Malone at anabel.perez@uconn.edu.

Work Schedule

Part-time work for students is an important component of the University experience. Such work provides much-needed financial assistance and the opportunity to gain valuable work skills. In setting a work schedule, employers and students are encouraged to keep in mind that the student's primary focus should be on academic endeavors and that there must be a balance between educational responsibilities and work. The student's work schedule and number of hours per week should be negotiated between the student and supervisor; we encourage the development of a standard work schedule for the semester that can be modified as needed (e.g., for midterms or finals). ***Under no circumstance should a student be scheduled to work during class times. Under no circumstance should a student participant in the Work-Study Research Assistant Program work more than 40 hours in a single pay period.***

A student is limited to working a maximum of 20 hours per week during a semester which translates to a limit of 40 hours per pay period during a semester. During vacation periods, a student may work a maximum of 40 hours per week, which translates to a limit of 80 hours per pay period. **Any earnings beyond the authorized remaining balance for either the fall semester or academic year will not be paid through Work-Study funds and must be paid by the department's operating budget.**

If hours in excess of the student's Work-Study balance are entered online on the Student Payroll Time Report, the student cannot be paid for the amount above the remaining balance. The employing department must submit a student labor payroll authorization to pay these earnings through that department's own funds.

Meal Periods and Breaks

Under Connecticut State Statute (Sec. 31-51ii), hourly workers (students employed on the student labor and/or Work-Study payrolls) who work for seven and one-half (7 1/2) or more consecutive hours must be offered a period of at least thirty (30) consecutive minutes for a meal period. The law requires this period to be given some time after the first two (2) hours of work and before the last two (2) hours of work.

Student employees are not paid for meal periods which are thirty (30) or more consecutive minutes, in which they are released from work duties and/or are allowed to leave their workstations. Therefore, the meal period should not be logged as hours worked on the student's timecard. The student must sign out for the time of the meal period on his/her timecard.

Student employees must be paid for any meal periods in which they are not released from work duties or allowed to leave their workstations. In these cases, the meal period would be considered hours worked on the student's timecard, and the student should not sign out for the time of the meal period on his/her timecard.

Employers are not required by either federal or state law to permit student employees to take coffee/snack/rest breaks. Therefore, allowing for breaks is at the discretion of the supervisor. Generally, if breaks are allowed, breaks of fifteen (15) minutes or less are compensable and should be considered as hours worked on the student's timecard. Students should not sign out for the time of the break on his/her timecard.

Core-CT: Submitting Hours and Timesheet Procedures

All student employees must enter their hours worked biweekly through the Core-CT system. Core-CT can be accessed at <https://ess.uconn.edu/>. Students will log in using their NetID and password. Students new to the system will be required to set up Two-factor authentication at their initial log-in. Core-CT's Resource Page (<https://ess.uconn.edu/core-ct-resource-page/>) provides reference material, instructions, and access to on-line tutorials. Students may find the step-by-step instructions for student employees on entering time especially useful. This resource is available under the Time and Labor section on the Resource Page.

The Core-CT self-service portal is available 4:00am to 8:00pm daily except non-pay week Thursdays. The system is **not available** on Non-Pay Week Thursdays.

Student employees are considered temporary, hourly workers and will only be paid for actual hours worked. Students cannot be paid for holidays, WW (winter weather) days, or other official University closing dates unless they actually work that day.

It is the student's responsibility to ensure that a correct timesheet is submitted via the Core-CT online system by the deadline. If you have any questions about this, please contact Anabel Perez Malone at anabel.perez@uconn.edu.

Important: Faculty please note that you will not be able to log in to Core-CT to see time reported. **We encourage you to institute any *additional* time tracking processes you find helpful in keeping track of your research assistant's work (e.g., physical sign-in/sign-out sheet, emailed sign-in/sign-out).**

Taxation and Payment

Students are required to complete both Federal and State W-4 Forms, since both Work-Study and student labor earnings are taxable under federal and state law. Once you have access to Core-CT, you can submit the federal W-4 via Core-CT. The CT W-4 form must be completed, scanned and uploaded to Payroll using the secure link on the bottom left of [Payroll homepage](#). W-4 forms, both federal and State of Connecticut may be obtained from the [Payroll website](#) (select the "Forms" tab and scroll down to Taxes). The student's withholding (the amount deducted for taxes) is based on the data the student provides on the W-4 Forms. It is very important that a student complete new W-4 Forms and a Change of Name and/or Address Form, if his/her permanent address changes, and submit this information to Payroll. This will ensure that the student's W-2 is mailed to the correct location. Please note that Payroll will only be able to complete an address change once the new address has been entered into the online Student Administration system.

All State of Connecticut employees, including student employees, receive only one W-2 Form reflecting combined income from all jobs, on all payrolls. Students employed at more than one state agency will receive only one W-2 Form containing income earned from all agencies combined. The W-2 Form will be distributed by the agency in which the employee earned the greatest income. If additional information regarding income tax issues is required, please contact the Payroll Office at www.payroll.uconn.edu.

Typically, students receive their paychecks two weeks following each Student Payroll Time Report deadline. If hours are not reported by the designated deadline, the student's paycheck will be delayed by at least an additional pay cycle. Setting up [Direct Deposit](#) (via the Direct Deposit link in the Payroll section of the Core-CT Home page) is optional, but highly recommended.

Safety and Training

Faculty supervisors are responsible for providing orientation to student employees relative to the position's requirements and responsibilities. With regard to safety training, the University now requires that faculty add all student employees to their lab group in the [HuskySMS system](#). Faculty are to check off the potential hazards that students may be exposed to in various categories (e.g., General, Biological, Chemical). This checklist should be completed as soon as possible to determine which safety training courses are appropriate for the student. Upon selecting the potential hazards/working conditions, a list of training requirements will be automatically added to the student's record in the HuskySMS system. Students must then register for and complete the necessary EHS safety training. For students working in office environments, it is likely that no additional safety training will be required.

Note: A student's participation in EHS training, or any other required training (e.g., [CITI training](#) in Biomedical Research and/or Social and Behavioral Science; [RCR training](#) for students working on NSF or NIH funded projects), is considered work time and should be reported on timecards. Students should not complete this training prior to being officially hired by Enrichment Programs.

Travel

Faculty must notify the OUR if the work-study position will involve travel to off-campus locations. Students must be compensated for the time they spend traveling to off-campus locations to perform work-study job duties. However, this compensation must be from a non-work-study funding source set up in advance by the faculty supervisor in consultation with the OUR. *Faculty supervisors must make arrangements to cover these costs using funds available to them.* In these cases, students will report travel time on a separate timesheet from their work hours; both timesheets are submitted through the Core-CT website.

Student drivers must receive mileage reimbursement for the miles they drive to off-campus locations to perform work-study job duties. Students must also be reimbursed for the costs of other forms of transportation (e.g., bus, train) to off-campus research locations. ***The OUR cannot cover travel reimbursement for research assistants. Faculty supervisors must make arrangements within their departments to cover these costs using funds available to them. Work-study funds may not be used for this purpose.***

Per Connecticut's Policy on Motor Vehicles Used for State Business, student drivers of personally owned vehicles traveling on university business must carry at least the minimum insurance coverage of:

- Third party liability: \$50,000/\$100,000
- Property damage liability: \$5,000

Student Employment Policies and Contacts

This section of the handbook has excerpted the elements of the Office of Student Financial Aid Services – Student Employment's [Employment Guide](#) that the OUR anticipates will be most relevant to the participants in the Work-Study Research Assistant program. The full [Employment Guide](#) can be reviewed online. General questions about Federal Work-Study or Student Employment can be directed to the Student Employment Office at (860) 486-3474 or studentjobs@uconn.edu.

FACULTY

Mentorship

Mentors, whether faculty members or independent researchers, are pivotal in ensuring the success of the student experience. They teach a variety of applied skills, methods, and techniques. To help students sink their roots in the culture of the discipline, mentors coach students to develop new ways to approach problems and encourage them to think about and reflect on the research. Through excellent mentoring, students are invited into the community of researchers and scholars as colleagues. – Merkel & Baker, 2002, p. 1

The importance of mentorship to successful undergraduate research experiences cannot be overstated. By supporting and challenging students over extended periods of time, research supervisors become trusted advisors and often come to know their students better than other faculty or professional staff on campus. Consistent communication and feedback on performance enhances student learning; we encourage you to establish regular meetings with your work-study research assistant to discuss their

learning and progress. The OUR has assembled many online and print mentoring resources which they are happy to share with interested faculty and researchers.

Research Assistant Tasks

The job description you posted to recruit a research assistant outlines the duties your hired student will perform. Please work with them to set up a work schedule each semester, allowing for flexibility so that they can devote the necessary time to his/her studies. Please bear in mind that the following activities **must** be considered work time:

- Time spent on training, including safety training
- Meeting times, whether lab/group meetings or one-on-one meetings
- Time spent traveling to off-campus research locations (see information on p. 11 regarding payment arrangements for travel time)
- Time spent attending a professional development event and submitting the associated reflection report
- Time spent completing mid-semester and end-of-year reflections

Note: We encourage students working as research assistants to present their research at the *Frontiers in Undergraduate Research Poster Exhibition* held every April. **Poster printing costs for WSRAP students will be covered by the OUR.**

Since the work on your project may vary from week to week, we encourage you to be proactive about identifying “back-up” tasks your research assistant can pivot to if his/her standard tasks are not available. Such tasks can include reading and summarizing literature, shadowing/observing research personnel, or attending relevant seminars, dissertation defenses, or other campus programming. If you have questions about whether a given activity is considered work under this program's auspices, please contact the OUR.

Discipline and Termination

If job performance issues arise, please reach out to the OUR and refer to the Employment Guide's [Progressive Disciplinary Policy](#). If progressive discipline is not successful, faculty members have the right to terminate a student's employment. Certain actions may result in immediate dismissal, such as:

- submission of fraudulent hours on a timecard
- destruction or theft of property belonging to the University, its patrons, or employees
- threat of physical harm to members of the University Community
- reporting to work under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- gross insubordination
- gross misconduct

You must notify the OUR immediately if you terminate a student research assistant employee, as we must follow the Progressive Disciplinary Policy outlined in the University's Employment Guide.

Terms and Conditions

Faculty supervisors of research assistants agree to the following terms and conditions:

- Adhere to the policies within the Student Employment Guide, the University Code of Conduct, the State Code of Ethics, the University Health and Safety Policy, and other relevant policy statements. Full policy descriptions are available via the [University of Connecticut Policies e-Library](#).

- Provide orientation and training to student employees relative to the requirements and responsibilities of the position. Discuss expectations of the student's work performance, including standards relating to quality and quantity.
- Complete the EHS/OUR Safety Confirmation form for each student you hire who is working in an environment with hazards (e.g., lab, studio, theatre). If appropriate, add your research assistant to your group in the [HuskySMS training platform](#) and note the required job activities in order to generate the student's list of required safety training courses.
- Monitor time reporting, earnings, and remaining balances for federal Work-Study recipients to ensure that students do not exceed their authorized amounts. Check the tracking spreadsheet every two weeks and alert the OUR to any discrepancies or errors.
- Submit two brief reports on your research assistant's work: the first by December 18, 2024, and the second by May 15, 2025. A link to the online report form will be provided to you by OUR.
- Ensure that a student immediately discontinues work if s/he has been dismissed or has withdrawn from the University.
- Apply fair standards in dealing with and responding to work-related issues.

STUDENTS

Professionalism

Student participants in the Work-Study Research Assistant Program are representatives of the Office of Undergraduate Research. Your actions, demeanor, and word choices reflect the OUR and the University. Clear and concise communication, honest and ethical behavior, respect for all persons, and professional comportment are expected of all research assistants.

Your work-study research assistantship is a job. You are expected to adhere to the schedule you establish with your faculty supervisor and to provide him/her with as much advance notice as possible if you will be late or absent.

Your assistantship is also an important opportunity. You will gain the most from this opportunity by challenging yourself to deepen your understanding of the project to which you are contributing. Ask questions, take initiative, and fully engage in the research to maximize your learning.

Discipline and Termination

If your job performance or attendance fail to meet expectations, you will be informed about the need for improvement. If improvement does not occur, you may be dismissed from your research assistantship. Certain actions may result in immediate dismissal, such as:

- submission of fraudulent hours on a timecard
- destruction or theft of property belonging to the University, its patrons, or employees
- threat of physical harm to members of the University Community
- reporting to work under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- gross insubordination
- gross misconduct

Terms and Conditions

- Students must adhere to departmental policies and procedures. If required by their work assignment, students must complete relevant training from Environmental Health & Safety,

Research Compliance Services (CITI and/or Responsible Conduct of Research Training), and/or other offices.

- A student employee is required to record the time period they work on a Student Payroll Time Sheet (or other approved form used by faculty/employer department) each time they report for work. The time recorded by the student must be true and accurate. The student should not work more than the maximum number of hours per week allowed based on his/her status.
- Students should know the beginning and end dates they are approved to work (as reflected on the approved payroll authorization). Students should not work before or after these dates, unless properly authorized to do so. Students are typically appointed on an annual basis and should not assume automatic renewal of the appointment from year to year.
- Students should not work beyond their regularly scheduled hours unless they have received prior approval from their supervisor.
- If a student withdraws or is dismissed from the University, s/he must notify his/her supervisor, and must stop working immediately.
- A student employee should make every effort to give a minimum of two weeks' notice if they must terminate employment.
- Students must have full-time enrollment status at the end of the Add-Drop period to maintain employment eligibility for Federal Work-Study payroll, with the exception of winter intersession. See "[Eligibility for Work-Study Employment](#)" for details.
- Students employed on the Federal Work-Study payroll must not work hours that will result in total earnings that exceed the amount authorized for a given position.
- Students must complete one professional development experience between their hire date and March 1, 2025 and submit a [brief reflection report](#) within two weeks of the experience.
- Students must attend one advising meeting with an OUR Staff member each semester to discuss learning, goals, and next steps.
- Students are asked to complete a brief, mid-semester reflection form each semester prior to their advising appointment with OUR (typically in mid-October and early March).
- Students must reflect on their research assistantship experience by completing the End-of-Year Reflection form by May 1, 2025. The Qualtrics link will be provided to students in April.

Contact Information

Please do not hesitate to reach out to us if you have any questions or comments to share.

Micah Heumann <i>OUR Director</i>	(860) 486-1255	Rowe 407	Micah.heumann@uconn.edu
Jodi Eskin <i>OUR Program Administrator and Advisor</i>	(860) 486-7939	Rowe 110	jodi.eskin@uconn.edu
Anabel Perez Malone <i>EP Administrative Manager</i>	(860) 486-0752	Rowe 403A	anabel.perez@uconn.edu

ugradresearch.uconn.edu/work-study

References

Merkel, C. A., & Baker, S. M. (2002). *How to mentor undergraduate researchers*. Washington, D.C.: Council on Undergraduate Research.