



## The Arizona Space Grant Consortium

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### **Who is eligible to mentor Space Grant students?**

Arizona Space Grant Consortium (AZSGC) affiliates, and University of Arizona affiliates, faculty, staff, research scientists, post-docs, and Tucson professionals interested in mentoring motivated undergraduate students are eligible to apply as mentors. For all other interested mentors that are not offering a fully-remote internship opportunity and are living outside of the Tucson metro-area, please consider applying as a mentor to Space Grant students at one of our [affiliate sites](#).

Mentors with underrepresented identities in STEM are strongly encouraged to apply.

### **What must a mentor provide to a Space Grant student?**

Potential mentors must work on research projects that relate to one or more NASA Mission Directorates (MDs). NASA's research interests are broad; please note that the NASA MDs relate to many STEM fields. For more information, view our NASA Mission Directorates page [here](#).

Mentors must be able to provide 4-20 hours per week (September – May) of meaningful work appropriate for an undergraduate student. Note that students' prior experience working on research projects may vary. Interns must be able to contact a mentor as needed and should have a one-on-one meeting with a mentor at least once a week.

Meaningful internship work must include a specific project or problem for your intern to solve; note that this work will be shared publicly at our Statewide Undergraduate Research Symposium. Projects do not have to be completed by the end of the program year, but interns must have a tangible “piece of the project puzzle” that they can actively work on throughout their internship, and then present on during the Symposium. Internship work hours may include background reading, attendance at team/relevant meetings, field work, and especially data collection, processing, and analysis.

Mentors may work collaboratively with post docs, graduate students, etc. in their workplace to provide a more robust mentorship experience to an intern. Mentors do not need to be the only individual mentoring an intern; this can be indicated in the mentor application.

### **What are major deadlines, events, and other commitments that a mentor must make, not mentioned above?**

In addition to providing an intern with 4-20 hours of meaningful work per week of the program year (September – May), meeting weekly with an intern, and providing overall guidance and mentorship, mentors are expected to respond in a timely manner when first matched with an intern to confirm their participation. Mentors are also asked to provide cost-share to the program (optional). Mentors must review and sign the program Welcome Packet, including a Code of Conduct agreement, before the start of the program year.

Mentors are expected to attend a 1 hour orientation at the beginning of the program year (September). Mentors are also expected to respond to a December and May evaluation of the program. Mentors are invited to attend events and especially to attend and support their intern at the Statewide Undergraduate Research Symposium in April of each year. Mentors are strongly encouraged to share updates with the Space Grant team, including things that are going well and especially things that aren't, so our team can follow up and make sure both intern and mentor are having a productive and successful program year. We also encourage mentors to send updates on conferences, papers, and presentations that their interns are part of through this program, and highlight stories with photos are much appreciated. Continued connection through social media, our newsletter, and attending annual events beyond the program year is also encouraged and appreciated. All of this also helps us maintain our program and report to NASA, which ultimately ensures our program's continued funding.

#### **Timeline of Program Year, Mentors:**

**July** – Mentor and intern applications due.

**August** – Mentors notified of intern match; must respond to confirm their participation. Cost-share paperwork (if applicable) must be signed, as well as Code of Conduct form.

**September** – Mentor orientation; internship begins.

**December** – Mid-year evaluation.

**March** – Interns must submit a 150-word abstract for the AZSGC Symposium; mentors must review/approve this abstract.

**April** – Interns must submit a PowerPoint presentation for the AZSGC Symposium; mentors must review/approve this presentation. Mentors are invited to attend the Symposium to support their student.

**May** – Internship ends and mentors are asked to do a final evaluation.

#### **How is this funded?**

This internship is funded by the NASA National Space Grant College and Fellowship Program, and whenever possible, through the generous contributions of mentors. The UArizona NASA Space Grant Undergraduate Research Internship program works hard to engage the largest number of students possible. Each year, we are able to extend internship opportunities to a larger group of undergraduates through much appreciated financial assistance provided by mentors who are able to full-fund or split-fund their interns. Interns may work up to 20 hours per week (receiving an hourly wage of \$14.50 plus 1.8% ERE). In 2021, interns averaged 13 hours of work per week from September - May. Thus, full-funding an intern at \$14.50 per hour for 30 weeks at 13 hours per week amounts to \$5,757, while split-funding an intern amounts to \$2,878.

Please note that cost-share is not considered in either the ranking/selection of interns or in the process of matching those students to mentor projects.

## **What does Space Grant provide?**

The Space Grant Program provides the foundation for which interns may apply for a paid research experience to be matched with mentors and research projects in their community. Space Grant offers 32 years of successful internship program experience to both interns and mentors.

Space Grant committee members review and rank intern applications so that mentors are matched with highly ranked undergraduate students that fit their project needs and requirements to the best of our ability.

Additionally, Space Grant hires interns as UArizona student employees and performs all payroll management, removing the administrative burden from the mentor. If a mentor chooses to cost-share with the program, Space Grant will charge the account accordingly. Student timesheets are shared via email every other week with mentors.

Space Grant will lead interns through an orientation session, and will ensure they are prepared to the best of our ability for the Statewide Undergraduate Research Symposium by holding abstract writing and PowerPoint creating/presenting workshops.

Space Grant also organizes at least one group event per month (field trips to the Biosphere 2, Flandrau Planetarium, lunch talks with local scientists, etc.) to allow interns to network, learn something new, and get to know one another.

Program staff will also check in with students for mandatory one-on-one meetings in October, December, and May of the program year and to receive evaluations of the program.

Through Space Grant, interns are also eligible for additional opportunities that are only open to Arizona Space grant interns including fully sponsored NASA Center Internships (\$7,900-\$11,650), Space Camp at Biosphere 2, NASA workshops, etc.

Space Grant students also receive a weekly Friday email with other opportunities and campus resources, and Space Grant is happy to write letters of support and/or recommendation.

## **What makes for a good internship?**

Once interns and mentors have been matched, mentors will receive a Welcome Packet with several documents and resources on how to create a great internship experience for their student. Key to that success includes a great first meeting, where intern and mentor can get to know one another and express their research interests and what may be accomplished during the program year. A mentor should provide a clear outline of responsibilities to an intern, set up consistent forms of communication to allow an intern the space to ask questions (i.e., one-on-one meetings are key), involve the intern in team settings, and set weekly goals with interns that are then followed up on each week. While the research project and an intern's responsibilities may change over time, it is important to have both short and long-term goals clearly defined and written down.

### **How many Space Grant interns may I work with?**

One of Space Grant's goals is to have diversity within our mentors and diversity within the topical areas we are supporting. The Space Grant Committee will typically not match a mentor with more than 2-3 interns total. Beyond this, we find it can be difficult for one person to be a supportive and responsive mentor.

### **What do mentors gain from the program?**

This is an opportunity for you to make an important contribution to encouraging UArizona students to pursue STEM while benefiting your own research program. Our aim is to support high caliber research experiences; students should be active participants in significant aspects of work. The competition among students for internships is steep. If you participate in this program, we will make every effort to match you with a smart and motivated student.

An undergraduate research experience can be a crucial factor in encouraging future scientists and engineers. It also serves an important role in promoting a deeper understanding of what work in various STEM fields actually entails. A positive and exciting internship experience can play an important role in ensuring students remain in the STEM pipeline, and you can key to that experience.

### **Is this program virtual or in person?**

Internships may be virtual, in person, or a combination of both. Mentors are asked to describe research tasks and location of work during the application process. Interns are also asked to verify if they may work in-person, virtually, a combination of both dependent on project, and if they have access to a vehicle to travel off-campus and/or perform field work. All of these factors are considered when selecting an intern/mentor match. In all cases, intern and mentor matches may work together to come up with a schedule that works for them and the research project during the program year.