



*"We make our world significant by the courage of our questions and by the depth of our answers."  
-Carl Sagan*

The Hunter R. Rawlings III Cornell Presidential Research Scholars (RCPRS) program supports a select group of highly motivated undergraduate students, from all colleges and many disciplines, by providing resources for and promoting sustained engagement in research and scholarly study in close relationship with faculty and other mentors.

The program provides students who demonstrate superior academic potential and intellectual curiosity significant research support throughout their undergraduate careers. Up to 200 students are supported every year, approximately 50 per class year. Scholars collaborate with faculty mentors of their choosing in designing and carrying out an individualized program of research.

In addition to this dynamic student-faculty partnership, the program provides each scholar with a generous research support account (RSA) and an annual need-based loan replacement of up to \$4,000 for eligible scholars.

An anonymous gift to the university created the Cornell Presidential Research Scholars program in 1996. In 2006, it was re-named in honor of President Emeritus Hunter R. Rawlings III, who was committed to increasing significant interactions between students and faculty members.

## BENEFITS ABOUND

**Research Support Account (RSA)** Students admitted as freshmen have access to up to \$8,000 to support research and related activities as long as they are full-time enrolled undergraduates at Cornell. Upperclass-admitted students have access to \$5,000. Students who plan and budget well can purchase necessary supplies, receive a living expense grant for at least one summer of research, and attend at least one conference.

**Faculty Connections** Students in RCPRS are expected to participate in research starting in their second semester. This is accomplished through involvement with a faculty mentor, either through on-going faculty research or an independent, faculty-approved project. Faculty mentors are crucial to the success of the RCPRS program.

**Freshman Colloquium** Incoming freshmen participate in the RCPRS Colloquium, which includes meetings with fellow students, university and college coordinators, and faculty representatives. This semester-long series in the fall creates a sense of cohesion and belonging, introduces the students to many Cornell resources, and helps them find a faculty mentor.

**Peer Advisory Network** RCPRS's Peer Advisory Network pairs the program's newest students with upperclass scholars who have come to know Cornell's challenges and resources, and who can provide input through the early stages of finding research opportunities.

**The Cornell Commitment Showcase/Research in Progress** In conjunction with the Freshman Colloquium, RCPRS upperclassmen volunteer to present their research to fellow scholars. This provides opportunities to learn about other projects and opportunities at Cornell.

**Summer Research Experiences** Students can develop summer internships to explore their research interests. Expenses for most internships are paid through RSAs. Each scholar is expected to participate in at least one full-time summer research experience.

**Senior Expo** Seniors are required to showcase their research in this capstone event, held every year in April.

**Graduation Reception** All seniors who graduate in good standing in RCPRS are honored at a reception on the Friday before graduation in May. Families and faculty mentors are invited to join in the celebration where students are introduced and honored.

**Student Advisory Board (SAB)** RCPRS students can apply to be members of the SAB, which advises staff on areas of interest for students, organizes social activities, coordinates the peer advisory network, and publishes a newsletter. Board members also serve as ambassadors of the program.

**Web Resources** [www.commitment.cornell.edu](http://www.commitment.cornell.edu) spotlights student research projects and provides program information. A moderated listserv, CPRS-L, keeps students up-to-date on opportunities, news, and events. Scholars are also encouraged to join the RCPRS Facebook and LinkedIn groups to connect with current scholars and alumni.

**Connect with a Community of Researchers** Relationships Research Scholars develop with one another and with the scholars who came before them add richness to the RCPRS experience. Social networking, visits from alumni, and special events promote connections between students and alumni who have lived the Cornell experience and have applied it to the world beyond.

**Summer Expected Savings Replacement (ESR)** Students who engage in full-time, program-supported research over the summer may apply for a one-time Expected Savings Replacement. The purpose of the ESR is to replace income that students were not able to save because they were completing an unpaid summer of research. *A limited number of ESRs are available.*

## REMAINING A RAWLINGS CORNELL PRESIDENTIAL RESEARCH SCHOLAR

### *General Expectations*

- Starting in the spring of freshman year, students participate in research each semester.
- Research Scholars must maintain a cumulative Grade Point Average of at least 3.0.
- Each scholar is expected to engage in research full-time for at least one summer, and may be eligible to do more if they choose. This can be at Cornell or elsewhere, with endorsement from the student's Cornell faculty mentor.
- Seniors present their research in the spring at the RCPRS Senior Expo.
- In addition to on-going evaluation and monitoring, each student submits an annual review at the end of the academic year. Faculty members also submit student evaluations.

## THE RCPRS EXPERIENCE YEAR-BY-YEAR

### *Freshman Year—a new world to explore*

First-year students are required to participate in the RCPRS Colloquium. This first semester activity introduces students to the many opportunities for research at Cornell, as well as to each other. Freshmen are expected to conduct informational interviews with faculty whose research is of interest to them. By the second semester, most students will have found a mentor and will have begun working on a research project either for wages or for credit. Freshmen write a research plan that describes the project and their goals for the semester. This plan is developed in conjunction with their faculty mentor. RCPRS is intended to be flexible and supportive of the varied needs and interests of each student as they get familiar with Cornell, fields of interest, and the world of research.

### *Sophomore Year—tightening your focus, sharpening your vision*

Scholars use their sophomore year to further explore their interests and become more fully involved in research. Sophomores, whether working with a new mentor or a mentor from the previous year, write a new research plan. The program expects that students will think creatively about their projects. Teaming up with other Research Scholars for a joint project or with more than one faculty mentor for interdisciplinary work is possible. Students who are not fully involved with research or who fall below academic standards (3.0 cumulative GPA) will be carefully evaluated by the program and college staff and face the possibility of being removed from RCPRS.

### *Junior Year—mastering the challenge*

By their junior year, scholars are expected to be working on a more individualized project that may develop into an honors thesis. The program expects that scholars conduct at least one summer of full time research, although it is possible to do research during multiple summers. Summer research need not be done in Ithaca, although off-campus projects funded by RCPRS must be endorsed by the Cornell faculty mentor.

### *Senior Year—honor and recognition for a job well-done*

Seniors are expected to present a poster of their research project at the RCPRS Senior Expo in mid-April. Information regarding requirements for the presentations is made available to both students and mentors in the early spring. Students are strongly encouraged to complete an honors thesis. A digital copy of the thesis should be made available to RCPRS. Seniors, their families, and faculty mentors are invited to a Graduation Reception the Friday before Commencement.

*Regardless of their field of study, RCPRS students are leaders in the perennial quest for knowledge and discovery central to the University's mission. Through the courage of their questions and the depth of their answers, they find value in their education and, ultimately, meaning in their lives.*