



**HUNTER R. RAWLINGS III  
CORNELL PRESIDENTIAL  
RESEARCH SCHOLARS**

*Awarded to exceptional undergraduates who  
demonstrate a strong commitment to research,  
inquiry and discovery*

**STUDENT HANDBOOK**

Hunter R. Rawlings III Cornell Presidential Research Scholars  
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## ABOUT THE PROGRAM

The Cornell Presidential Research Scholars program was created in 1996 to recognize and reward outstanding students committed to inquiry and discovery. In 2006, the Cornell Board of Trustees renamed the program in honor of President Hunter R. Rawlings III in recognition of his commitment to students and scholars.

RCPRS supports a select group of undergraduate students, from all colleges and many disciplines, by providing resources and promoting sustained engagement in research in close relationship with faculty and other mentors. This degree of collaboration is rare in the undergraduate experience. Magnifying the power of this dynamic student-faculty partnership, Rawlings CPRS provides each scholar with access to a research support account (RSA) and, if eligible, an annual need-based loan replacement.

RCPRS is one of three programs under the umbrella of The Cornell Commitment. The Commitment programs *recognize, reward, and encourage further development of a select group of students who exemplify Cornell's commitment to academic excellence, engagement, work and service, inquiry and discovery, and leadership and learning, and in so doing, enrich their experience at Cornell and beyond.*

## SELECTION OF RESEARCH SCHOLARS

Hunter R. Rawlings III Cornell Presidential Research Scholars (RCPRS) are members of a select group, representing less than two percent of the Cornell undergraduate population. Freshmen are selected for the program during the Cornell admissions process based on their academic excellence as well as expressed or demonstrated interest in research and academic inquiry. In addition, a limited number of students are selected as rising juniors through a highly-competitive application process.

## PROGRAM BENEFITS AND SERVICES

### ***Research***

Academic year: RCPRS students participate in research each semester, starting in the spring of their freshman year, usually for 6-10 hours per week. Upperclass students generally work 8-15 hours per week. Students are expected to do research for a minimum of 6 hours per week or their program status may be “conditional.” Students may do research for wages or for credit. The decision to do research for wages or for credit should be made with your faculty mentor, based on the norms in your discipline or department. *Paid research in excess of 20 hours per week during the academic year is not permitted.* Students must carefully plan their budgets to cover research wages, supplies, summer expenses, and to allow for research travel and conferences.

Summer: Students are expected to develop a summer experience in conjunction with their Cornell faculty mentor to explore their research interests either at Cornell or elsewhere. Students who choose to do research away from Cornell are required to have the support of their Cornell mentor as well as an off-campus mentor.

Research Abroad: Students may choose to conduct research abroad. RCPRS encourages such opportunities. *Support will not be given, however, for research or travel to countries listed on the U.S. Department travel warning list, for experiences that are not endorsed by a Cornell faculty mentor or for the cost of study abroad programs.*

Presentations: Students are encouraged to present their work at conferences and posters sessions at Cornell and elsewhere. CURB (the Cornell Undergraduate Research Board) holds a spring and fall poster session; *The Research Paper* displays posters when they launch a new issue of their magazine; many departments hold poster sessions on campus; and each year, several RCPRSers present their work at the National Conference on Undergraduate Research (NCUR). RCPRS **seniors are required** to showcase their research the RCPRS Senior Expo held in April.

Research Plans: Freshman, sophomores and those changing majors and/or projects are required to submit a research plan.

Annual Reviews: All students are required to submit an annual review each April. This includes a research description, which is posted on the RCPRS website, as well as other evaluative information that is for program staff only. The Annual Review also indicates that the student wishes to remain in RCPRS; by not submitting, students indicate they wish to withdraw from RCPRS.

### ***Financial Support***

Loan Reduction: Eligible students may receive up to \$4,000 annually in loan reduction. Eligibility and amounts are determined by the financial aid office and are subject to change as financial need changes.

Research Support Account (RSA): Students admitted as freshman have access to up to \$8,000 to support research and related activities as long as they are full-time enrolled undergraduates at Cornell. Students admitted as rising juniors have access to up to \$5,000 for the duration of their undergraduate career. Students who plan and budget well can purchase necessary supplies, receive a living expense grant for at least one summer of research, attend at least one conference and may receive limited wages. *A waiver is required if a senior who has not completed a summer of full-time research wishes to be eligible for senior year wages or conference funding.*

Summer/Winter Research: Students are strongly encouraged to participate in at least one summer of full-time research (at least 280 hours), either on or off-campus, and may apply for a Living Expense Grant to cover necessary living expenses. This includes rent, utilities, food/household items, and transportation. Expenses are generally capped at \$3,500; students are encouraged to budget wisely to make the most of all of their research experiences.

Students may also apply for funding to do research over the winter break.

Expected Savings Replacement (ESR): Students who engage in full-time research over the summer may qualify for approximately \$3,000 as an expected savings replacement. The ESR replaces summer income that you were not able to save as you were completing an unpaid

summer of research. These funds are designed to replace Cornell's "summer savings expectation" (SSE), so the amount is determined annually by the Financial Aid Office.

The ESR is a benefit in addition to the summer living expense grant and is money that does not come from your Research Support Account (RSA). The ESR is awarded 50% in the fall semester and 50% in the spring. Students are required to be enrolled full-time during each of those semesters to receive the ESR. *ESRs are not guaranteed; a limited number are available each year.*

Research Supplies: Research supplies and services (rental of space, use of lab equipment, etc.) are generally covered by the RSA, up to \$500 per semester. **All expenses over \$50 require pre-approval.** Non-expendable items such as equipment, computer-related purchases (but not computers or other hardware) and the purchase of texts or other literature required for research may be permitted, but will be covered at only 50% of the purchase price, with prior approval only. See the funding request form and guidelines for further details. NOT ALLOWABLE EXPENSES include, but are not limited to: tuition, course textbooks, computers and third party expenses (e.g., faculty or research assistant expenses even if they are related to your research).

Conferences: All students are encouraged to submit materials to present at relevant conferences. Students who are invited to present their research may request funding from RCPRS to cover conference-related expenses and travel. These expenses must be pre-approved. Expenses are generally capped at \$1,000.

### ***Student Advisory Board***

The Student Advisory Board (SAB) usually has 8-10 members who serve as the student voice of the program. They provide input regarding programming and policies to RCPRS staff. SAB members serve as program ambassadors, talking not only with prospective students and new freshmen, but with trustees, the president and faculty as well.

They also coordinate social activities for their RCPRS peers, such as Pizza at the Nines, coffee tabs and bowling. All students are encouraged to participate in these social events. The SAB also coordinates such things as the Peer Advisory Network and summer housing. Students may apply to join the Student Advisory Board toward the end of the fall semester.

## **PROGRAM DETAILS BY CLASS YEAR (PROGRAM AGREEMENT)**

### **All Four Years**

I will...

- Maintain at least a 3.0 cumulative grade point average (GPA)
- Engage in research each semester for at least 6 hours per week starting in the spring of freshman year, unless on program-approved hiatus, involved in off-campus program (e.g., study abroad, engineering co-op) or on leave of absence from the university
- Complete an annual review in the spring
- Earn a favorable evaluation from my faculty mentor
- Submit all forms, plans, and funding requests in a complete and timely manner
- Not incur any expenses without prior approval, when required

- Seek opportunities to present my research at Cornell and elsewhere (*strongly encouraged*)
- Read and respond to program-related email and other communication
- Uphold the standards and ideals of the RCPRS program of integrity and ethics in research and academics
- Meet with program staff and/or college representatives as soon as possible if I have difficulty with any of these expectations or program requirements

### **First Semester Freshman Year**

- Attend all the colloquium sessions outlined by the program and by my college
- Complete at least three informational interviews with faculty, one of which may be an interview and site visit with my peer advisor
- Meet my peer advisor at least once (*strongly encouraged*)

### **Second Semester Freshman Year**

- Complete a research plan outlining my project and goals for this semester
- Begin research on campus
- Complete and submit appropriate credit or hiring form

### **Sophomore and Junior Years**

- Complete a second or updated research plan due early in sophomore year
- Submit form indicating research for credit or for wages
- Conduct at least *one* summer of full-time research, either on or off-campus
- Act as a peer advisor to an incoming student (*strongly encouraged*)

### **Senior Year**

- Submit a research abstract
- Present research at the RCPRS Senior Expo
- Complete a senior honors thesis (*strongly encouraged*) and submit an electronic copy to RCPRS office
- Not be eligible to earn wages or conference funding through RCPRS if I have not completed a summer of research unless I receive a waiver

### ***I understand that if I meet these expectations, I will:***

- Remain a member of Rawlings CPRS as long as I am a full-time undergraduate at Cornell University
- Receive research support for approved expenses from the Research Support Account (up to \$8,000 total for all years)
- Receive up to \$4,000 annually in loan reduction if I am eligible for financial aid (may change from year to year)
- Graduate in good standing as a Hunter R. Rawlings III Cornell Presidential Research Scholar

I understand that my continued participation in the Program is conditional upon my meeting all of the above expectations. If I do not meet these expectations, the Program Coordinator may, at his or her discretion, place me on probation or terminate me from the program. If I am

terminated from the Program, I will no longer be eligible for financial support from the Program, and I will not be allowed to reapply to the Program. Finally, I understand that all decisions of the Program Coordinator are final.

#### **IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER/PROGRAM DEADLINES**

Some dates will vary from year to year, but these are general deadlines for planning purposes.

~September 1 <sup>st</sup>	Post-summer research materials and ESR application
~October 1 <sup>st</sup>	Fall research for credit or wage form
~October 1 <sup>st</sup>	Sophomore Research Plan
~March 1 <sup>st</sup>	Spring research for credit or wage form
~March 1 <sup>st</sup>	Freshman Research Plan
~March 25 <sup>th</sup>	Research abstracts for Senior Expo (if applicable)
~April 30 <sup>th</sup>	Annual Review (this also indicates your intention to continue in RCPRS)
May 1 <sup>st</sup>	Summer Living Expense Grant

All funding applications are due at least **2 weeks before** any expenses are incurred; the exception is for the Summer Living Expense Grant, due May 1.

#### **PROGRAM COMPLIANCE**

In order to remain in good standing in the program, students are expected to meet the aforementioned expectations. Program staff reviews student status each semester, looking at GPA, involvement in research, timely submission of required information and forms, any feedback received from faculty mentors, as well as any extenuating circumstances which should be considered.

##### Program Status Designations

*Good Standing* – scholar has full access to all RCPRS benefits.

*Conditional* – scholar has access to the RSA and the loan replacement, but is monitored closely and staff reviews the student’s record at the end of the conditional semester. If a student’s status is “conditional” in the spring, approval for his/her summer funding may be delayed.

*Probation* – scholar does not have access to the RSA or the loan replacement; if the student does not meet all program requirements within the probationary semester, he/she will be removed from the program.

*Removal* – scholar is removed from the program, loses access to all benefits, and will not be re-admitted to the program.

*Leave of Absence (LOA)* – voluntary, medical or academic leave from the university. Students on LOA must communicate with the RCPRS office in advance of their return to Cornell and will be “conditional” for the first semester upon their return.

## STUDENT SUPPORT AND ASSISTANCE

Students are encouraged to talk with their faculty mentor, program staff and college contacts. If a student is having difficulties meeting program requirements, finding a mentor or getting involved with research, they should speak with program staff as soon as possible.

Kristin Ramsay, kmr44, 5-8595: Program Coordinator, Associate Director of The Cornell Commitment. Kristin is the main contact person for the program and all related issues.

## SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Exceptions to the above guidelines will be considered on an individual basis and will be given full consideration, provided all necessary information is provided to program staff at the time of the request

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### Use of Money (RSA)

**1. May I receive credit and wages for the same research project?**

No, students working on a single research project may receive one or the other, but not both wages and credit for the same work.

**2. May I receive credit for one project and wages for a separate project?**

This needs to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. It is important that these are two clearly-defined and distinct projects.

**3. May I receive wages from my mentor in addition to what RCPRS covers?**

RCPRS covers wages at the rates specified on the wage form. If your mentor wishes to pay you more per hour, the increase would come from their budget, not your RSA, and be arranged through their payroll representative.

**4. Is the \$8,000 renewable every year or is it \$8,000 in total?**

Each entering freshman has access to a Research Support Account valued at \$8,000 **total**, and each upperclass-admitted student has access to up to \$5,000, to be used while a full-time undergraduate student in good standing in the RCPRS program.

**5. May I receive both wages and the living expense grant over the summer? What if my mentor wants to pay me?**

You may not receive both wages and the living expense grant from RCPRS. If your mentor wishes to pay you, or you are working off-campus in a paid position, you may still apply for a living expense grant from your RSA. It is important to note that students receiving income for their summer research may not qualify for the ESR (see p.2).

**6. May I apply for the living expense grant more than once?**

Yes, if your budget allows. This decision should be discussed with your faculty mentor and RCPRS coordinator.



**7. My research is in the social sciences or the humanities and I don't need lab supplies. Can my RSA pay for books? For help coding my data? For paying subjects?**

Yes. Your RSA is available to cover texts and literature that is required for your research, but not course textbooks. The rate of compensation is 50% of the purchase price because these are items that students will generally keep.

You may use your RSA to help with coding of data, but the expectation is that the process of coding is an integral part of learning to conduct research in your field. Pre-approval is required.

Pre-approval is also required if you are conducting an experiment with human subjects and wish to compensate the subjects.

**8. I'm an international student—does this change my funding at all?**

In some cases, an international student's reimbursement may be reduced due to certain withholding taxes. This is applied to reimbursements and grants (living expense and ESR). You may apply for a refund of this tax at the end of the year. (See ISSO for details on international student tax refunds.)

**9. What happens if I run out of money?**

This happens rarely. You are still expected to participate in the RCPRS program and to meet all program requirements. By doing this, you will graduate in good standing in the program and receive special recognition as a Rawlings Cornell Presidential Research Scholar. It is our hope that with your mentor you will plan your budget successfully, and thus avoid running out of money. Students have either completed their research for credit or their mentor has been able to continue paying the student's wages.

**Research, mentors**

**10. Does my mentor have to be in my college?**

No. You may select a mentor from any of the colleges at Cornell. However, if you plan on doing a Senior Honors Thesis, you will need to have a mentor from your college then.

**11. Does my mentor have to be a professor?**

Yes, generally this should be the case. If you have found someone who is an associate professor, adjunct professor, or research associate, you will need to discuss this with the program coordinator or your college contact before making a commitment.

**12. What happens if I can't find a mentor?**

Students are responsible for finding a faculty mentor. Freshman Colloquium provides opportunities to get started, such as during the Freshman-Faculty Dinner, the college sessions, and while conducting the faculty informational interviews. Students should speak with their college representatives, peer advisors, attend seminars in their field(s) of interest, talk to their professors, and search online.

**13. Can I switch mentors/projects/majors?**

Yes. In the event that you find you need or want to switch mentors, you should first discuss the matter with your current mentor and make sure you end the relationship on the best of terms. Once

this is accomplished, inform RCPRS staff of this change and then submit an updated research plan. When changing projects and/or majors, the same process is required.

**14. When I am doing a co-op or study abroad, am I required to be engaged in research?**

No, you are not required to be engaged in research while on co-op, study abroad, Cornell-in-Washington or other university-sponsored off-campus program. Some students do choose to continue their research off-campus or take advantage of research in another location. Students interested in receiving RSA support for such research need mentor endorsement and program approval.

**15. Am I permitted to take a leave from research (while still an enrolled student) for a semester and still remain in good standing in the program?**

Students wishing to take a leave from research must first talk with the program coordinator. In general, the status of a student who requests time off from research will be Conditional. If the student already has Conditional status, they may be placed on probation. The program coordinator considers such requests on a case-by-case basis.

**16. Can I be involved in more than one research project at a time?**

Yes. Students have been involved with more than one faculty mentor on different projects. Occasionally students may be involved in more than one project with the same mentor. See questions 1 and 2 regarding wages and/or credit.

**Other**

**17. How do I get involved in the Student Advisory Board?**

Attend SAB-sponsored events and get to know the SAB members. All RCPRS students are invited to apply for a position on the Student Advisory Board at the end of the fall semester. Interviews are usually held during study week. Accepted members begin a one-year term in January.

**18. If my program status is conditional, what is required of me? What if I'm on probation?**

If your program status is conditional, it is typically because you were not able to meet one or more of the program requirements. You will have one semester to meet the missing requirement(s). During that time, however, you must also meet all program requirements on time, and keep the lines of communication with your mentor and program staff open. The requirements are the same for those who are on probation.

If you have any other questions, please contact the RCPRS office at [rcprs@cornell.edu](mailto:rcprs@cornell.edu).