Interdisciplinary Undergraduate Research Grants

I’m confused. Do art students really conduct research?
Arts faculty conduct research and so do their students. Faculty are expected to establish and maintain a program of research/creative endeavor and there are no limits placed on that creative work. Research/creative work of our faculty must be rigorous, exploratory and make a contribution to the field. These contributions (outcomes) take many forms: writings in journals/books, presentations at conferences, consultancies, shows/exhibitions, commissions, performances, documentaries, recordings, and developing new technologies. Student research involves these same elements, meaning your project outcomes will likely be similar to these examples.

Who is eligible?
This funding opportunity is for undergraduate students in the School of the Arts, including freshmen. All are welcome to apply for funding to work on projects they are passionate about. We ask for expected graduation date on the application to make sure students are enrolled while the project is in progress.

Do we have to be an interdisciplinary team?
No. One of our goals is that students have a positive experience collaborating with peers from other majors. That’s part of the spirit of the grants and it gets the committee excited to see the possibilities.

Can an individual art major apply?
If a student applies individually with a really interesting idea, it will receive serious consideration.

Can team members participate from outside the School of the Arts?
Absolutely, as long as one student is an art major. In fact, we like to see you working with other students at the university. Take advantage of the entire university. VCU is classified by the Carnegie Foundation Commission on Higher Education as “Very High Research Activity.”

How many students apply?
We receive approximately 100 submissions from all of the arts majors, averaging 3 students per project.

How many proposals are awarded?
It depends on how much money is being requested and it’s very competitive. This year we expect approximately 15 proposals will be selected.

How do I approach the summary section of the proposal?
This is your one chance to convince the committee to give your team the grant award. Before submitting it, pretend you are the committee reading it. Make sure you have thought it through and that it is logical. Clearly and briefly summarize your research idea and/or creative work and why it is important to the art world. Let the
committee know what process you intend to go through to arrive at a desired outcome. This section should be approximately 100 words in length.

**How do we know how to budget and what to budget?**

Know that the limit is $3,000 per project but don’t automatically ask for the full amount if you cannot demonstrate you need it. Most projects do not ask for the full amount. The committee looks carefully at how much thought the team has put into developing this budget. Below is an example of a reasonable budget from a team of fashion design, sculpture and photography majors. Their proposal is to create a wearable art piece and enter it in the annual *World of Wearable Art* contest in New Zealand. The budgets often have a paragraph of explanation. While this budget is adequate, I would ask, “what if you’re a winner, are you going to New Zealand?” If yes, enter a travel estimate in the budget – which they did not. But still the committee would have funded this proposal.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Budget for Estimated Expenses</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Supplies</strong></td>
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<td>Fabric</td>
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<td>Wood</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<td>Artist Entrance Fee</td>
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<td>Photography</td>
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<td>Crating</td>
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<td>Shipping to New Zealand</td>
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<td>Misc.</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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**What is the timeline?**

The timeline should begin in January. By then the team knows they’ve been selected to receive the award and can begin their work. The timeline can be in a simple bullet format. At minimum it should indicate by month what action steps the team will take toward project completion. It would conclude with the planned outcome. Typically projects are one semester, two semesters or three semesters (one calendar year). The committee may question if much work is planned over a summer semester yet the team members are dispersed and working full time jobs. Also, make sure team member(s) have not graduated as you progress through a time line.

**What are examples of expected outcomes?**

With your passion and funding, what do you want to realize? It’s our hope you get funded for your big idea and enjoy the experience or collaboration so you will want to do this again. We generally see projects produce a documentary, a video, a performance, a piece of creative work, an exhibition, a book, paper or develop an app.
When will I know if our project is selected?
The awards are announced via email by December 1st and the funds are available in January.

In total, how much money will be awarded?
A total of $30,000 will be awarded each year.

Do I have to complete a report or paper at the conclusion of the project?
While you are expected to have an outcome, a paper is not necessary. However we may ask you to talk to other students and parents at an Open House or we would like to brag about your team project to other audiences. What you learned and the process you went through is valuable information. Please give credit to VCUarts for supporting your project.

When is the money available to use?
The money will be located in the department budget of the primary student's major. Cash/checks are not issued to students for the amount of the grant. It is our hope that the department can purchase as much as possible for your team from the grant funds, otherwise students would be reimbursed. The award letter will advise you to meet with Associate Dean Nancy Scott in January for instructions to access the funds and purchase what is needed.

Is being awarded a grant a big deal?
Definitely, list it on your resume!