

# ***The Undergraduate Research and Creative Activities Program***

The Office of Academic Innovation and Effectiveness  
Southern Illinois University Edwardsville

## **URCA ASSOCIATE BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS**

Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity Associate projects may have budgets up to \$500. The University and the state of Illinois divide expenditures into several broad categories. You will also need to submit your budget under these expenditure guidelines.

Here are the definitions with explanations of these categories. Items in quotation marks are taken from the Southern Illinois University P-Card (Procurement Card) User Guide:

**Commodities:** *“Consumable supplies. Includes individual equipment items costing less than \$100.”*

A good majority of the items included in URCA budgets fall into this category. Basically, any tangible object that you can hold in your hand that costs less than \$100 will fall into this category. There are, of course, exceptions to this. Here are some common examples of items that are commodities:

- Chemicals and lab supplies (Petri dishes, extraction kits, pipettes, test tubes, cells, live animals, plants, etc.) Even if a single kit consisting of several useable items, chemical, etc., costs more than \$100, it is still considered Commodities.
- Art supplies (Brushes, paint, clay, material, ink, paper, precious metals, etc.) Even if a single piece of gold wire, etc. costs more than \$100, it is still considered Commodities.
- Office supplies (ink cartridges, flash drives, paper, pens, envelopes, folders, etc.) Even if a single ink cartridge costs more than \$100, it is still considered Commodities.
- Books, movies, DVDs that cost less than \$100 each.
- Items such as tape recorders, digital recorders, and other small equipment that cost less than \$100.
- Photocopying done on the SIUE campus. (Runs about 3½ cents per sheet at SIUE's Fast Copy)
- Making of presentation posters
- Other miscellaneous items (batteries, etc.)

**Equipment:** *“Individual equipment items costing at least \$100”*

Please note that shipping and handling costs are considered part of the final purchase total. So, if for instance, you are buying an item that costs \$95 but shipping and handling are \$10, then the item will be considered Equipment because the total is \$105. Commonly used items that are considered Equipment:

- Camcorders, transcription machines, equipment (real examples include oxygen probes and kilns) and other durable goods that cost more than \$100
- Books, if the purchase price is greater than \$100 (cost INCLUDES shipping & handling)

Note: Some items are NOT considered Equipment, even if the individual item costs greater than \$100. Items that may cost more than \$100 but are NOT Equipment:

- Chemicals and expendable lab supplies that cost more than \$100 per item
- Precious metals and other art supplies that cost more than \$100 per item
- Printer ink cartridges, even if they cost more than \$100
- Software
- Poster printing

**Contractual Services:** *“Services to be performed by an external vendor, includes registration fees for a conference or workshop.....equipment repair and computer software.”*

In general, Contractual Services involve paying someone to provide a specialized service for you. Sometimes the distinction is not very apparent between Contractual Services and Commodities. Here are some common examples of Contractual Services:

- Computer software (no matter what the cost)
- Conference registration
- Film developing/processing
- Microfiche copies, courthouse processing fees, and other services done off-campus
- Specialized services (for instance, machine shop work, repairs to equipment, or “consultant” work by a non-University employee)

**Travel:** Under University guidelines, student travel falls under Contractual Services. However, for URCA purposes, we do like student travel to be considered a separate category.

However, there are two distinct areas in the URCA budget in which travel may be considered and the amounts may not be utilized for the same trips. The \$500 budget for the project may include student travel to a conference in which the students will gain information, insights or techniques that will help them carry out their project. In addition, the Office of Academic Innovation and Effectiveness has available \$400 for students to use for travel to a conference in which they present their findings or creative work. These amounts CANNOT be combined for the same trip.

Student travel may include:

- Airfare or other transportation
- Lodging
- Shuttles, taxis, parking and other associated costs
- Meal reimbursement or daily per diem (\$28/day for in-state travel and \$32 for out-of-state; must be in continuous travel for at least 24 hours)
- Mileage (instead of reimbursement for the actual cost of gasoline)

In addition to conference travel, mileage costs may also be incurred during the course of the student’s research, such as to travel to and from a field site or to collect data. The current mileage reimbursement rate is 50½ cents per mile, but this figure is subject to change.

**IMPORTANT NOTE: The University has contracts with certain preferred vendors (such as Office Max.) These vendors MUST be used to keep our contract and may result in substantial savings for you. Check with the Office of Academic Innovation and Effectiveness for more guidance on this area.**