Student Research Trainees (under REU or similar training programs)

Guidance for Research Stipend Payments

Please take a few minutes to review this information for the guidelines applicable to Student Research Trainees (SRT). Adherence to these guidelines and to the goals of the particular program will help ensure Rice preserves the non-employee status of the SRT program.

Background

Whether through a Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REU) award or similar training program, Rice hosts numerous initiatives designed to expand student participation in scientific and academic research. The SRT experience is intended primarily, and funded for the purpose of, providing an educational training experience for students (normally undergraduates) who might be interested in entering or continuing study in certain fields. By integrating research and education, these initiatives attempt to attract a diversified pool of talented students into certain targeted career paths, including teaching and research. *The focus of these programs is* not to provide employees to Rice or employment to the SRT, but *to provide valuable educational experiences for these students through participation in university-level research efforts*.

The stipends paid to SRT participants are not intended as wages and are not considered as being in exchange for services performed. These monies are provided as training/education stipends to allow students to forgo actual employment opportunities in favor of participating in university research and education programs. In order to distinguish them from visiting students whose research efforts primarily benefit Rice, these individuals are classified as SRTs or Student Research Trainees.

Please follow these guidelines to preserve the non-employee status of SRTs:

1) The primary purpose of the stipends under these programs should be to further the education and training of the recipient rather than payment for past, present or future services rendered to Rice. These students should **not** be viewed as performing required services for Rice's benefit in exchange for their financial support.

2) The focus of the SRT experience should be on the experience provided to them and not on results of any research by them. The expectation is that these SRTs will receive research experience by allowing them to join a research group and work closely with faculty and other students. Thus, SRTs, in accordance with their respective programs, provide orientation sessions, guest lectures, student presentations, social interactions and other professional development activities.

   No "work" assignment is required or implied and an employment status is not intended. No payments should be withheld based on results, though further stipends can be discontinued if the student withdraws from the program. Other than their participation in the program, SRT students should not be required to provide Rice a particular product or result (what tax laws refer to as "a substantial quid pro quo") in order to receive stipend payments.

3) Because SRT participants are not Rice "workers", they should not be used directly to provide a work product required by a Rice research/educational program or a sponsored research project.

4) The schedule (or time present) for SRTs should be determined by the elements of the program. It is not intended for SRT schedules to necessarily resemble the (work) schedules of paid research staff.

5) Stipend payments will be determined by the funding source and, because SRTs are not employees, the stipends should not be determined by comparing their amount to the salary that might be received by paid research staff.

6) SRTs should not be characterized as staff members nor accorded employee benefits.

7) SRTs should maintain health insurance coverage, including hospitalization coverage while participating in this program.

To reiterate tax laws, internal Rice procedures and applicable grant conditions do not permit Rice to treat these students as employees who are providing services in exchange for wages. If you have any questions regarding the appropriateness of this administrative procedure or practice, please contact your dean's office.