Ledford Faculty Mentor Guidelines

The Ledford Scholarship, named for Colonel Lee B. Ledford, offers financial assistance for summer research projects to undergraduate students enrolled at ACA member institutions. Undergraduate students from any discipline are eligible, and a variety of fields of study have been supported in the past, applying various methodologies, e.g., laboratory research, field work, interview/oral history, archival/library research, participant observation, etc....

The Ledford Scholarship provides stipends for students at a rate of $10.00/hour for up to 360 hours (up to $3600 total) over the course of the summer as well as an allotment of up to $1,000 for equipment, supplies, and travel directly related to the research project (if relevant).

Student applications must have the support of a faculty member who will agree to serve as a mentor to the student researcher throughout the project. These mentors are expected to share their own research skills and experiences, which can prepare scholars to conduct more intensive undergraduate research, and to cultivate among the student scholars a richer understanding of academic research and scholarly pursuit.

Ledford Faculty Mentors are strongly encouraged to attend (at least) the student portion of the ACA’s Annual Summit held each fall (usually at the end of September/beginning of October—visit the ACA website for specific time and locale), at which time the Scholars do a public poster presentation of their research project and participate in a ceremony recognizing their achievements. While no Ledford funding is available for faculty mentors, these instructors receive complementary registration to the Summit. The mentors (or their home institutions) are responsible for any lodging or other travel expenses associated with the conference.

What are the hallmarks of a successful mentor?
While it is understood that mentors may help students with ideas for proposals and with research methodology, the proposal must be written by the student. In the application, both student and mentor will verify the proposal has been completed by the student.

The mentor’s work is obviously a crucial component of the student’s learning experience: mentors share their knowledge, experiences, and wisdom, and they serve as role models for their students; they help students define and attain their goals and engage in disciplinary study and academic/professional preparation; they stimulate student curiosity and build confidence; they cultivate growth in an open and supportive environment; and through the development of students’ research, encourage and assist these scholars to participate and/or present at conferences or other meetings on- or off-campus.

How is mentorship accomplished?
There are probably as many mentoring styles as there are personality types. The challenge and fun of mentoring is developing one’s own personal style for sharing the special strengths and skills s/he has to offer. Mentoring is more effective when the scholar takes a proactive role in maintaining contact with the mentor. The Scholar should understand the importance of taking the initiative in maintaining the relationship and responding to the mentor’s efforts to help the process be successful. Possible stumbling blocks to successful mentorship can include mentor inaccessibility due to relocation or unavailability. Moreover, problematic interpersonal issues between mentor and student, such as misplaced priorities, lack of contact, distrust, misguided competition, deception, harsh reaction, or undue assignment of credit for work done can greatly diminish the learning opportunities for students. Ultimately, the Mentor should be as helpful as possible while remaining mindful that the project is owned by the Student Scholar.