

College of Agriculture and Food Sciences

Center for International Agricultural Trade Development Research and Training

USDA NextGen Undergraduate Research

& Engagement Internship Program

CIATDRT - Internship Program

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Program Overview

1. Program Purpose

The Center for International Agricultural Trade Development Research and Training (CIATDRT) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) NextGen Undergraduate Research and Engagement Internship Program (UREIP) provide undergraduate students with structured, faculty-mentored research and experiential learning opportunities that strengthen knowledge, skills, and career readiness in food, agriculture, natural resources, and related fields.

The program is designed to develop the next generation of agricultural professionals by providing students with meaningful hands-on experiences that integrate classroom learning with research, applied problem solving, workforce development, leadership development, and professional engagement. Through participation in internship activities, students gain practical experience, build technical and professional competencies, explore career pathways, expand their professional networks, and strengthen their preparation for graduate education and careers within USDA mission areas.

Internships are conducted under the guidance of faculty mentors and may involve basic research, applied research, experiential learning, entrepreneurship, community engagement, international agriculture, project management, or other scholarly and professional activities that contribute to student learning and workforce preparation.

2. Eligible Internship Areas

The USDA NextGen UREIP supports student internships across a broad range of disciplines and professional practice areas relevant to food, agriculture, natural resources, community development, and global food systems. Internships may be conducted in laboratory, field, classroom, community, industry, business, government, nonprofit, or international settings and are intended to provide meaningful research and experiential learning opportunities aligned with USDA mission areas.

Examples of eligible internship areas include:

- Agricultural Sciences
- Food Science and Food Safety
- Soil and Water Sciences
- Biological Systems Engineering
- Biotechnology and Agricultural Innovation
- Natural Resources, Ecology, and Conservation
- Agribusiness, Entrepreneurship, and Agricultural Enterprise Development
- Agricultural Economics and Policy
- Agricultural Marketing and Supply Chain Management
- Community, Rural, and Economic Development
- Workforce Development and Career Readiness
- International Agriculture, Trade, and Development

- Global Food Systems and Food Security
- Experiential Education and Applied Learning
- Leadership Development and Youth Engagement
- Extension, Outreach, and Stakeholder Engagement
- Program Planning, Evaluation, and Impact Assessment
- International Project Management and Capacity Building
- Interdisciplinary Food, Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Human Sciences

Students are encouraged to participate in internships that support their academic interests, career goals, and professional development objectives while contributing to the advancement of USDA mission areas.

3. Internship Structure

The internship consists of a two-semester appointment (Fall and Spring) that may include basic research, applied research, experiential learning and engagement, entrepreneurship, international agriculture, project management, and related professional activities.

➢ **Fall Semester 2026**

- September 21, 2026 - December 4, 2026
- 11 weeks (fall semester will be prorated)

➢ **Spring Semester 2027**

- 14-week appointment
- Dates aligned with the FAMU Spring 2027 academic calendar

4. Student Support

Selected interns may receive funding based upon one of two approved appointment categories:

- 20 hours per week: Up to $5,000 per semester
- 15 hours per week: Up to $3,750 per semester

Funding calculations are based on a standard 14-week internship model. Fall 2026 appointments beginning September 21, 2026, will be prorated or adjusted.

Hours worked weekly	**Stipend Amount**
20 hours	$5,000
15 hours	$3,750
Request for relevant supplies	**Maximum supplies request**
Interns working 20 hours	$2,500
Interns working 15 hours	$2,000

Continuation from Fall to Spring is contingent upon:

- Satisfactory progress
- Completion of required deliverables
- Faculty mentor recommendation
- Available funding

5. Student Responsibilities

Student interns are expected to:

- Participate in project orientation and safety training
- Maintain regular (weekly) communication with faculty mentors
- Conduct research activities according to approved protocols and timelines
- Maintain accurate laboratory and/or field records
- Participate in weekly mentor meetings
- Submit monthly progress reports
- Present research findings at a CAFS, MANRRS, PAWC, or other research symposium
- Assist with manuscripts, posters, presentations, or other scholarly products
- Participate in relevant Global Agriculture NextGen leadership, career development, and/or New-Gen Global Food Systems Network activities

6. Expected Outcomes

By completing the internship, students should demonstrate:

- Increased knowledge and understanding of a discipline, profession, or USDA mission area relevant to their internship experience.
- Applied technical, analytical, research, or professional skills appropriate to their internship assignment.
- Critical thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making abilities.
- Effective written, oral, and professional communication skills.
- Data collection, management, analysis, and interpretation competencies, as appropriate to the internship.
- Professional workplace behaviors, including responsibility, accountability, teamwork, and ethical conduct.
- Project planning, organization, and time-management skills.
- Increased leadership capacity and confidence in professional settings.
- Greater awareness of career pathways in agriculture, food systems, natural resources, community development, agribusiness, international development, and related fields.
- Enhanced preparedness for graduate education, professional employment, entrepreneurship, public service, or leadership roles within USDA mission areas.

7. Student Evaluation and Assessment

The USDA NextGen UREIP is designed to promote student learning, professional growth, workforce readiness, leadership development, and career preparation. Assessment activities are intended to document student learning and skill development, measure progress toward

internship goals and learning objectives, and evaluate the effectiveness of the internship and mentoring experience.

Student performance will be assessed through a combination of faculty mentor evaluations, student self-assessments, progress reports, project deliverables, professional development activities, presentations, and participation in program requirements.

7.1. Assessment Areas

Students will be evaluated in the following areas:

- Technical and disciplinary knowledge development.
- Application of skills and knowledge to real-world challenges and professional settings.
- Critical thinking, problem-solving, and analytical abilities.
- Written, oral, and professional communication skills.
- Professionalism, reliability, and workplace conduct.
- Initiative, independence, and adaptability.
- Project planning, organization, and time management.
- Teamwork, collaboration, and interpersonal effectiveness.
- Leadership development and professional growth.
- Achievement of agreed-upon learning objectives and project milestones.
- Contribution to project deliverables, internship activities, and program goals.

7.2. Assessment Schedule

- **Beginning of Internship**

Students will complete a baseline self-assessment to identify their existing knowledge, skills, career interests, and professional development goals.

- **Mid-Semester Review**

Faculty mentors will conduct a formal progress review to evaluate:

- Progress toward project objectives
- Quality of completed work
- Achievement of learning goals
- Professional engagement
- Areas needing improvement

- **End-of-Semester Evaluation**

Faculty mentors and students will complete final evaluations assessing:

- Achievement of learning outcomes
- Completion of project responsibilities
- Research competency development
- Professional growth

- Readiness for continued internship engagement, graduate study, professional employment, entrepreneurship, leadership opportunities, or USDA-related career pathways.

7.3. Continuation Funding Decisions

Continuation into the Spring semester will be based upon:

- Satisfactory project progress
- Completion of required deliverables
- Faculty mentor recommendation
- Demonstrated achievement of learning objectives
- Compliance with program requirements
- Availability of program funding

8. Participation Process - How to Apply

8.1. Faculty Project Submission Process

Faculty members interested in serving as mentors in the USDA NextGen UREIP must submit a Project Concept Paper for review and consideration.

The Concept Paper should be approximately three to five pages in length and describe a research, applied research, experiential learning, extension, entrepreneurship, workforce development, international agriculture, project management, community engagement, or other scholarly activity that provides meaningful hands-on learning opportunities for undergraduate students while supporting USDA mission areas and workforce development objectives.

Each Concept Paper should include:

- Project title and faculty mentor information
- Problem statement and project justification
- Student learning goals and objectives
- Student learning and professional development opportunities
- A proposed semester-by-semester time-phased work plan for a 14-week internship period during the fall and/or spring semesters.
- Faculty mentoring and supervision plan
- Expected student deliverables
- Expected project outcomes and impacts
- Student evaluation/assessment plan
- Proposed budget and supply requirements within the context of the allowable funding limits

Concept Papers will be evaluated based on:

- Alignment with USDA NextGen goals
- Student learning and workforce development opportunities
- Quality of the mentoring plan
- Feasibility of the proposed scope of work and timeline

- Expected outcomes and impacts

Projects approved for funding will move forward to the student application and appointment process.

8.2. Student Application and Appointment Process

Undergraduate students interested in participating in the USDA NextGen UREIP must apply to an approved faculty-led project. Students may be recruited by participating faculty mentors or may express interest in approved projects that align with their academic background, career interests, and professional development goals. The program supports student engagement in basic research, applied research, experiential learning, extension/outreach, workforce development, entrepreneurship, international agriculture, project management, and other approved scholarly activities.

- **Student Eligibility**

To be considered for participation, applicants must:

- Be a **United States citizen**.
- Be currently enrolled as an undergraduate student at Florida A&M University.
- Be in good academic standing.
- Demonstrate an interest in the priority areas and disciplines already identified for this program, such as: agriculture, food systems, natural resources, agribusiness, entrepreneurship, international development, project management, workforce development, experiential learning, or related fields/areas.
- Be willing to commit to the required internship schedule and program expectations.
- Be available to participate for the approved internship period of performance under the supervision of a faculty mentor.
- Be able to complete all required reporting, professional development, and assessment activities associated with the program.

- **Required Application Materials**

Students selected by a faculty mentor must submit the following materials:

- Completed USDA NextGen UREIP Application.
- Current unofficial academic transcript.
- Statement of Interest (500-750 words).
- Resume
- Faculty Letter of Recommendation.
- Professional headshot photograph for program communications, reporting, and USDA program documentation purposes.
- Documentation verifying United States citizenship, consistent with university and program requirements (e.g., U.S. Passport, Birth Certificate, Certificate of Citizenship, or other approved documentation).

- **Statement of Interest Requirements**

The Statement of Interest should address:

1. Why is the student interested in the proposed internship project?
2. How prior coursework, experiences, and skills have prepared the student for participation.
3. Technical, professional, leadership, and career skills the student hopes to develop through the internship.
4. How participation supports the student's academic, career, graduate school, or professional goals.

9. Selection Criteria

Applications will be reviewed based upon:

- Academic preparation and relevant coursework.
- Alignment between the student's interests and the project objectives.
- Quality of the Statement of Interest.
- Faculty recommendation.
- Potential for professional growth and workforce development.
- Commitment to completing all program requirements and deliverables.

10. Appointment and Acceptance

Students selected for participation will receive an official Internship Award Letter outlining:

- Internship Project Title
- Faculty Mentor(s)
- Internship Period of Performance
- Weekly Commitment Level (15 or 20 hours)
- Approved Stipend Amount
- Reporting Requirements
- Expected Deliverables
- Program Expectations

Students must formally accept the award and complete all required onboarding activities before beginning internship responsibilities.

Students selected for participation are expected to comply with all program requirements described under the Student Responsibilities section of this handbook, including orientation, training, reporting, professional development activities, mentor meetings, Office of Global Agriculture requirements, evaluation requirements, and final project deliverables. Failure to meet program requirements may affect continuation funding eligibility and future participation in USDA NextGen activities.

Contact Us

For more information, please contact:

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