NIH › National Institutes of Health
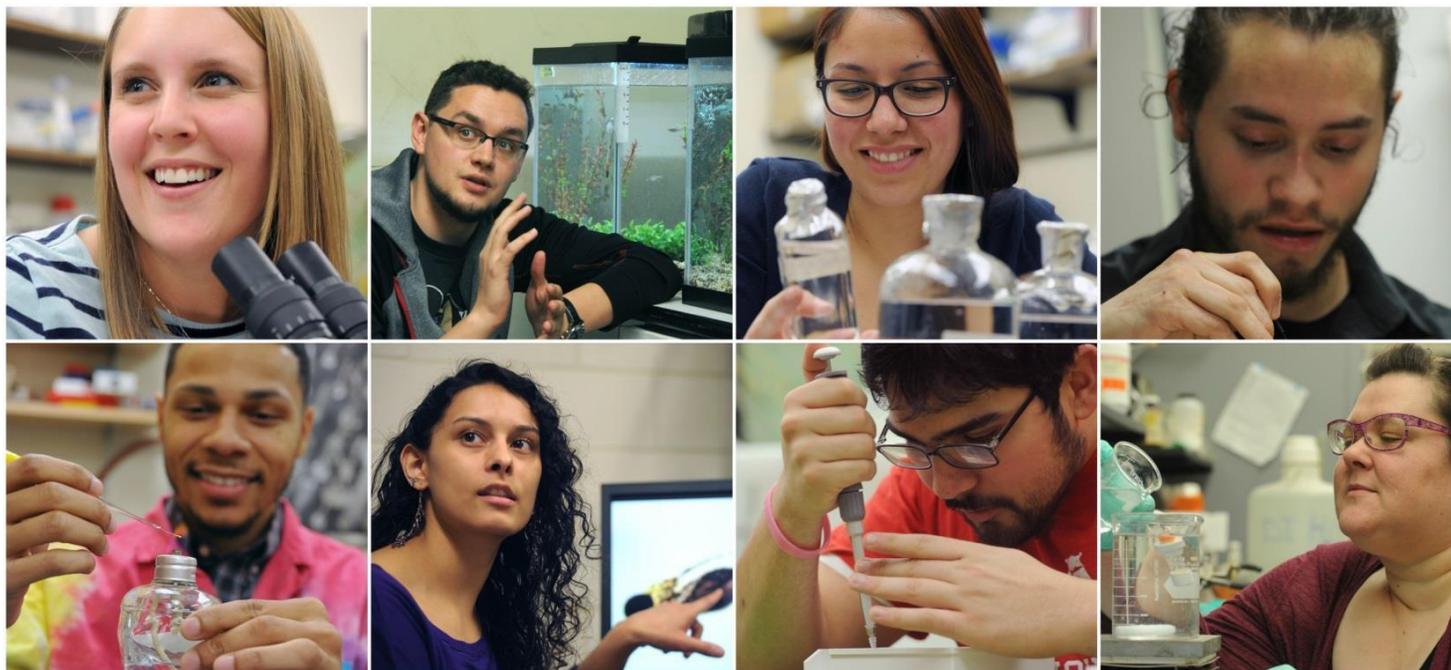
**Northeastern**
ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

# NIH MARC U-STAR

(National Institutes of Health - Maximizing Access to Research Careers Undergraduate Student Training in Academic Research)

# TRANING PROGRAM



# Handbook for
# MARC Scholars

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Please note that this handbook is updated periodically. However, most changes in policies or rules that affect this handbook's provisions will be made available to scholars through emails sent to their Nmail address.

Last edit: December 2021

# MARC TEAM AND HOURS OF OPERATION

**Program Directors (PDs):**

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The MARC Office, located in BBH-204D, is open Monday - Friday, 8:30 AM - 4:30 PM. Office hours of Program Directors will be notified via email at the start of each semester and will also be posted on the MARC Website (www.neiu.edu/marc).

# ABOUT NIH MARC U-STAR PROGRAM

## Dear MARC Scholar,

Congratulations and welcome to the NIH MARC U-STAR Program at Northeastern Illinois University! The National Institutes of Health MARC U-STAR Program provides 2 years of support for undergraduate students in their junior and senior years who are underrepresented in the biomedical and behavioral sciences. The program is aimed at enhancing a student's ability to gain access to a high-caliber PhD program in the biomedical and/or behavioral fields.

## Benefits

- An annual student stipend for 2 years (junior and senior years; $13,000 per year)
- Up to 12 credit hours of IL-resident tuition for the last 2 years of study at NEIU (junior and senior years)
- A paid (transportation included) 10-week summer research experience at a research-intensive institution identified and arranged in collaboration with the MARC PDs
- Paid travel expenses to present research at a professional conference
- Participation in NEIU research immersion. During the academic year, NEIU offers research training opportunities so the student can be immersed in a research program
- Informational seminars on a variety of graduate-school related topics
- Academic, career, and personal guidance and support throughout undergraduate degree completion
- Mentoring from a senior MARC peer

## Requirements

- A research project with an NEIU faculty mentor
- A written and approved thesis based on the research conducted
- Writing and applying for an NSF Graduate Research Fellowship Program (GRFP) during senior year
- Presentations of research at: (1) the NEIU Research Symposium (2) the SCSE Student Symposium and (3) a Regional/National Conference
- Completion of Mathematical & Statistical Modeling of Complex Systems Minor
- Acceptance into and commitment to complete a PhD (or MD/PhD) program in biomedical and/or behavioral fields

- Regular meetings with MARC directors
- Registration for classes must be approved by MARC Program Director(s) every semester
- Registration in Research Skills (first year) and Advanced Research Skills (senior year) classes throughout two years of program
- Maintain a minimum of a 3.5 GPA throughout the duration of the program
- Carry oneself with appropriate demeanor toward other MARC and Pre- MARC trainees, directors, staff and guests
- Respond in an appropriate time frame to all email requests (usually 1-2 business days during school year) from the program directors/coordinator
- Work  15-20  hours/week (during school year) a in designated lab and complete time sheets in order to receive stipend
- Attend all MARC-related events that do not conflict with classes

## Eligibility

- Be an undergraduate student and have a declared major at NEIU in Biology, Chemistry, Computer Science, Mathematics, Physics, or Psychology.
- Be a sophomore or junior at the time of application submission; freshman or senior students are not eligible.
- Have a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0.
- Be a first-generation college student with income eligibility and/or a member of a group underrepresented in graduate education.
- Have US citizenship or permanent residency.
- Have career goals to earn a doctoral degree in biomedical and/or behavioral research.

# ONCE A MARC SCHOLAR

## Completing the New MARC Trainee Form

Please make arrangements to see the Program Coordinator to complete the form.

## Obtain a Real ID

All new MARC students need to obtain a Real ID as it is needed for national flights to conferences, unless you hold a valid passport for travel. (Deadline extended until further notice)

## Reading and Signing MARC Contract of Commitment

All new MARC and pre-MARC scholars will read and sign a Contract of Commitment which outlines the MARC Program requirements to be completed during the training. A copy can be obtained from the MARC office.

## Provide a Short Biography and a Picture

All new scholars will send a short biography (100-200 words) and a headshot picture to the PC two weeks prior to their official admission as a MARC scholar. The short biography and the picture will be added on the MARC website. You can arrange with the PC to have a professional headshot taken by the university's photographer.

## Attend Orientation Meeting

At the beginning of every Fall semester or when new scholars are admitted, the MARC Program organizes an Orientation Meeting that serves to inform current and new scholars, and their faculty mentors, about the plans and MARC events for the new academic year. New scholars also sign and hand in their contract of commitment at the end of this meeting.

The Official Ceremony for the Induction to the program of new scholars is usually held in September at the Annual SCSE Student Research Symposium.

## Registering on xTrain – Formal Admission to the Program

The official admission as a MARC scholar (trainee) is done through the NIH eRA Commons Portal. Scholars will be contacted by the program coordinator to start the process.  Usually, the official admissions happen at the end of May and students will work with the program coordinator to sign up for eRA Commons account and complete the xTrain Statement of Appointment (form 2271). NIH reviews the new student appointments and once they accept, we will start disbursing stipends and processing tuition paperwork. MARC scholars will also have to register for an ORCID and link it to their x-Train.

## Start Using MARC/NMail Calendar

All MARC events appear on the MARC Nmail Calendar. You have access to view the details of this calendar through your Nmail account. You will be sent calendar invitations to MARC events regularly and are expected to respond within 24-48 hours. Please make sure that the time zone in your Nmail Calendar is set to Central Time. If you are unsure how to work the calendar, please ask the program coordinator and she will

## Math Peer Leading

New scholars are expected to peer lead Math Workshops during their first semester as a MARC scholar. Please contact Dr. Joseph Hibdon for more details.

## Pre-MARC Scholars

The requirements for Pre-MARC scholars are very similar to those of MARC scholars. Unfortunately, the MARC grant cannot provide any financial support to the pre-MARC scholars. However, other funding opportunities through the university's Work Study or Student Aid programs can be explored once you are admitted into the program. Please check with MARC Directors or Program Coordinator about these opportunities.

Pre-MARC scholars are also required to sign a Contract of Commitment. Successfully fulfilling the requirements of this contract by the end of the first year gives the pre-MARC scholar a competitive advantage to be admitted as a full MARC scholar in the next round of MARC applications.

# RESEARCH IMMERSION

## Finding a Research Faculty Mentor

Once you are appointed as a MARC scholar, you and MARC PDs will work on finding a faculty mentor with whom you can work during school year on a research project. MARC PDs make every effort to match your research interests with those of the faculty mentor.

## Working in the Lab

MARC scholars are required to work 15-20 hours/week on their research project. The hours on a project do not always involve lab bench work. Searching and reading literature, preparing to present at a conference, analyzing data, etc., count toward these hours and should be recorded in the MARC Research Timesheet.

## Submission of Research Timesheets

Research timesheets are due on the last Thursday of the month. Please hand in your completed and signed (by both you and your faculty mentor) timesheet to the PC in BBH-204D before the end of business day. Submitting the timesheet after the due date will result in your stipend being processed late.

## Writing & Defending Your Research Thesis

Please refer to the Thesis Manual for more details on writing and defending your MARC thesis.

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# **MONEY MATTERS**

## Stipends

Upon receiving the scholar's research timesheet on the last Thursday of the month, the program coordinator will have the scholar sign a Direct Payment Voucher (DPV) and an Invoice for that month's stipend. The PC will notify you when your check is ready to be picked up from the office. It usually takes about two weeks from the time of timesheet submission and signing of DPV/Invoice to the time stipend check is ready to be picked up.

## Tuition/Fees

MARC scholars are placed on a priority registration list with the university's registrar office which allows them to register earlier for their classes than the majority of students. Scholars must meet with Dr. Hibdon and get approval for the classes they are planning on taking for the next semester. We'll submit the paperwork for your tuition coverage only when your list of classes is approved and cannot pay for unapproved classes. The Financial Aid office will then apply the MARC tuition award to your account (usually applied mid-semester). As of June 2019, MARC can only cover up to 12 credit hours per semester per funded scholar (Illinois resident tuition rate).

## Stipends/Tuition Taxability

MARC stipends are coded as non-reportable by NEIU. As such, Form 1099 will not be issued by NEIU to report the stipends. Scholars are reminded, however, that even though NEIU does not issue a Form 1099, they are still required to report Kirschstein-NRSA stipends to their tax agent. Please go to the NIH website to read more on Stipends Taxability: https://grants.nih.gov/grants/policy/nihgps_2012/nihgps_ch11.htm

Scholars will receive a 1098-T that reports the tuition award for the year. Please let the program coordinator know as soon as possible if you do not receive such form by the end of January. Once Form 1098-T has been issued, it can also be found on NEIUPort under the "Current Student" tab, in the "Employment Details" channel.

# MARC CALENDAR/EVENTS AND COMMUNICATION

## Nmail Calendar

All MARC-related events will be posted on the MARC Nmail Calendar. Scholars must use their Nmail to be able to view the calendar and respond to calendar invitations to MARC events. It is important that the scholars check the calendar regularly for updates. In addition, the MARC calendar listing all events will also be emailed periodically to scholars as a PDF document. It is extremely important that scholars respond to calendar invitations within 1-2 business days. Please make sure that the time zone in your Nmail Calendar is set as GMT-05:00 Central Time.

## List of Recurring MARC Events

Below is a list of recurring MARC events throughout the year:

### Fall Events:

- Orientation Meeting with MARC faculty mentors, program directors, and staff
- New MARC Scholars Induction Ceremony
- Student Center for Science Engagement (SCSE) Annual Student Symposium
- Mid-semester Scholar's Progress Meeting with MARC faculty mentor and PDs
- Society for Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science (SACNAS) National Conference
- Annual Biomedical Research Conference for Minority Students (ABRCMS)
- NEIU's Annual Faculty Research Symposium
- Mathematical and Statistical Modeling Workshop
- MARC End-of-Semester Celebration

### Spring Events:

- Louis Stokes Alliances for Minority Participation (LSAMP) Conference
- Mid-semester Scholar's Progress Meeting with MARC faculty mentor and PDs
- NEIU Annual Student Research & Creative Activities Symposium - all scholars are expected to give a podium presentation
- Mathematical and Statistical Modeling of Complex Systems Workshop
- Meeting with Program Evaluator
- MARC Year-End/Graduation Celebration

## MARC-sponsored events

MARC scholars are expected to participate in all MARC-sponsored events, unless they conflict with classes, in which case the scholar should notify the PC of such conflicts as soon as possible.

## Speakers

MARC scholars are expected to attend all events during the day that MARC-invited speakers are on campus. Such events include the scholar giving a lab tour to the speaker in the morning, having lunch with the speaker, and attending the speaker's research seminar. Speakers are usually invited on Tuesday or Thursday and give their research seminar during NEIU's Activity Hour (3:00-4:00 PM)

## Website

Our website contains information about NIH MARC U-STAR at Northeastern, biography of scholars/faculty/staff, scholars' achievements, events and recent news, contact details for the MARC team, as well as downloadable forms. Please let us know your comments/suggestions on how to improve our website and make it more accessible to you.

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# CONFERENCES AND TRAVEL

## Conferences

MARC scholars are expected to present their research at one National Conference (usually Annual Biomedical Research Conference for Minority Students, ABRCMS, or the Society for Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics and Native Americans in Science, SACNAS, in the fall semester) per year while they are in the training program, subject to availability of MARC funds. MARC scholars are also expected to present (preferably give a podium presentation) at NEIU's SCSE Student Symposium in fall and NEIU's Student Research and Creative Activities Symposium in spring.

In addition, MARC scholars are required to attend the two-day Mathematical and Statistical Modeling of Complex System Workshop at the end of the fall and spring semesters.

Other conferences that MARC scholars usually attend/present at are:

- The Louis Stokes Alliances for Minority Participation (LSAMP) Symposium
- SACNAS Regional/Chicago Symposium
- Chicago Area Undergraduate Research Symposium (CAURS)

## Traveling to Conferences

Scholars will be reimbursed for costs of attending/presenting at a conference (other than mandatory conferences), provided that they first get the approval of the Program Directors in writing. The program coordinator will guide you in completing the paperwork needed for travel to conferences as per NEIU's Group Travel Involving Students Policy (https://www.neiu.edu/about/university-policy/finance). Please note that all MARC scholars appointed after June 2020 will have to have a valid passport for travel or a valid Real ID. For more information on Real ID, please follow the link. https://realid.ilsos.gov/

## Conference Poster Printing

Free poster printing service is provided for scholars that are going to present at conferences. Scholars can print their posters from the MARC office, BBH-204D. Poster printing will be available on the days/times announced via email by PC. Posters have to be reviewed by both the scholar and their faculty mentor and be in their final version. A Poster Printing Form must be completed and signed by the scholar and their faculty mentor before coming in the office to print the poster.

**Please note that the poster printer in the MARC office can only print posters for which one of the sides is 42 inches or less.** If the conference requirements for poster size are such where both sides have to be greater than 42", please make sure to submit your poster for printing no later than 4 business days prior to your departure for conference, and we'll have it printed from an outside vendor. If you have any questions about setting your poster to the correct size, please contact the Program Coordinator before you start working on your poster.

Please refrain from producing posters saturated with color. Using a white background is preferred. Poster tubes can be borrowed from the MARC office and returned upon coming back from the conference. Some poster templates can be found in this shared Google folder:
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1GgxmBhPV3M5lYYwgej5yiqODguRh2qQ9?usp=sharing

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# EXTRAMURAL SUMMER RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

## Finding Suitable Placement

MARC scholars in their second year in the program are required to complete a Summer Research Experience (SRE) at a research-intensive university for 10 weeks. Finding a placement for the SRE will be a joint effort between the scholar and PDs. Scholars have to meet with PDs in order to discuss their research interests and their preferences for where they would like to go for their research internship. They can also ask the PDs for a list of laboratories that they have connections with. Usually, applications for summer research programs start in late Fall and have deadlines in January and February.

Finding a suitable placement for your SRE can be time consuming. In an effort to make the process easier and for your records, we encourage you to make a list of summer programs and send it to MARC PDs before you meet with them to discuss the options.

Usually, travel expenses, room and board, and stipends will be paid by MARC and not the host institution, unless another arrangement has been made between the Host(s) and MARC Program Directors. **In addition, scholars cannot accept the financial support from the host institution since they are going to receive a stipend from MARC.** If scholars are not in an extramural summer internship, they are expected to continue doing research in the laboratory of their NEIU faculty mentor.

## List of Local/National Summer Research Programs

We have compiled this list of summer research programs to start navigating your options. Please click on each of the hyperlinks below to visit the program's website.

Baylor College of Medicine - SMART Program

Boston University - STaRS Summer Research Program

Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center - Summer Undergraduate Research Program

Harvard University - Amgen Scholars Program

Harvard University - CCV Summer Undergraduate Research Internship Program

Harvard University - Systems Biology Summer Internship

Johns Hopkins Diversity Summer Internship Program

The Leadership Alliance

Loyola University of Chicago – Loyola Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (LUROP)

Michigan State University – Summer Research Opportunity Program (SROP)

The Ohio State University - Summer Research Experience

Princeton Summer Research Program

Rutgers University - Research in Science and Engineering

Stanford University School of Medicine – Stanford Summer Research Program (SSRP)-Amgen Scholars Program

University of Buffalo - Climb Up Summer Research Program

University of California, Los Angeles - Summer Programs for Undergraduate Research

University of California, San Francisco – Amgen Scholars Program

University of Chicago – Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REU)

University of Colorado – Summer Multicultural Access to Research Training (SMART)

University of Iowa - Summer Research Experience

University of Michigan - Summer Research Opportunity Program (SROP)

University of Nebraska – M.D./Ph.D. Summer Undergraduate Research Program

University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill - Summer of Learning and Research (SOLAR)

University of Pennsylvania - Summer Undergraduate Internship Program

Yale University - Biomedical Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship Program


## Summer Research Expectations

Once you are offered a placement, it is your responsibility to start communicating with your summer PI at the host institution as soon as possible. It is good practice to ask the PI for reading materials about the research topic you are going to be working on and to have completed the reading by the time you start your SRE. You are typically required to work 40 hours/week. Once you start your SRE, you and your PI (from host institution) must complete the Summer Research Experience Form and send to Program Directors/Coordinator.

## Presentation of Summer Research

It is common for the SREs to end with a Summer Symposium where the scholar would have to give either an oral and/or poster presentation. Should this be local, please ask your summer PI if you can invite your fellow MARC scholars and team to attend your presentation. If you wish to present your summer research at one of the required conferences/symposia, please ask the written permission from your PI and MARC Program Directors.

In addition, please send the Program Coordinator the following information about your summer research presentation(s):

- Date(s) of Presentation(s)
- Name of Symposium/Presentation Event
- Type of Presentation (poster, podium, or both)
- Title(s) of Presentation(s)

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# **GRADUATE SCHOOL APPLICATIONS**

## Taking the GRE Test

The MARC Program has a limited number of 50% reduction vouchers on the General GRE Test. Ask the program coordinator if they have a 50% discount voucher. If you can obtain a reduction voucher from another program you are affiliated with (ex. McNair), please do so, so that we can offer the discount vouchers to another MARC scholar. Also, once you have taken the GRE test, please send your score report to the Program Coordinator. Please note that many graduate programs are now doing away with the General GRE test requirement and you may not have to take it.

## Writing your Personal Statement

Writing your personal statement will be a collaborative effort between you, your faculty mentor, and the MARC PDs. Please have a first draft of your personal statement in October of your second year and send it to your faculty mentor and MARC PDs. You will most probably have many drafts before your final one, so it is important to start early.

## Letters of Recommendation

Scholars in their second year need to identify faculty from whom they can obtain letters of recommendation for the graduate school application. The person writing your letter must know you well and be enthusiastic about writing your letter. It is recommended that you set up appointments with the faculty and that you have a personal statement handy to give to them.  Please give your recommender enough notice to write your letter, preferably one month.

## Applying for PhD/Graduate Program

In their second year of appointment, MARC scholars are required to work on their Graduate School Applications. This includes preparing to take the GRE, creating a personal statement, making a list of all the programs that they wish to apply and share the list with MARC Program Directors and Coordinator, contacting faculty to request for letters of recommendations. Please note that most graduate school applications have deadlines starting December 1.

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# **ALUMNI**

We love keeping in touch with our MARC alumni so you'll always receive invitations to major MARC events. In addition, <u>NIH mandates that we keep track of our alumni scholars and</u> <u>have records of their current professional status.</u> As such, once you graduate from the MARC Program and NEIU, we will send you an Alumni Survey Form every year so that you can update your information. Please notify us if you contact information changes.