The ACA’s Colonel Lee B. Ledford Scholars Program offers financial assistance for intensive research projects to undergraduate students enrolled at ACA member institutions. Undergraduate students from Appalachian or contiguous counties, from any disciplines, are eligible, and a variety of fields of study, research approaches, and methodologies are supported each year.

The Ledford Endowment provides stipends for awarded students undertaking undergraduate research at a rate of $10.00/hour for up to 360 hours total ($3,600 maximum). Additionally, an allotment of up to $1,000 for reimbursement may be furnished for reasonable equipment and travel expenses. These reimbursed expenses must be directly related to completion of one’s research project. For example, laboratory supplies necessary to complete one’s research or travel to and from one’s research site would be allowable; general summer lodging or tuition for summer courses would not be eligible. Ineligible projects include mission trips, class trips, or travel for students traveling alone. The application requires an estimated budget; applications that furnish a precise and itemized explanation of anticipated expenditures will be received more favorably.

The application must have the support of a faculty member who will agree to serve as a mentor throughout the research project. Beginning in 2023, Mentors will receive a $300 stipend upon completion of the Scholar’s project, and $500 for working with two or more students in the same project cycle.

Traditionally, the Ledford program was available for summer research projects only. Beginning with 2023 awards, the ACA will implement a pilot program that allows awardees to select either summer research or fall semester research. Students must select one option or the other in their initial application.

**Ledford Scholar Responsibilities**

Participation in the Ledford Scholars Program carries certain responsibilities for the student researcher:

- Provision of a short (4-6 minutes) recorded video of presentation of one’s research findings, which will be highlighted on the ACA website; and
- Submission of a final project report to the ACA following the Summit which includes a brief narrative of project “takeaways” and a final itemized budget.

Additionally, Scholars are strongly encouraged to make a public presentation of their project in an appropriate venue on their home campuses in the fall semester after completion of their research.

Award funding in the amount of actual hours worked and research reimbursements, up to the initial award, will be provided to the student’s institution following completion of the final report. We encourage applicants to craft estimates of project expenses as carefully as possible to avoid significant unused funds (which may result in other deserving students not receiving awards).

The ACA will furnish specific information regarding deadlines for final reports and video presentations once projects are underway. However, students who complete summer projects may anticipate a deadline in mid-September, and students finishing fall semester projects can expect a deadline near Thanksgiving, prior to the end of fall term.

Revised: November 2022
The Application
To be considered for a Ledford Scholarship, students must submit a full application prior to deadline. These applications must be submitted electronically through the ACA’s website. The components of a completed application include:

a. **Budget estimates:** The budget within the application must outline the estimated number of hours the student will work on the project and the amount of total stipend requested ($10.00 an hour and up to 360 total hours compensated, or up to $3,600 total) and any allocation of equipment and travel (which may not to exceed $1,000). The equipment budget should be itemized and as clear as possible in estimating resources needed. The number of estimated work hours should correspond reasonably to the magnitude/complexity of the project.

b. **Project narrative:** in the proposal, the applicant should address the research question, the learning goals, and how these goals will be accomplished in the time allotted to the project as outlined in the budget.

c. **Description of the roles of the faculty mentor** (and any other faculty/staff engaged in the project) and (if applicable) other student researchers and/or on-site supervisor.

d. A brief **biographical sketch** including a statement of interest in the proposed research and anticipated outcomes.

e. **A letter of endorsement from the faculty mentor** (on college/university letterhead) stating his or her willingness to mentor the student during the project.

f. **A verification** that the proposal is, and the research will be, the work of the student.

g. A **letter of endorsement** (on college/university letterhead) **from the Chief Academic Officer** of the applicant’s institution.

h. **The student’s most recent transcripts (official or unofficial).**

All application components are submitted electronically through the web application form located on the Ledford webpage (https://acaweb.org/student-scholarships/ledford-scholarships/). The CAO’s letter and the Faculty Mentor’s letter are submitted separately through distinct forms at the same website.

The Review Process
Applications are reviewed by the Ledford Scholar Review Committee, a committee of the ACA’s Council of Chief Academic Officers. It includes three Chief Academic Officers from member institutions who serve three-year terms, and two ACA faculty members selected for a one-year term by the ACA based upon nominations from CAOs. In choosing committee membership, the ACA strives for both geographical and disciplinary diversity.

The Committee evaluates the applications based upon an established rubric. Members use their professional judgment to determine scoring, and compiled ranked scoring means and medians are reviewed during final determination of awards. To ensure maximum objectivity, reviewers will not assess any applications from their own institutions. The substantive components of the proposal are evaluated based upon these criteria:

- The proposal is written clearly and effectively;
- The proposal has a clearly articulated rationale and objectives;
- The proposal presents a research plan capable of achieving its stated research objectives;
- The proposal utilizes methodologies capable of achieving its objectives;
- The proposal puts forth a reasonable and attainable timeline and clearly defined budget through which the student can achieve her/his objectives; and
- The proposal entails evidence of significant student/faculty mentor interaction.

In addition to these components of the proposals, the applications will be scored based upon previous experience with Ledford support (i.e., students who have not received an award in the past will receive favor). Finally, per the expectations of the original donor, as a part of the scoring metric, students will be favored in the following order of priority regarding residency: Harlan County, Kentucky or contiguous county; the state of Kentucky; the five states of the ACA’s region; and Appalachian counties outside the ACA.

**Revised: November 2022**
region. Students who did not graduate high school (or were home schooled) from an ARC-designated county or a county contiguous to the area are not eligible for the Ledford Scholars program.

To ensure the highest quality of applicants, each college or university will review applications emerging from their institution and submit only those for which they endorse. To better guarantee that resources are allocated most fully across all ACA schools, the number of applications that may be submitted from a single college/university is based upon a formula based upon the school’s undergraduate FTE in the most recent IPEDS fall semester data, as follows:

- Undergraduate FTE up to 1000—up to four (4) applications
- Undergraduate FTE 1001-1300—up to five (5) applications
- Undergraduate FTE 1301-1700—up to six (6) applications
- Undergraduate FTE 1701-2200—up to seven (7) applications
- Undergraduate FTE 2201-2800—up to eight (8) applications
- Undergraduate FTE 2801-3500—up to nine (9) applications
- Undergraduate FTE greater than 3500—up to ten (10) applications

**Funding of Awarded Proposals**

Applicants who are awarded funding are expected to carry out their projects in a manner that follows the original proposal as closely as possible. Substantive changes to projects from the awarded proposals must receive the endorsement of one’s Faculty Mentor and Chief Academic Officer, and approval from the ACA. The ultimate dispersal of award funds will be based upon actual hours worked and actual reimbursements for appropriate research expenses, so it is important that proposals seek to estimate expenses as accurately as possible. Over-estimating expected hours work or research expenses ultimately leaves ACA funds unused, and it may prevent other deserving students from receiving support.

ACA funding is furnished to member institutions (rather than directly to students) following proper completion of the projects, so it is important that Ledford Scholars understand member institution business protocols and establish with their home institutions the procedures and timelines for payments.

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*If you have questions regarding the Ledford Scholars Program, please contact Larry Hall, Vice President for Academic Programs at the ACA. (larry.hall@acaweb.org)*

Revised: November 2022