

JANUARY 2021 – REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS



- ***New* 2021 Graduate Student Scholars Program**
- **2021 Faculty Scholars Program**

Program Description

Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant (IISG) Scholars programs are professional networking and development opportunities for graduate students and faculty from institutes of higher learning in Illinois and Indiana who wish to develop extension, education, or communication capacities related to their scholarly interests. Awards are issued for one year and activities should be completed during that year. IISG expects to support 6–8 Graduate Student Scholars and 3–4 Faculty Scholars in 2021.

One of IISG’s long-term goals is to help build a community of researchers and outreach professionals focused on critically important Lake Michigan issues. The IISG Scholars programs are designed to help build this community by introducing researchers to the issues and the stakeholders affected by them. In addition, the programs are intended to help graduate student scholars further the impact of their research, and faculty scholars develop innovative, fundable proposals for future work in the region.

We encourage individuals from all disciplines to apply for the IISG Scholars programs. IISG is committed to supporting justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts. For this RFA, IISG specifically encourages applicants who are, or have demonstrably recruited and engaged, students or fellows from underrepresented groups (particularly those whose backgrounds may have inhibited careers in science, technology, engineering, and math), as well as those whose proposed project outcomes have potential to benefit underserved communities. Applicants are encouraged to describe these in their statement of interest. The full IISG values statement can be found at <https://iiseagrant.org/about/about-us/>.

If you have questions about the program, please contact Carolyn Foley (cfoley@purdue.edu). An informational webinar will be held Tuesday, February 16, 2021, at 2 p.m. Eastern Time ([click to register for the webinar](#)). The recording will be posted at <https://iiseagrant.org/research/funding-opportunities/>.

Application Deadline

Applicants for both opportunities (graduate students or faculty) should submit materials to iisgres@purdue.edu by 5 p.m. Central Time on March 12, 2021. Include “2021 Scholars Competition” in the subject line.

Application Review Panel

Applications for both opportunities will be reviewed by an external panel according to criteria listed below. Graduate students will be competing against other graduate students, and faculty will be competing against other faculty. The panel will be comprised of applied research, extension, and communication personnel, plus key stakeholders who are involved in the topic

areas PIs are interested in working in (e.g., natural resources agency personnel, community planners, members of the IISG advisory committee). After the panelists have evaluated the applicants' suitability for program admission, IISG administration will review the strongest applicants and select scholars, based on a combination of external reviewers' scores and consistency with IISG strategic plan and programmatic goals. Efforts will be made to spread funds across institutions, with a preference for applicants who are, or have demonstrably recruited and engaged, students or fellows from underserved groups, as well as those whose proposed project outcomes have potential to benefit underserved communities*.

Program Timeline

- March 12, 2021: Initial applications due to IISG
- April 2021: Review of initial applications and notification of graduate student and faculty scholars
- May 3, 2021: Final versions of all materials requested of successful scholar applicants due to IISG
- June 1, 2021: Award initiation date
- June–September 2021: Phase 1, including two day-long networking events and development of at least one product in support of a larger proposal for faculty scholars; participation in several professional development activities for graduate student scholars
- October 2021–May 2022: Phase 2, including further interactions with IISG staff members and additional professional development activity(ies) for faculty scholars; participation in several professional development activities for graduate student scholars
- May 31, 2022: Final proposals completed or already submitted to an external funding agency for faculty scholars; graduate students and faculty have presented final results to IISG and key stakeholders

***New for 2021* Graduate Student Scholars**

Award Amounts and Eligibility

Graduate student applicants can request up to \$7,000 to support research expenses, graduate student stipends, travel, or other activities that help expand the scholarly or societal impact of their research. Matching funds are not required for graduate student applicants.

While work proposed as part of this award should further the IISG mission to empower southern Lake Michigan communities to secure a healthy environment and economy and align with the [IISG 2018–2023 Strategic Plan](#), it may be acceptable to adapt research methods or results from other geographic locations locally. For example, a research project conducted in southern Indiana could be expanded to include northwest Indiana.

Applicants must be enrolled as a graduate student at an institute of higher learning in Illinois or Indiana at some point during the 2021–22 academic year. Those who have received an IISG Graduate Student Scholar grant in the past three years are not eligible for funding through the current competition.

Expectations of Graduate Student Scholars

During their scholar year, graduate student scholars are expected to:

1. Participate in at least four professional development activities, including “Introduction to Sea Grant,” “Effective Communication via Social Media,” “Integrating Research and Extension,” and “Connecting Small Scale Research Projects to Broader Societal Impacts.” Other offerings will vary with scholar cohort but may include discussions about job opportunities outside of academia, books or journals, or grant writing. Activities will not be scheduled more than one per month and may be conducted virtually.
2. Present results to the IISG staff and key stakeholders, e.g., external advisory committee members, partner organizations, approximately during May 2022 (exact date TBD). Presentations will likely occur in person, in Champaign-Urbana, Illinois West Lafayette, Indiana; Chicago, Illinois; or northwest Indiana. The graduate student applicant should consider budgeting travel funds into the award to attend this event.

Failure to participate in required activities may lead to forfeiture of funds.

Application Materials

Templates and guidance for the following components can be found at:

<https://iiseagrant.org/research/funding-opportunities/templates-and-guidance-for-proposal-submissions/>. All applications must include components 1 through 7.

1. **Front matter** (1 page). Include the applicant’s name, the administrative lead’s name, affiliations, physical and email addresses, total budget request, and an abstract that describes the proposed project outcomes (see 2a).
2. **Statement of interest** (3-page maximum). Statements of interest should describe a) activities that will be accomplished with award funds, including how these activities will allow the student to substantially improve their research and how these activities correspond to the IISG strategic plan; and b) why the applicant is interested in the IISG Scholars Program and how the program fits into the applicant’s career goals. Applicants should write this section for a general audience, but include enough detail to allow for review per criteria listed below.
3. **Letter of Commitment** (1-page). Funds will be sent to the graduate student’s institution rather than the student directly; thus, each applicant must identify an administrative lead for their project who can accept funds on their behalf. The student’s major professor may serve in this capacity but this is not required, as long as someone is willing to serve as administrative lead. The letter of commitment should confirm that the student is or will be enrolled at some point during the 2021–22 academic year and that the named person will support the student in their efforts. However, the intent is for the graduate student to be the driving force behind all outcomes of the project.
4. **Budget requests** (90-4 form plus separate budget narrative). Applicants can request graduate student stipends, research material costs, indirect cost, fringe, travel, printing, publication and documentation costs, etc. Budgets should include travel to mandatory

activities described above if other travel funds are not available to the student.

5. **Applicant CV** (2 pages). NSF or NIH format is acceptable.
6. **Data Management Plan** (max. 2 pages). Under NOAA directives, environmental data generated during projects funded by IISG must be verified and shared within 2 years of completion of the project. The full definition of environmental data can be found at <https://iiseagrant.org/research/principal-investigator-resources/>. If your project will not generate environmental data, state that in your application. If your project will generate environmental data, download and complete the template, and return with your application.
7. **Abbreviated Environmental Compliance Questionnaire** (as many pages as needed). Download and complete the template. Answer every question considering all activities that will be completed by the applicant as part of the proposed work.
8. **Purdue University Letter of Intent Form** (1 page). Download the template specific to the IISG Scholars 2021 competition. This is not required for applicants from Purdue University and Purdue Northwest.
9. **Purdue University Entity Profile** (1 page). Download the template. This is not required for applicants from Purdue University and Purdue Northwest.

Application Review

The application materials will be reviewed by an external panel, based on the following criteria:

Section 1: Based on the entire application package, please rate the following on a scale of 1 to 5, 5 being best (25 marks total):

- The work proposed fits with IISG's strategic priorities. (Note that applicants need not have a history of work directly related to Lake Michigan to be considered, but the proposed outcomes should align with IISG strategic priorities.)
- The proposed budget is appropriate for the work described.
- The applicant's previous academic and professional record is strong. (It is appropriate to consider the stage of an applicant's career when providing this rating.)
- On the whole, materials submitted suggest that the applicant will be able to develop products that help IISG achieve strategic goals.
- On the whole, materials submitted suggest that the applicant's research will be substantially improved via this award.
- Bonus points, maximum of 5: on the whole, materials submitted suggest that this application will benefit individuals or communities that have been historically underserved.*

Section 2: Based on the entire application package, please provide an overall qualitative rating:

A Excellent – A truly meritorious project

B Good – A project that clearly deserves support but to which minor improvements are recommended to achieve desired outcomes

C Adequate – A project that should be supported, assuming major reservations related to achieving desired outcomes can be addressed

D Questionable – A project about which reservations are so serious that it should be supported only in exceptional circumstances

Faculty Scholars

Award Amounts and Eligibility

Faculty applicants can request up to \$12,000. Funds can be used to support research expenses, summer salary, graduate student stipends, travel, or other activities that further the IISG mission to empower southern Lake Michigan communities to secure a healthy environment and economy. While work proposed as part of this award should further the IISG mission and align with the [IISG 2018–2023 Strategic Plan](#), it may be acceptable to adapt research methods or results from other geographic locations locally. For example, a research project conducted in southern Indiana could be expanded to include northwestern Indiana.

Applicants must be a faculty member at an institute of higher learning in Illinois or Indiana. Those who have received an IISG Scholars grant in the past three years are not eligible for funding through the current competition.

Expectations of Faculty Scholars

During their scholar year, faculty scholars are expected to:

1. Develop at least one product that can be used to support a larger proposal. Example products include an initial data set, a detailed literature review, a completed needs assessment, a description of a research protocol, or similar products. Applicants should describe this product or suite of products in their application.
2. Participate in three networking and learning events at IISG and partner sites in and around southern Lake Michigan in 2021. During these events, scholars will interact with IISG stakeholders and staff members to 1) understand critical Lake Michigan issues, 2) understand the role IISG plays in helping address these issues, and 3) brainstorm about how scholars might support ongoing activities to address these issues. The specific dates for these events will be set in the early spring 2021, but are anticipated to be one day during the week of June 21, one day the week of July 26, both in 2021, and one day in May 2022.

Scholars must attend all events to receive scholars funds.

3. Develop a research proposal that combines research and outreach to address an IISG-approved topic relevant to the [IISG 2018–2023 Strategic Plan](#), which is to be submitted to an external funding agency. Scholars are encouraged, but not required, to work directly with IISG communication, education, outreach, and/or extension staff members while developing the proposal. The scholar should play a key role in proposal development, e.g., by serving as principal investigator or serving as main convener of the project team. Submission of this proposal to competitions for internal funds at the scholar's university or Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant does not meet the requirement, but

submission of a proposal to a competition run by the National Sea Grant Office may. Questions about which competitions are acceptable should be directed to Carolyn Foley (cfoley@purdue.edu).

Application Materials

Templates and guidance for the following components can be found at:

<https://iiseagrant.org/research/funding-opportunities/templates-and-guidance-for-proposal-submissions/>. All applications must include components 1 through 6.

1. **Front matter** (1 page). Include the applicant's name, affiliation, address, total budget request, and an abstract that describes the proposed project outcomes (see 2a).
2. **Statement of interest** (4-page maximum). Statements of interest should describe why the applicant is interested in the IISG Scholars Program and how the program fits into the applicant's career goals. In addition, the statement of interest should include a) 1–3 potential products that the scholar could develop as a result of participating in this program. Example products include an initial data set, a detailed literature review, a completed needs assessment, a description of a research protocol, or similar products. Product descriptions should provide enough detail that reviewers can understand the areas that the applicants are interested in working, but should be written for a general audience (i.e., do not assume that the reviewers are familiar with your area of expertise). Applicants should a) demonstrate how development of these products corresponds with the IISG strategic plan; and b) compile a list of potential competitions that the applicant would target with the full proposal to be developed by the end of the IISG Scholars Program.
3. **Budget requests** (90-4 form plus separate budget narrative). Applicants can request summer salary, graduate student stipends, indirect cost, fringe, travel, printing, publication and documentation costs, etc. For faculty, up to \$10,000 can be put toward salary and associated fringe. Budgets should include travel to mandatory activities described above. Successful applicants must demonstrate 50% match (1 non-federal dollar for every 2 dollars requested; if applicants request \$12,000, they must demonstrate at least \$6,000 in non-federal match for a total of \$18,000 to go toward this work).
4. **Applicant CV** (2 pages). NSF or NIH format is acceptable.
5. **Data Management Plan** (max. 2 pages). Under NOAA directives, environmental data generated during projects funded by IISG must be verified and shared within 2 years of completion of the project. The full definition of environmental data can be found at <https://iiseagrant.org/research/principal-investigator-resources/>. If your project will not generate environmental data, state that in your application. If your project will generate environmental data, download and complete the template, and return with your application.
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- The proposed budget is appropriate for the work described.
- The applicant's previous academic and professional record is strong. (It is appropriate to consider the stage of an applicant's career when providing this rating.)
- On the whole, materials submitted suggest that the applicant will be able to develop products that help IISG achieve strategic goals.
- On the whole, materials submitted suggest that the applicant will be able to develop a successful proposal to an external funding agency.
- Bonus points, maximum of 5: on the whole, materials submitted suggest that this application will benefit individuals or communities that have been historically underserved.*

Section 2: Based on the entire application package, please provide an overall qualitative rating:

A Excellent – A truly meritorious project

B Good – A project that clearly deserves support but to which minor improvements are recommended in order to achieve desired outcomes

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*Underserved groups or communities may be underserved because of geographic location, racial and ethnic status, and/or other special needs (such as language barriers, disabilities, alienage status or age).