

SVP Futures Award

Vertebrate paleontology, like many geoscience fields, has poor representation of scientists who are Black, Indigenous, or members of other racial and ethnic minority groups. Research shows that this underrepresentation is not due to a lack of interest, but rather a lack of opportunities and resources and that this disparity is amplified at later career stages. In recognition of our need to increase access for underrepresented groups, SVP has established the Futures Award, a new grant program that supports summer research experiences for undergraduates from underrepresented minority backgrounds.

DESCRIPTION OF GRANT PROGRAM

This grant aims to provide funding for one applicant per cycle. Each grant will provide \$5,000 for a research experience during the student's regularly scheduled break from school (eight to ten weeks). The award can be used to support travel to and room and board at a research site, research expenses, and stipend for the award recipient. All funds must be spent on the proposed project within two years of awarding. Our aim is for students to then apply for a [Jackson School of Geosciences Student Travel Grant](#) to attend SVP the next year to share the results of their project, where they may participate in a new mentorship program organized by the Student and Postdoc Liaison Committee.

Applicants will submit **1)** a cover sheet providing their educational background, **2)** an application with questions about what motivated them to apply for the award and what they hope to get out of it, **3)** an unofficial transcript or list of courses taken WITHOUT a GPA (GPAs and grades will NOT be considered), and **4)** a Letter of Support from their intended research mentor OR a statement on the student's geographic and travel restrictions. The student may name a specific researcher with whom they wish to work, and the committee will take into account the mentorship record of any named researchers. If the student does not have a specific mentor in mind, the award panel will match the student with a research mentor who can provide the experience they're looking for, drawn from a list of researchers who have volunteered to serve as mentors for this program and who have been vetted by the committee. SVP will do its best to match the student with a mentor who will be a good fit, but it is not responsible for overseeing the mentor-mentee interactions. Applicants will also fill out an [anonymous demographic survey](#) that will not be tied to their application.

The grant will be awarded to the student, not the mentor, and the student should have an active role in leading the project and is required to give a presentation about their findings at SVP when they are awarded a Student Travel Grant to attend. The student should be a co-author, if not lead author, on any publications or presentations directly resulting from the work funded by the grant.

APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY

Any person who is a member of an ethnic minority and/or a person of color enrolled in an undergraduate degree program who is not due to graduate at the end of the year in which they

apply for the grant is eligible (i.e., they will not graduate before the research project is conducted). This new award is for undergraduate students from racial or ethnic groups that are underrepresented in vertebrate paleontology due to historical discrimination. Black (a person with African heritage and with lived experience as a Black person) and/or Indigenous (a person belonging to a group established in a territory before colonization whose lands remain largely colonized and with lived experience as an Indigenous person) students are especially encouraged to apply. Applicants are not asked to describe their racial or ethnic background in the application, but by applying to this award, they are verifying that they are from a race or ethnicity that is underrepresented in vertebrate paleontology (i.e. they are not white, or if they are white, they are Latinx, Indigenous, or mixed race). Anyone who intentionally misrepresents their identity by applying for this award even though they are not from a race or ethnicity that is underrepresented in vertebrate paleontology may face consequences such as revocation of the grant and a temporary ban from SVP meetings.

APPLICATION MATERIALS

All applicants must submit the following materials to be considered for the award:

1. Completed cover form
2. Application questionnaire. Applicants are expected to answer the questionnaire on their own (e.g., without the help of a mentor).
3. Unofficial transcript with GPA and other personal information redacted. If an unofficial transcript is unavailable, please submit a list of courses taken. GPA and grades will not be considered as part of the application materials.
4. Research advisor information:
 1. IF YOU WANT TO WORK WITH A SPECIFIC RESEARCH ADVISOR: Letter of Support from project advisor indicating that they agree to be responsible for guiding the applicant through successful completion of the project and will abide by the SVP Code of Conduct and procedures and rules of this award. If the project advisor has additional funds that they plan to use to support the student, this should be indicated in the letter of support. The project advisor **must** also fill out the [potential mentor survey](#). You will be compiling this letter with your other application materials and submitting the entire application, so your potential research advisor should share this letter with you in PDF format.
 2. IF YOU DO NOT HAVE A SPECIFIC RESEARCH ADVISOR IN MIND: Write a brief description of any geographic constraints on where they are able to do the research experience. If you have circumstances that would prevent you from traveling and would thus prefer to work remotely, please state that and describe those circumstances here. This will be combined with the application questionnaire to help the awards committee match you with a mentor.
Note: Applications will be reviewed equally regardless of whether a mentor is indicated or not.
5. Anonymized demographic information survey. This survey will not be associated with the applicant's materials. It allows SVP to assess which underrepresented groups are applying

for this award and which groups we need to do a better job communicating with about this opportunity.

All applicants acknowledge that SVP is not responsible for ensuring that the cost of the proposed research experience fits within the amount of the award (\$5,000 USD). Applicants should make sure that they have sufficient funds for the research experience they are proposing, whether through the SVP Futures Award alone or through a combination of funding sources.

Applicants should combine items 1-4 into a single PDF and submit it via SVP's online application portal. Item 5 is a standalone survey and must be filled out separately.

Questions about the program should be directed to Melissa Kemp or Catherine Early.