

# ESC Student Research Grant – 2025-26 Request for Proposals

The Ecosystem Science Center (ESC) solicits student research grant proposals from undergraduate and graduate students working with an ESC member on research related to the ESC mission to advance our understanding of how ecosystems function and how human activities influence ecosystem processes. This program is intended to give students an opportunity to gain experience in writing competitive grants and to conduct their own research project.



## Application Deadline(s)

The application deadline for academic year 2025-26: **11:59pm EST on Feb. 27, 2026**

## Funding Amounts

The maximum award amount for graduate student awards will be up to \$1,500, and for undergraduate awards up to \$1,000. Allowable costs include supplies, sample analysis fees or other services, field equipment, payroll for personnel, and travel to conduct research (not to present at a meeting or conference).

## Eligibility

- The student's primary advisor is an eligible ESC member under the current GLRC Institute membership policy.
- Research must be related to the interests of the ESC to advance our understanding of how ecosystems function and how human activities influence ecosystem processes. A statement of relatedness must be included in the project description as described in the detailed instructions.
- A student is eligible to receive a maximum of one research grant per academic year, e.g. students who have received funding in Spring may apply for funding in the following fall. If you've been awarded an ESC research grant previously, you must fill out a Progress Report before you can receive additional funding.
- ESC funds are for unfunded research initiatives. This includes projects without any current funding or it could be for additional work on a funded project. If the proposed work is connected to another project, please explain how the ESC funds will enable an expansion in scope of the funded project.

## Award Requirements

- Project duration should not exceed 12 months.
- Submit a Progress Report upon completion of the project to [glrcadmin-l@mtu.edu](mailto:glrcadmin-l@mtu.edu). (See instructions below.)
- Funded students are required to present at the annual ESC poster forum.
- Publications resulting from ESC supported research should formally acknowledge ESC and posters and presentations of supported research should display the [ESC logo](#).

## Submission

Submit a proposal following the instructions listed below as a single pdf document with a file title in the format of "YourLastName YYYYMM esc student research proposal.pdf" (e.g. Carson 2026.02 esc student research proposal.pdf).

Submit the proposal (and Progress Report, if applicable) to [glrcadmin-l@mtu.edu](mailto:glrcadmin-l@mtu.edu) by the applicable deadline.

## Proposal Instructions

Proposals should be a maximum of 3 pages in length with 11 pt font and 1 inch margins. References should be placed last and use the same font and page margins as the main text. References do not count against the 3 page proposal limit.

Include all of the following sections listed below and address the guidance given for each:

### Applicant info:

- Student's name
- Degree program (including academic standing: Bachelor's, Master's or Ph.D.)
- Department
- Student's advisor(s), department or college, and email address.
- Additional investigator names and affiliations: List the names of any additional MTU faculty or staff and their department affiliations.
- List all previous ESC research grants, including the project title and date (semester and year) of award:

## Research Project Title:

The project title should provide some sense of the project's focus and scope.

## Background:

The background section should provide the larger scientific context of the proposed work. It should also be clear how the proposed work fits into this scientific context. Assume your audience is intelligent, but has little direct knowledge about your research topic and why it is important. Introduce your study from a broad context then into a narrower context that will link to the specific questions to be asked or hypotheses to be addressed. Relatedness to the ESC mission should be directly addressed in this section. Any proposal deemed unrelated to the ESC will not be funded through this program.

## Objectives and Hypotheses/Research Questions:

The objectives should clearly arise from the background provided. If the work is part of a larger project, summarize the broader objectives of that project. State the specific hypotheses or research questions for the work to be carried out by the funds requested in your proposal. It should be clear that your request is for important additional work, if part of a bigger project.

## Methods:

The link between hypotheses/research questions and methods should be clear. The proposed methods should be appropriate for testing the hypotheses or answering the questions defined above. They should briefly but clearly define the study sites, sampling and analytical techniques to be used, and planned statistical/data analyses that will be used to evaluate your data relative to your hypotheses.

If there are important measurements or analyses related to your research request that are being addressed by a larger project, please briefly describe them and the fact that they are being supported by the larger project. Otherwise, you risk reviewers asking "Why isn't XXX measured?" It is understood that the award will only fund a small amount of work, but it needs to be clear how it fits into the larger scheme of some projects. Your methods should primarily describe what you will use the ESC funds for, but background on other activities occurring at the study location can help reviewers as they assess your specific request.

The methods should include a timeline for field measurement, lab and data analysis, and writing/presentation activities. Project duration should not exceed 12 months.

## Budget and Budget Justification:

Include a budget breakdown into common research project categories. Allowable costs include supplies, services (e.g. sample analysis fees), equipment, personnel (e.g. payroll), and travel (to research sites, not for presentations). Provide a description of the items purchased in each

category (justification). The budget should be appropriate for the costs of the proposed work. If the proposed work will require more funds than available from the ESC grant, state other sources of funding available, or how the work will be scaled back if other funding is not obtained.

## References:

Provide references using any common citation style. References do not count against the page limit.

## Progress Reports

A progress report is required at the end of all ESC research grants, and is required before students can receive any monies for a new project, even if the previous project is unfinished. Progress reports should be a maximum of 1 page in length with 11 pt font and 1 inch margins. The progress report does not count against the proposal page limit and should be submitted as a separate document. Include the student and advisor names and academic department(s), title of the project, semester and year of award, summary of grant expenditures, summary of the project results, list of any products developed. Submit a Progress Report as a pdf document to [glrcadmin-l@mtu.edu](mailto:glrcadmin-l@mtu.edu).

## Review Process

ESC research grants are competitive. The grants will be judged by a panel of ESC members on the following criteria. Feedback will be given for all proposals that are reviewed. Specific criteria include:

**Scientific Merit:** The proposed work should make a novel contribution to knowledge or understanding and its scientific merit should be clear to the reviewer, who may not have expertise in your field.

**Quality of Writing:** Proposal is well written, organized and complies with the listed application formatting and page limit requirements.

**Realistic:** Proposal objectives are achievable within the 1 year period of performance, and budget is realistic based on the proposed work to be performed.

Careful attention to the required elements described above for each proposal section will help proposals meet these criteria.