Young Researchers Program 2023

Application instructions and tips for applying

*Please read this entire document before submitting your application.*

**Eligibility**

1. **Current high school juniors/rising seniors living in Los Angeles and attending a public school in the Los Angeles, Lynwood, Compton, or Inglewood Unified School Districts (including charter schools)**
   - Defined as those students who will be seniors starting in Fall 2023 with an expected graduation date no later than **Spring 2024**.
   - **Sophomores who will not be able to participate next year may apply this year, see below for an additional required essay.**

2. **Highly motivated students** interested in learning about scientific research and pursuing a college education/career in Science, Technology, Engineering, or Math (STEM) fields.
   - **Do not worry about needing prior research or laboratory experience. No specific skills are required to apply; just enthusiasm and willingness to learn.**
   - The program is aimed at Los Angeles students who have few opportunities to experience research or science outside of the classroom.

3. Students must be able to **commit at least 15 hours per week to working on a scientific research project at USC**. We will also require students attend an additional 2 hours per week of college prep seminars and two field trips (one day trip to NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory and one 3 day, 2 night overnight field trip to Catalina Island).

4. Students must be **vaccinated for Measles and COVID-19** (2 doses).

5. If accepted, students **MUST have their own transportation** to and from the USC campus. LA Metro bus/train passes will be provided to students at no charge.
6. You do **NOT** have to be a US citizen to participate.
   - However, the $300 stipend provided by USC at the end of the program to participants requires a social security number for processing. Therefore, non-US citizens can participate but unfortunately are not eligible for the stipend.

**Application Checklist**

A complete application includes the following and is due by **MARCH 31, 2023**: 

- **Short-Answer Questions**: These require 3-4 sentence answers about why you are interested in science, why you are interested in participating in YRP, and how you would benefit from program participation. *The required answers are short, but make sure you take time to think about the questions so that your answers are unique and informative!*
- **Academic Information**: The math and science classes you've already taken or are currently taking, and which were your most and least preferred. *This will NOT affect your chance of getting in! If you are accepted, we will use this information to try to match you to a project you will enjoy.*
- **Research Area Preferences**: You will be asked to rank your first, second, and third choice of research interest areas. We will do our best to match you with a project and mentor you will thrive with.
- **Personal statement (see below)**
- **Letter of Recommendation (see below)**
- **Eligibility Statement (for current sophomores only)**: Describe in 250-500 words why you would be unable to apply to the program in 2022 as a junior.

*Please be aware that you CANNOT save your application and return later to finish it. Therefore, we strongly recommend that you first look at the questions on the application and then write your short answer responses and Personal Statement in a word processing software. When you are ready to submit all of the required information, copy your answers into the provided text boxes. When you are sure everything is complete, hit 'Submit'. If you make a mistake after submitting the application, you can fill in a new application and we will only consider your most recent submission (up to the deadline).*

**Personal Statement Instructions and Tips**
What is the purpose of the personal statement?

• It allows us to learn about your personality, experiences, and what makes you a unique applicant.
• It allows you to freely explain why you would be a great participant in the program.
• It gives you a chance to describe your accomplishments in light of the opportunities or challenges you face at home or in school.

Instructions:

• In **500-1000 words**, describe your current/future academic and career goals, and the reasons for your interest in the Young Researchers Program. We are looking for evidence of your intellectual and scientific curiosity as well as your interest in personal and professional development.
• If you exceed the word limit, we will ONLY consider the first 1000 words.

Tips for success:

• *Start now!* The more time you give yourself, the better your essay and the more time you will have for getting help.

• *Proofread! Proofread! Proofread!* Not just for grammar, spelling, and punctuation, but also for content and readability. Ask 2-3 qualified people, like teachers or guidance counselors, to read your essay and provide you with feedback on how to improve it.

• *Show, don’t tell.* For example, instead of saying, "I am a leader," show us that you are a leader by talking about your experiences acting as one in a club or organization. Don't just say, "I like science," show us you do by describing your involvement in clubs or classes, or by telling the story of how you first realized you were so interested in science/engineering.

• *Before you start, ask yourself some questions:*
  ◦ Why are you interested in science/engineering? How did your interest begin?
  ◦ How would participating in this program contribute to your current and future academic or career goals?
- What personal/individual strengths do you have that would make you a good participant? What are some examples of times you have shown these strengths?
- Have you had to overcome hardships or obstacles to reach your goals? Did these obstacles shape your future goals?

**Letter of Recommendation**

**Instructions and Tips**

- As part of your application, you are required to provide us with one letter of recommendation.
- You must contact your recommender prior to giving us their contact information to make sure that they are willing and qualified to write you a strong letter of recommendation.
- You will be responsible for submitting the contact information of your letter writer to us within your application form, including their first and last names, job title, and email address. We will contact your recommender and ask for their letter submission.
- Although your recommender is responsible for writing and submitting your recommendation to YRP, it is **your responsibility** to ensure that your letter writer receives an email from YRP and submits your letter before the letter of recommendation deadline: April 14, 2023.

**Rec letter tips for success:**

- Choose your recommender carefully. This person should know you well and be familiar with your academic strengths, weaknesses, and interests. This is typically a science teacher, but could also be other professionals, such as another teacher or the adviser of a club/organization you are involved in.
  - Family members and peers are not appropriate letter writers.
  - Make sure you directly ask your recommender if they are willing to write you a positive letter. Ex. “Would you be willing to write me a positive letter of recommendation for the USC Young Researchers Program?”
  - Give recommenders plenty of time to write your letter, at least 2 weeks (the sooner, the better!)
• Talk with your recommender about your specific strengths you would like them to highlight. Some items that might be highlighted in an effective letter would be your academic performance, honors or awards, character traits such as initiative, curiosity, dedication, integrity, reliability, and enthusiasm, your willingness to participate, and your ability to work independently and as part of a team.

• Help your recommender write you a better letter by providing them with information about the program itself and sharing your personal statement with them (or any other information they might find useful).

• Send regular reminders to your recommender so they are aware of the deadline as it approaches, and ensure they have all the information they need.