

INTRODUCTION

The first step in completing the Big Ten Academic Alliance SROP application is to gain an overall understanding of the process. **Please read through the entire application guide before initiating your application.** The Big Ten Academic Alliance Common SROP application is web-based and not available in paper form – if an institution accepts campus-based applications submitted directly to their campuses, these may be in paper form. The Big Ten Academic Alliance SROP application allows you to apply to a variety of summer research programs at participating [institutions](#) using a single shared application. Please review the [Campus Profiles](#) page to determine which schools participate in the common application.

COMPLETING THE APPLICATION

You must register for an application account. You will need to have an email address in order to create the account. Your email address will be your username, and you will create a password when registering. You will need this information to return later to either complete your application or check its status. We will use this email address to communicate with you regarding the status of your application. You are advised to monitor your email account regularly.

The application consists of 7 sections. You will complete the first 5 sections online:

- ◆ Personal Information
- ◆ Academic Information
- ◆ Research Statement
- ◆ Personal Statement
- ◆ Institution Selection
- ◆ Faculty letters of recommendation (2)
- ◆ Undergraduate Transcript(s)

PREPARING YOUR WRITTEN STATEMENTS

You will be required to submit two written statements, a personal statement and a statement of research interest. You are encouraged to prepare and edit your written statements prior to initiating your online application. The written statements are a crucial component of the application. Be sure to proof read and edit your responses. Share your drafts with your honors advisor or professors. When you complete the online application form, you can copy and paste your statements into the appropriate sections on the form.

Visit the writing center on campus for help preparing your written statements.

YOUR STATEMENT OF RESEARCH INTEREST (250 WORDS MAXIMUM)

In order to identify potential faculty mentors for you, SROP program staff members need to know your research areas of interest. You should explain as clearly as possible the areas that you would like to research and why this research appeals to you.

1. It is a good idea to consult your advisors or professors for advice about preparing a research statement. Your professors can help you formulate questions or topics. This is a good opportunity to ask your professors to give you a recommendation. They can write a better recommendation for you if they understand your research interests and your motivations for wanting to complete a research experience.

2. Your statement should be specific but not too narrow in focus. If you have had other research experiences, include a description of the project and your role in the research. You can explore areas of research by visiting the web pages of the participating institutions. Read about the kinds of research that is being done.

YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT (250 WORDS MAXIMUM)

SROP is intended to help students from diverse backgrounds learn about and prepare for graduate study. This program is especially for students from groups that are underrepresented in the academy including racial and ethnic minorities, low-income and first-generation students, and non-traditional students. The personal statement is your opportunity to explain why you want to participate in SROP. Some questions you might consider:

- ◆ What are your academic aspirations?
- ◆ What are your career goals?
- ◆ In what ways have your experiences and background influenced your goals?
- ◆ How will SROP help you accomplish your goals?
- ◆ What do you expect to gain from a SROP experience?

SELECTING BIG TEN ACADEMIC ALLIANCE SROP INSTITUTIONS

Participation in SROP is an excellent opportunity for you to become familiar with a place where you might like to pursue graduate study. SROP also gives you a chance to become acquainted with professors in the departments where you might apply.

In the institution selection section of the SROP application, you can apply to any or all listed universities. Do not apply to universities where no one is doing research in your desired area. Program staff will not be able to match you with a research mentor, and you are unlikely to be accepted there.

Your institution selection should be intentional. Your references can serve as a resource to help you shape your research interests and may help you select institutions to target for SROP. You need to explore the graduate offerings at the participating institutions to assist you in deciding where to apply. Consider the following questions when reviewing graduate school websites:

- ◆ Does the university have faculty with expertise in my chosen field of study?
- ◆ What kinds of research are the faculty members doing in this field?
- ◆ Are there doctoral degree programs in my area that I would consider for graduate study?

Visit the [Gateway to Graduate Education](#) website to learn more about the 1,850 graduate programs available across the Big Ten Academic Alliance.

Each institution has its own program dates, stipend amounts, room and board allowance, etc. To help you refine your choice of programs, please refer to the [Campus Profiles](#) webpage.

FINALIZING YOUR ONLINE APPLICATION

Once you have completed all sections of the application, select CHECK AND FINALIZE YOUR APPLICATION. Select PREVIEW YOUR APPLICATION to view your complete application. If you are satisfied with your responses, close this PREVIEW window and select FINALIZE to submit your application. Once you have FINALIZED your application, you will be able to view and print it; however, you will not be able to make any changes.

You will be directed to a confirmation page when you FINALIZE your online application. You will receive instructions to give to your references to complete the web-based recommendation. We do not accept letters of recommendation in paper form or via email. You may cut and paste the instructions into an email for your references, or you can print out and deliver the information to them. Your references must have your application ID number to submit a

recommendation for you. You will need to log into your application and check your status of your application to ensure the transcript(s) and recommendations are received by the application deadline.

REQUESTING FACULTY RECOMMENDATIONS

Your faculty recommendations are vital to the selection process. These documents provide the selection committee a glimpse at who you are as a researcher. Recommendations carry more weight if they are from professors or instructors who can address your ability to conduct research. We may contact your references directly to confirm their recommendation information. Here are a few tips to assist you when determining who will be your reference and the steps you should take to assist your references.

WHO IS AN APPROPRIATE REFERENCE?

- ◆ Ask for recommendations from someone who knows your academic work and can comment specifically on your performance and research capabilities, particularly in the fields of study related to your desired research area.
- ◆ Advisors and program directors can comment on your overall achievement. Generally, they cannot evaluate your experience in your field of study. If you have a recommendation from someone like this, you will need to have a strong academic reference that can speak to your research potential and knowledge in the field to supplement it.
- ◆ You should not ask a neighbor, church minister, employer (unless related to your research area) or anyone else who know you outside of an academic or research context.

HOW TO SECURE A REFERENCE:

- ◆ Early in the application process, visit your references during office hours or schedule an appointment to discuss your SROP plans and your graduate school goals.
- ◆ Give your references a short resume of your experience and areas of interest. Remind them about a project or paper you completed in their class. What grade did you make? Was there something about that project that stands out?
- ◆ After you FINALIZE the online application, give the instructions to your references for completing the online recommendation form. The instruction sheet will have a website address and your application ID number, which your references will need in order to submit the recommendation.
- ◆ Monitor your application status to ensure that the recommendations are submitted on time.

SENDING TRANSCRIPTS

You need to mail your undergraduate transcript(s) to the Big Ten Academic Alliance. Transcripts must be received by our office no later than March 1. You must submit a transcript from all institutions you have attended. Mail your transcript(s) to the following address:

Big Ten Academic Alliance
ATTN: SROP Application Process
1819 S. Neil St., Suite D
Champaign, IL 61820

QUESTIONS?

Email the Big Ten Academic Alliance Coordinator at srop.coordinator@btaa.org.

RECEIVING AN OFFER

SROP staff at participating institutions will begin contacting applicants in the spring. You may be asked to provide additional information. If selected, you will receive an acceptance offer from a program via email or phone.

It is possible that you could receive multiple offers. To allow you time to consider multiple offers, SROP programs have made **March 15** the deadline for final and binding decisions. You must accept or decline your offer by this date. If you do not make a decision by March 15, a program may rescind your offer and extend it to someone else. Notification will be sent via email to all applicants who do not receive an offer of acceptance in early May.

Monitor your email inbox and voicemail regularly.

Your voicemail messages and ringtones should be professional.

Note: Once you have accepted an offer to a university, you cannot accept an offer from a different institution. Acceptance decisions are final.

HANDLING MULTIPLE OFFERS

We encourage you not to hold onto multiple offers while waiting to hear from every institution. For example, let's say you applied to A, B, C, and D universities. You received an offer from B and C. You know that A is your first choice. Given a choice between B and C, you definitely prefer B. We encourage you to decline the offer from C so that another student can receive an offer for the space that you declined.

To continue the example, let's say that you received an offer from D. You are still holding out for A, but you know that B is still your preference over D. Decline your offer from D while you wait to see if A will accept you.

This courtesy will enable more students to receive offers for a great research opportunity, and your program staff and mentors will be impressed with your professional and polished communications.