



REAL Challenge Awards 2022-23

... because equitable outcomes don't occur by chance.

At VCU, our goal is not only workforce readiness - it's WORLD readiness. Of Virginia's R1 institutions, VCU enrolls the second highest percentage of students from the lowest economic quintile while ranking 14th in the state (out of 62) at improving student social mobility (see [Opportunity Insight's Mobility Report Card](#)). Not only has our work increased in both relevance and importance, so too has our commitment to doing more.

The REAL Challenge Awards program was started in 2020 to support faculty, programs, and departments as they seek ways to mitigate obstacles and increase access to transformative, high impact experiential learning opportunities both in and beyond the classroom.

For the 2022-2023 academic year two rounds of proposals will be offered:

- **July 1, 2022 for projects that will be implemented in Fall 2022.** Awardees will be notified on or by August 1, 2022
- **September 15, 2022 for projects implemented in Spring or Summer 2023.** Awardees will be notified on or by October 1, 2022

Additional information about the awards, as well as the application, can be found on the [REAL Challenge Awards webpage](#).

2022-23 award objectives

Funded proposals should directly address one or more of the following objectives:

- To provide structured work-based learning experiences incorporating guided reflection and mentoring through academically-linked internships, co-ops, or jobs
- To engage students in cross-disciplinary learning experiences that involve team-based learning, mentoring, and guided reflection
- To involve students in undergraduate research experiences that incorporate guided reflection and mentorship
- To develop embedded experiential learning pathways that support students' progress towards industry-recognized credentials as a part of their baccalaureate or graduate studies
- To support student participation in community or place-based experiences that advance students' career readiness, intercultural competence and sense of global citizenship

Criteria

Applications will be evaluated based on the following:

- Alignment with the award program objectives
- Focus on equity and inclusion
- Strength of implementation plan
- Impact of funding

Eligibility and amount

All full-time VCU employees (faculty, staff or UAP) are eligible to apply for the REAL Challenge Awards. While multiple applications from a single unit/department are welcome, only one proposal per unit/department can be funded in an academic year. Units are therefore encouraged to put forward a single proposal to ensure competitiveness.

It is anticipated that funding awards will range from \$700 to \$8,000. All funding is contingent upon state and university fiscal policies in place at the time of the award. It is highly recommended that proposal writers consult their unit's fiscal administrator to ensure the fundability of their proposals.

Historically, preference has been given to applications that focus on engaging students who may face greater barriers to participating in experiential/applied learning activities, including but not limited to:

- First-in-family
- Students from minoritized communities
- Students with significant financial need
- International students
- Adult learners
- Transfer students
- Neurodiverse students
- Individuals with disabilities or chronic conditions
- Students enrolled in disciplines with fewer opportunities for applied or experiential learning

Examples of eligible projects include but are not limited to costs associated with:

- Developing an equity-focused strategic plan for an academic area that addresses the Challenge Award objectives
- Developing a work-based learning pipeline with industry partners
- Developing an alumni-student mentorship program
- Embedding [AAC&U Essential Learning outcomes](#), [NACE Competencies](#) or comparable framework into the context of an academic discipline
- Working with relevant campus partners to develop an external grant proposal that addresses one or more of the Challenge Award objectives
- Training or equipment to support innovative curricula design

Application process and timeline

To be considered for the REAL Challenge Awards, applications must be received via [our online form](#). Please also complete the [REAL Challenge Awards worksheet](#), which you'll be asked to upload as part of your application, to provide additional details about budget, project goals, and implementation timeline.

Proposal and decision timeline

Proposals are due:

- **July 1, 2022 for projects that will be implemented in Fall 2022.** Awardees will be notified on or by August 1, 2022
- **September 15, 2022 for projects implemented in Spring or Summer 2023.** Awardees will be notified on or by October 1, 2022

Disbursement and use of funds

- Funds will be disbursed to the faculty or staff member's fiscal agent for administration upon acceptance of the award, and all awards will be in compliance with state and university fiscal policies. Awards must be expended within the 2022-23 fiscal year.

Please note that any equipment or technology purchased will be the property of VCU.

Reporting and awardee expectations

Mid-year and final reports/presentations on the uses of the funds and outcomes of the project will be expected from those selected. Final reports from all awardees will be due August 2023.

Awardees will also be asked to gather periodically to share progress, challenges, and lessons learned.

Questions

Contact Erin Webster Garrett, assistant vice provost for REAL, at real@vcu.edu.