Guidelines for Preparing a Report for a VWRRC Student Research Grant or Fellowship

Below are guidelines for preparing your report whether it is federally funded (e.g., through US Geological Survey) or not. The report (either interim or final report) consists of a short narrative and responses to a series of questions about your student status, demographics, and the project. PLEASE READ THESE GUIDELINES BEFORE FILLING OUT THE REPORT FORM.

The report is submitted using a Google form. A URL for the form will be provided by the program administrator. It is advised that you write your narrative first and then save it as a separate Word file. Then, either paste it into the form or upload it as PDF file. If you have photographs or figures to include (maximum of 3), also provide a short description (including credit if necessary) in a separate Word or PDF file. When the report is submitted, you will have the option of receiving a copy of your responses and report.

Please remember that the VWRRC shall be credited in all publications (journal articles, conference papers, graduate thesis, websites, etc.) that result from this project. This should take the form of a simple statement such as: "Support for this research was provided by the Virginia Water Resources Research Center (VWRRC)." *It is the responsibility of the student and faculty research mentor to communicate publications, presentations, proposals, data, etc. resulting from this grant or fellowship even after the reporting period.*

Report format

Interim Reports:
Provide a short summary of the work and information on your progress toward project goals. Interim reports may be just a few sentences or bullets and largely describe accomplishments to date and progress toward completion of the work. A plan for spending remaining funds on the budget is also required.

Final Reports:
The goal of the final report is to document your major findings and allow readers from different backgrounds to understand why the work is important. If you are submitting a fellowship report that broadly supported your academic program, the report responses should focus on your program and/or thesis/dissertation project. Final reports should be no longer than 450 words and written at a level understandable to an undergraduate student from a non-science/engineering background, but with basic science literacy. A good analog for the report style is ScienceDaily (http://www.sciencedaily.com), a science news website that offers readers the depth and breadth of breaking news about the latest scientific discoveries.

The target audience of the final report is stakeholders of the VWRRC, which include academics from many different fields, legislators, water-interest groups, students, citizens, and state and federal agencies. Possible uses of the report include as a post on the VWRRC's webpage, as part of reports to VWRRC funding agencies (e.g., US Geological Survey), or in communications with federal legislators, Virginia General Assembly members, or state agency staff.

The report should provide enough context for the project's implications to be clear to readers. The report should not contain references and should avoid numbers, measurements, and acronyms unless necessary. The report should be accompanied by a headline that could be used in a newsletter or press release, and that also conveys the overall findings of the project. You may also submit a relevant photograph (provide photo credits and permission to use in newsletters) or a simple graphical illustration of project findings. Include names, affiliations, and contact information for all project investigators.

Here are some general style guidelines:

- Grab attention with a good headline that also tells the story of your work.
- Distinguish between findings and interpretation or extrapolation.
- Avoid over-claiming results and hype.
- Get right to the point in the first few sentences. Your title/headline and first paragraph should convey the general story. This title is not necessarily the same as your proposal, thesis, or project title. It should be understood by broad audiences and be provocative, informative, professional, and tell the story of your work. Again, ScienceDaily (http://www.sciencedaily.com) is a good reference for style.
- Consider providing access to more information (e.g., a URL).
- Try using 3 short paragraphs to construct the report. The first paragraph should be strong and attract readers. It should also tell the entire story in brief. The second paragraph should provide some level of detail about findings and the last paragraph is a brief summary of implications of your findings and take-home message.
- Use plain language. Avoid excessive use of adjectives, fancy words, and jargon.
- Use active, not passive, voice.

Open Science: Data Archiving and Open Access

If federal funds were used to support your work (this is not the case for the Walker Fellowship and many undergraduate projects), you will need to follow the open science guidelines below. Even if your work was not supported by federal funds, open science is still a good idea for sharing ideas, information, and research findings in a manner that is accessible for all. In many cases, non-federal funders require that researchers follow open science practices as well.

Data Policy: Data are made fully accessible, discoverable, and usable (open access) as soon as possible, but no later than one (1) year after project completion. However, if the data are critical for completion of a student thesis or dissertation, they can be released one year after the submission of the thesis or dissertation. Data products will be archived by the Virginia Tech Data Repository (data.lib.vt.edu), the institutional repository in the University Libraries at Virginia Tech, or at the institutional data repository of the recipient of the grant home institution if not from Virginia Tech, for purposes of preservation, discoverability, and access. Other public repositories such as the Environmental Data Initiative or Hydroshare supported by the Consortium of Universities for the Advancement of Hydrologic Science, Inc. can be used as well. Students or their faculty mentors must provide a URL (or doi) to their data repository entry no later than one year after submission of their final report or completion of thesis or dissertation.

Publication Policy: Manuscripts resulting from support from VWRRC programs should also be open access. This can take the form of open access publishing or by depositing an article version such as an accepted manuscript or preprint into a repository. For Virginia Tech researchers, an open access deposit of accepted manuscripts is available through the university's institutional repository (see Virginia Tech Policy 13000 2.3.A. #8; vtechworks.lib.vt.edu; guides.lib.vt.edu/oa). Students or their faculty mentors must provide a URL (or doi) to their publication deposit or to the published open access article as soon as it is available.

If you are unclear whether these policies apply to you, please contact the VWRRC program administrator.