

# 2026 PSI Heuermann Research Idea Award

The **PSI Heuermann Research Idea Award** supports innovative plant science research projects of graduate students and postdoctoral researchers in PSI at UNL. The award aims to fund research expenses for at least one graduate student and one postdoctoral researcher each year. The proposed research should represent a new idea that is not simply a request to fund current research goals or supplement an ongoing project.

## **Awards and Allowable Expenses**

Proposals involving a single PSI tenure-track or tenured faculty advisor may apply for up to \$3500, while proposals substantively involving more than one PSI tenure-track or tenured faculty advisor (collaborative proposals) may apply for \$5000. Awards should be used primarily for research expenses (e.g., consumables, supplies, and computer hardware). The research award may be spent over a period of up to two years.

## **Eligibility**

- Applicants must be part of PSI member labs during the proposed research period.
- Awardees from previous years are NOT eligible to apply again.

## **Evaluation Criteria**

Proposals will be reviewed and ranked by the PSI Research Idea Award committee based on the following evaluation criteria:

### **1. *Significance of the proposed research***

- Clear and compelling description of the proposed research, placed in the broader context of PSI's vision and mission (<https://psi.unl.edu/vision-mission-and-core-values/>)
- Significance of the proposed research and its novel contributions to plant sciences
- Clear and compelling description of how the proposed work extends beyond the applicant's current research projects and goals and therefore constitutes a new idea

### **2. *Intellectual merit and conceptual framework***

- Evidence of the student's understanding of the background scientific theory and findings
- Quality and significance of research questions being addressed and/or hypotheses being tested
- Clarity of the description and appropriateness of the proposed methods for addressing the research questions and hypotheses
- Expected outcomes and how the data will be analyzed to address the research questions and/or hypotheses
- Potential for new discoveries, data generation, and/or development of new research approaches or frameworks

### **3. Feasibility and budget justification**

- Demonstration that the project is achievable and likely to be successful within the timeframe and budget
- Consistency and coherence between the scope of the work described in the proposal and the budget
- If the proposal is collaborative, then the role of the co-advisor must be clearly and explicitly defined, with an explanation of how the work could not otherwise be performed except in this collaborative context

### **4. Impacts on the applicant's research and career goals**

- Description of the applicant's research and career goals and how the proposed research activity contributes to achieving the goals

### **5. Timeline of proposed work**

- Timeline of milestones and products of the project

## **Application Requirements**

1. **Project details (online):** Includes student's full legal name, email address, name of the mentor(s) providing the support letter, project title, total amount of funds requested, and 250-word abstract. For collaborative proposals, the names of both mentors must be provided.
2. **Research proposal:** Should be maximum length of 3 pages including all figures and tables, using single line spacing, 1-inch margins, and a minimum of 11-point font. Figures and Tables should not be made so small as to be unreadable. Please explicitly include the following information, ideally in specifically named sections:
  - Introduction/Background
  - Research questions and/or hypotheses
  - Methods and Study Design (e.g., description of the study site/organism, approaches to data collection and analysis, and any other details necessary to evaluate the proposed research)
  - Expected outcomes of the research, including a description of how the proposed project activities specifically address the research questions and/or hypotheses.
  - Research significance and contribution to PSI vision and mission (<https://psi.unl.edu/vision-mission-and-core-values/>).
  - Novelty: Explicitly describe how this work goes above and beyond the applicant's current research projects and goals and, for collaborative proposals, how the two mentors are necessary for and will each contribute to the successful completion of the project.
  - Contribution of proposed project to applicant's research and career goals
  - Timeline of proposed activities

3. **References cited:** A list of references cited in the Research Proposal. References are limited to two pages, using single line spacing, 1-inch margins, and a minimum of 11-point font. This section does not count towards the 3-page limit for the Research Proposal.
4. **Budget and justification:** Should include an itemized list of proposed expenses, with a brief justification of how each expense contributes to and is required to conduct the proposed activities.
5. **CV**
6. **Letter of support:** The applicant should arrange for a letter of support (1 page) to be submitted by the student's major mentor. For collaborative proposals, a second letter of reference will also be needed from the co-mentor. The letter(s) should indicate that a) the applicant will study under the mentor's supervision during the proposed research period and b) the mentor agrees to provide mentorship for the proposed research activities. In addition, for collaborative proposals, the letter should affirm the mentor's contribution to the project.

### Submission Instructions

- Complete the online application form: <https://forms.cloud.microsoft/r/D72cmHCwsW>
- Document numbers 2-5, listed above in the Application Requirements, should be combined in one single PDF file.
- The letter(s) of support should be emailed by the applicant's mentor(s) to the PSI Graduate Committee Chair ([jpmower@unl.edu](mailto:jpmower@unl.edu)) by the application deadline.
- **Application Deadline: May 8th, 2026.** Decisions will be made by the end of June 2026.
- **Incomplete or late applications will not be considered.**

### Additional Information

Awardees will be announced by the PSI mailing list and on the PSI website. Awardees will be honored at the Plant Science Retreat in November 2026, and they are strongly encouraged to present their findings at the 2027 Plant Science Symposium or 2028 Plant Science Retreat.

### Reporting

Students are required to submit a 2-page report summarizing major research findings, including images and figures, as appropriate, and explain any challenges. The report should also include an itemized financial report detailing expenses, with a short description of how each expense contributed to the project. Procedures for submitting these reports will be provided after awards are made. Selected awardees may be asked to write a short blog post for the PSI website.

Contact [jpmower@unl.edu](mailto:jpmower@unl.edu) with questions.