



Harvard College Summer Program for Undergraduates in Data Science (SPUDS) 2023-2024 Application Instructions

PROGRAM INFORMATION

The Summer Program for Undergraduates in Data Science (SPUDS) is a ten-week summer program, co-sponsored by Harvard College and the Harvard Data Science Initiative (HDSI), that aims to provide a formative and substantive data science research experience and to promote community, creativity, and scholarship amongst Harvard College students. SPUDS will support Fellows with interests in computer science, mathematics, and statistics, including those who are interested in data science applications across the arts, humanities, sciences and more. We also encourage SPUDS projects in regard to the ethics of data science.

To participate in SPUDS, prospective fellows should find a research position on their own and apply to SPUDS separately. **It is not necessary to have secured a research position by the SPUDS application deadline.** Fellows will work with Harvard-affiliated researchers and live in one of the Harvard College houses with other fellows in the Summer Undergraduate Research Village. As part of SPUDS, fellows will participate in rich evening programming, including both social and academic activities, and become members of a vibrant intellectual and social summer community. **SPUDS will run from Monday, June 3, 2024 to Thursday, August 8, 2024. (The move-in and move-out schedule will be confirmed later this spring.)**

COMPONENTS & EXPECTATIONS

SPUDS Fellows are expected to fully participate and contribute to the community of scholars in evening enrichment activities not associated with individual research throughout the term of the Program. While many activities are voluntary, other SPUDS activities, especially those associated with Harvard faculty are mandatory for all Fellows. **Individuals who are taking summer school courses, who are preparing to take the summer MCAT or other summer graduate school entrance exams, or who are engaged in full-time public service projects are not eligible to participate in SPUDS.**

SPUDS consists of the following components:

- **Research experience:** SPUDS is intended to provide Fellows with a substantive and formative research experience in data science through close work with a Harvard-affiliated faculty mentor.
- **Residential life and community:** SPUDS Fellows will live together with the other Harvard Summer Undergraduate Research Village programs (PRISE, BLISS, PRIMO, SHARP, and SURGH) in a Harvard College residential house for the duration of the Program. The Research Village will have on hand its own staff—including the director, resident dean, proctors and program assistants— during the ten weeks of the Program.
- **Dining:** A full HUDS meal plan is available to SPUDS Fellows.
- **Special events and academic programming:** SPUDS will feature a variety of academic activities, including the SPUDS Distinguished Speaker Series, the SPUDS Distinguished Faculty Conversation Series, collaborative activities with HDSI postdocs, a weekly forum to share hands-on skills, a research symposium, and more.
- **Recreational and social programs:** SPUDS Fellows are eligible to register for free use of Harvard athletic facilities, including the Malkin Athletic Center, Hemenway Gymnasium, and Blodgett Pool. A calendar of Research Village activities will include a range of opportunities to socialize and take advantage of Boston's cultural and recreational summer offerings with your colleagues, including a variety of excursions and Fellow-initiated community events.

CONTINUE TO THE NEXT PAGE FOR ADDITIONAL PROGRAM INFORMATION.



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ELIGIBILITY

- Any continuing Harvard College undergraduate student in good standing; preference will be given to individuals who have not yet participated in a Summer Research Village Program (e.g., PRISE, BLISS, PRIMO, SHARP, SURGH, or SPUDS).
- Must be able to commit 10 weeks* to summer research on campus.
- Must be participating in a research activity in data science with a Harvard-affiliated faculty member. Projects are intended to be interdisciplinary and may pursue data science applications across the arts, humanities, sciences, and more. **[PLEASE NOTE: PRISE projects related to data science will also be considered for funding through SPUDS.]**
- May accept funding for only **one** Harvard-funded summer experience, per the [Harvard College Summer Funding Policy](#).

***NOTE: Individuals taking summer school courses, preparing for the summer MCAT exam or other summer graduate school entrance exams, or engaging in full-time public service projects are not eligible to participate in SPUDS.**

BENEFITS

SPUDS offers a variety of benefits to ensure a successful summer research experience and enable fellows to form a close-knit community:

- A **living stipend of \$3,000** for the ten-week program
- Free **lodging** in designated Harvard housing
- A full **boarding/dining** plan

SELECTION CRITERIA

Since the primary purpose of the Program is to build and foster a strong and diverse community of scholars in data science, a successful application will demonstrate the following:

1. A strong dedication to developing or furthering academic interest and excellence in data science research;
2. A documented and verified opportunity to participate in a data science research experience that fulfills a compelling and specific academic goal over the summer (**confirmation may be submitted after the deadline**);
3. The ability and desire to participate actively and enthusiastically in a diverse residential community of scholars;
4. An academic record demonstrating success in coursework that develops theoretical knowledge and/or practical application of data science;

Evaluation of the applicant will be based on how well and how effectively the components of the application define and address these qualities and requirements.

CONTINUE TO THE NEXT PAGE FOR APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS.



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PLEASE READ CAREFULLY AND ORGANIZE THE FOLLOWING MATERIALS FOR YOUR APPLICATION:

■ **APPLICATION FORM**

Complete the online CARAT information, which will be compiled and displayed as your application cover sheet.

■ **CURRENT RESUME**

Indicate significant activities, achievements, and experiences in college that demonstrate your interests and potential achievements. **Do not exceed one page.**

■ **CURRENT UNOFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT**

Download your unofficial transcript from my.harvard.edu, **including your fall course grades and spring course listing.**

■ **ESSAY RESPONSES**

In a separate document, please provide responses to the following two statements. Please be sure to include your name at the top of the page(s).

1. Briefly describe the research interest(s) you would like to pursue this summer and why. This essay should convince a committee of data scientists and administrators that you have thought carefully about the topic yourself and are not simply rewording material from Wikipedia or a webpage. Please be as specific as possible, but describe the research in your own words. If you must use jargon, give your own descriptions of the technical terms you use. If you have not yet selected a project, please describe your intended research interest, what you hope to learn, and how you expect the research experience will contribute to your academic goals. (500 words maximum.)

2. Describe how you will contribute to and benefit from participating in a diverse residential community of researchers. Please provide descriptions of your involvement in your Harvard house or dorm (or other communities, such as a club or team or volunteer program), with specific examples of your role in contributing to the cohesion and distinctive identity of the group. In addition, consider your involvement in light of the return to campus this fall term. How has your experience impacted you, and what you have you done to address the challenges of belonging and contributing to a community in the current environment? (750 words maximum.)

■ **EVALUATION FORM (NEW FOR SUMMER 2024)**

One evaluation form is required in lieu of a traditional recommendation letter. Send your recommender the Evaluation Form (see below), which will guide them on the topics we would like addressed in their evaluation. Your evaluation form should be completed by someone in the Harvard academic/research community who can comment on your academic initiative and interest in pursuing excellence. This form may include brief examples of how you will benefit from SPUDS. If your academic evaluator is also your summer faculty research host, they should also confirm your lab placement in that form; in this case, the evaluation form will also count as a letter of support, and therefore you do not need a separate confirmation letter. First-year students may consider a high-school academic/research evaluator.

- **HOUSE RECOMMENDATIONS:** Applicants do NOT need to seek a residential letter of recommendation. Yard/House feedback will be solicited directly from URAF for all SPUDS applicants. If you have a community-based reference who is not in your House community (e.g., coach), please contact your proctor or House Fellowship Advisor (HFA) so that they can be in touch with that individual to get feedback for your application.

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS CONTINUE ON NEXT PAGE.



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■ CONFIRMATION LETTER FROM RESEARCH HOST

A letter from your designated faculty research host must confirm your project and provide details about the proposed project, as well as to what extent and by whom you will be mentored. **The applicant may upload this to CARAT directly, or the faculty host may email it to undergradresearch@fas.harvard.edu.**

If your faculty host chooses to send the confirmation letter to URAF, they should email their confirmation letter in pdf format to undergradresearch@fas.harvard.edu with SPUDS and [YOUR LAST NAME] in the subject line. **If you do not have your project host confirmed by the application deadline, please have your faculty host email their confirmation letter as soon as possible.**

If your faculty host is also your academic recommender, your faculty host should confirm your lab placement in their letter of recommendation, which they will upload directly to CARAT on your behalf after you indicate them in the Reference section.

CONTINUE TO THE NEXT PAGE FOR APPLICATION UPLOAD INSTRUCTIONS.



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PLEASE SUBMIT YOUR APPLICATION AS FOLLOWS:

1. **LOG IN TO [CARAT](#) USING YOUR HARVARD KEY** and confirm that your profile information is correct.
2. **“APPLY” TO THE [SPUDS “FUNDING SOURCE”](#)**
Fill out all required fields.
3. **REQUEST RECOMMENDATIONS (via “Recommendations” tab)**
You are **STRONGLY ENCOURAGED** to solicit recommendations at least three weeks ahead of the application deadline. Once you have provided name (Last, First) and contact information for your recommenders, **YOU MUST CLICK “Send recommendation request”** under each recommender’s entry in order for CARAT to send the notification to your recommender’s email. **“Save and Next” will NOT submit your recommendation requests.**
4. **SEND YOUR EVALUATOR THE EVALUATION FORM ITSELF! It can be found by clicking [here](#).**
 - a. **Ask your evaluator to complete the evaluation form and upload it to CARAT in lieu of a recommendation letter. Only the form will be accepted; recommendation letters are not accepted for SPUDS.**
5. **UPLOAD YOUR DOCUMENTS**
All documents must be submitted concurrently, in PDF format. No supplementary materials will be accepted.
6. **SUBMIT YOUR APPLICATION (via “Submission” tab)**
Enter your HUID and click “Submit.” The date and time of your submission will be noted, and late applications will not be accepted. Please note that you do not need to wait for your recommenders to submit their letters to submit your materials.

If you or your recommenders have questions about this application or the online submission process, please contact the Office of Undergraduate Research and Fellowships at (617) 495-5095 or undergradresearch@fas.harvard.edu.

■ **DEADLINE: WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2024 AT 11:59pm(EST)**