

NRI Opens Applications for Seventh Year of Virtual Internship Program

Applications are open for NRI's 2026 Virtual Internship Program, a competitive four-week online program introducing students to nutrition research careers.

KANNAPOLIS , NC, UNITED STATES, February 24, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The [UNC Nutrition Research Institute \(NRI\)](https://www.uncnri.org/) has opened applications for its 2026 Virtual Internship Program (VIP), a highly competitive, four-week online program designed to introduce high school students to the field of nutrition research. Applications are open now through March 23.

Now entering its seventh year, VIP provides early exposure to scientific research, critical thinking, and professional communication for students interested in science, health, and research-related careers. The fully virtual format allows students from across the country to participate in a structured academic experience led by NRI faculty, postdoctoral researchers and professional staff.

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Carsyn Patton, VIP Co-Director

“VIP is intentionally designed to mirror how science works in real research environments,” said Carsyn Patton, VIP co-director. “Students are challenged to think critically, ask questions, and communicate complex ideas clearly—skills that are essential across scientific disciplines.”

The program includes live online lectures, interactive discussions, and small-group mentoring sessions. A central focus of VIP is scientific communication, with students

learning how researchers share their work through scientific posters. Posters are a standard format used in academic and professional research settings, and VIP participants develop their



own posters over the course of the program. By the end of the four-week program, students present their work to peers and NRI scientists, producing a scientific poster that reflects their understanding of research communication.

VIP is open to all high school students, including rising ninth graders and rising college freshmen. Due to the program's rigorous structure and high demand, applications are carefully reviewed, and a limited cohort of 54 students from across the country will be selected to participate.

Sessions take place twice weekly in June and include presentations from NRI faculty, mentoring sessions, and student presentations. In addition to learning about nutrition research methods and current scientific questions, students gain insight into academic pathways and careers in science and public health.

New for 2026, students who are accepted and choose to participate will be asked to pay a \$25 registration fee to reserve their spot in the program. There is no fee to apply, and a limited number of scholarships will be available based on financial need.

Key dates for the 2026 program include:

- Applications open: February 16
- Applications close: March 23
- Selected students notified: April 1

The Virtual Internship Program reflects NRI's commitment to education, mentorship, and building the future pipeline of nutrition researchers. By providing early, realistic exposure to scientific research and communication, VIP helps students explore whether a career in science is the right fit for them while equipping them with skills that are valuable across academic and professional settings.

More information about VIP, including eligibility and application details is available at uncnri.org/VIP.

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The University
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Nutrition Research Institute

UNC Chapel Hill and NRI Logo

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