Request for Student Applications

2027 Albert, Norma and Howard Geller ’77 Endowed Research Awards for Student Projects Relating to Sustainability

The George Perkins Marsh Institute announces a call for applications for The Albert, Norma and Howard Geller ’77 Endowed Research Awards. These awards support student-initiated research projects that advance our understanding of natural resource and environmental sustainability and develop practical improvements that can move society towards more sustainable outcomes. Successful applications will balance originality with evidence of support from a faculty mentor, who will help guide the funded work. After completion of their projects, awardees are expected to report findings from their work and present these findings at an appropriate university forum.

Clark University undergraduate and graduate students are eligible, and will be reviewed in separate competitions. Subject to the number and quality of applications received, it is the intention of the committee to award one-half of both regular and small awards to undergraduate projects. We anticipate making approximately 3-4 regular awards in amounts ranging from $1,001 to $2,500, and several smaller grants of up to $1,000. Requests for more than $2,500 will not be considered.

Given the intent of the Geller Awards, proposals will be evaluated on the following criteria:

- relevance to practical approaches of advancing sustainability
- originality and innovation
- clarity and feasibility of research plan
- ways in which the project will contribute to linking knowledge to action
- potential for the award to enable a project that may not be possible without it
- evidence of meaningful interactions with a faculty mentor for the project and/or linkages to ongoing research (but not at the expense of originality and independence)
- cost-effectiveness (i.e., whether the budget is reasonable)
- a scope of work commensurate with the academic standing of the student (i.e., we expect that applications from graduate students will reflect a greater degree of academic experience and professionalism, compared to applications from undergraduate students).

Deadlines and Dates

The deadline for applications is **Friday, November 20, 2026** at 4:30pm, Eastern Time. A faculty committee that shares Howard Geller's interests in student research and activism for sustainability will select successful proposals. **Announcement of awards will be made as early as December 2026,** and **awards will be available for projects beginning as early as January 2, 2027** (projects may also begin later). All awarded projects should be **completed before December 31, 2027**, although some flexibility will be allowed due to extenuating circumstances.

Questions should be directed to Chris Williams, Interim Director of the George Perkins Marsh Institute, cwilliams@clarku.edu.

Content of Applications

1. Application must contain a cover sheet that includes:

    - the project title
    - the student's name and department (of major or graduate work, as applicable), the degree being sought, advisor (if applicable), and the anticipated date of degree completion
    - whether the project is an undergraduate or graduate project
    - proposed duration of the work (including desired start and end date)
    - contact information for the applicant including address, phone, and email
    - the total funds requested, and whether the proposal is for a regular or small project
    - the identity of the faculty sponsor, including email
    - whether the applicant is an international student (This will not influence your eligibility for an award in any way. The information is only required for internal accounting purposes.)
    - a project summary of no more than 300 words
    - The cover sheet is not included in page limits for the project description (see below).

2. Applications must contain a description of the proposed project (maximum 5 pages) which:

    - describes the issue or problem that the project will address;
    - describes the objectives of the project;
    - describes how the project will be conducted and, for projects involving more than one student, how the tasks will be divided or shared among the participants;
    - discusses anticipated results and benefits and how they will be documented;
    - places the proposed work in the context of other related studies and activities and explains why this project is worthwhile.

3. The project description is limited to five pages, single-spaced, with one-inch margins and no smaller than 12-point font. Appendices or attachments exceeding the 5-page limit are not allowed. Proposals exceeding page limits will not be accepted.

4. If the proposal is for a portion of a larger faculty or student project with a more extensive budget, the project description (#2 above) must state clearly and explicitly how financial support from a Geller award will complement the larger project. This is included in the 5-page limit.

5. If the proposed project is part of a final paper, thesis, dissertation or class work, state this clearly in the project description and provide a short description of any other sources of funding for this project. **If the project is part of a dissertation or thesis, clearly explain the improvements or extensions that will be possible with a Geller Award.** This is included in the 5-page limit.

6. Projects should include a bibliography and be properly cited. This bibliography is NOT included in the 5-page limit.

7. Proposals must also include a one-page proposed budget with a clear explanation of the purpose of the proposed expenditures. The use of all requested funds must be explained. This budget and explanation are NOT included in the 5-page limit. See additional details on the budget below.

8. Before submission, **proposals should be reviewed and approved by a faculty sponsor** who should be clearly identified on the cover page of the proposal. Make sure to leave sufficient time for your faculty sponsor to review the proposal prior to the submission deadline.

Guidance on Budgets

Proposals must include a one-page budget with a clear explanation of the purpose of expenditures. This budget and explanation are NOT included in the 5-page limit for the project description. The content and reasonableness of the budget is one of the factors that will be considered when rating your proposal. The use of all requested funds must be explained. We anticipate making approximately 3-4 awards in amounts ranging from $1,001 to $2,500, and several smaller grants of up to $1,000. Requests for more than $2,500 will not be considered.

Typical budget items include research supplies, printing/mailing of surveys, equipment, data, and support for travel and housing at research sites. Requests for conference travel support (e.g., funds to attend academic conferences) will not be considered. Award funds cannot be used to support stipends, wages or salaries for applicants. If your budget includes the purchase of major equipment with an expected lifespan of multiple years (e.g., a wet suit, computer equipment, laboratory equipment, etc.), this equipment must be donated to your department upon completion of the Geller project and must be stated explicitly in the budget description. If funds for travel are requested, please explain how these funds will be used and break down the total into subcategories (e.g., amount for airfare, hotel, meals, mileage, parking, etc.).

Cost sharing (i.e., using other funds to pay for part of your proposed project) is encouraged but not mandatory. A budget table such as the following is suggested:

Budget Item Description	Total Cost	Amount Covered by Geller Award	Amount Covered by Other Sources
Budget item #1			
Budget item #2			
…			
Total			

The budget table should be followed by a written description and justification of each item, along with any cost sharing. Applicants with questions regarding the budget of their project should contact Chris Williams, Interim Director of the George Perkins Marsh Institute, cwilliams@clarku.edu.

Submission

Applications should be submitted electronically **as a single pdf file** to Chris Williams, Interim Director of the George Perkins Marsh Institute, cwilliams@clarku.edu. The file should be named using the following format, *LastName*_Geller2027.pdf, where "*LastName*" is your family name. For example, if your name were Jane Doe, you would submit your proposal in a single pdf file named Doe_Geller2027.pdf.

History of the Albert, Norma and Howard '77 Endowed Research Awards: The Geller Student Research Awards were established by the family of Dr. Howard Geller. Howard graduated from Clark in 1977 with degrees in Physics and Science, Technology and Society (now Environmental Science and Policy). After Clark, he earned graduate degrees at Princeton and the University of Sao Paolo and became the first executive director of the American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy (ACEEE). After twenty years of accomplishments at ACEEE, including contributions to the National Appliance Energy Conservation Act of 1987 and the Energy Policy Act of 1992, he left ACEEE to found and direct the Southwest Energy Efficiency Project (SWEEP) in 2001. Remembering his own experience as an activist student researcher at Clark, Howard hopes these annual awards will support other Clark students as they combine research with action that moves society toward sustainability.