SPARK - Human Resources Onboarding Tasks

2026-2027 Academic Year

Welcome to Northwestern University and welcome to SPARK! We are excited for you to get started on work with your faculty mentor. Before you begin, you must complete the tasks outlined below.

Some of the hiring forms require documents that you may not have on hand (such as your original birth certificate; a copy will not be accepted). Read through each step carefully so you can plan.

This handout is available online at the QR code above or on our website:
https://research.soc.northwestern.edu/undergraduate-research-opportunities/

SPARK Contacts		
Dr. Sharra Vostral	SPARK Director, Asst Dean, Professor	svostral@northwestern.edu
Amanda Peterson	Program Coordinator	apeterson@northwestern.edu
Fernando Eloisa	Financial Assistant, CSD	fernando.eloisa@northwestern.edu
Joe Kustra	Business Administrator, Comm Studies	joe.kustra@northwestern.edu

HR Definitions	
Rehire	Students who worked during Fall 2026 quarter while enrolled at NU as a student
New hires	Students who have never signed hiring paperwork at NU while enrolled as a student

Task	Assigned to	Due Date	Notes
Sign the contract and return it to everyone included in your offer email	All SPARK scholars	No later than November 16	Tip: Click "reply all" - ensure it includes your faculty mentor and Sharra Vostral before sending.
Contact your mentor	All SPARK scholars	No later than November 20	Introduce yourself and ask what your work will involve and when it will begin.
Attend Onboarding session	All SPARK scholars	November 11 3-3:50 (HCS) 4-4:50 (Comm)	In FSB 1-180. Welcome, onboarding, and info sessions. If you have a conflict with your program's session, you may attend the other.
Fill out the Social Security Application	*International students* without a social security #	ASAP	This takes time so start the process immediately! You will need this for many of the tasks. You can find details on the OISS website.
Enroll in *CMN 110: Research Fundamentals in Communication* for winter quarter	All SPARK scholars	November 12 (pre-reg); November 16 (regular reg)	Passcode required. You will receive it from Sharra Vostral before course registration

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Fill out I-9 Part 1	New hires	No later than December 12	Complete in the I-9 Service Center using these instructions. Create an account and enter your personal information (date of birth, social security number, phone number, etc.) If you are an international student and/or on a visa, you will need to provide your work authorization expiration date and either a USCIS Number, I-94 Admission Number, or your Foreign Passport Number.
Fill out I-9 Part 2	New hires	No later than December 12	*Complete in person at HR!* You can view the list of acceptable documents here. Bring one document from List A OR one document from List B (must contain your photo) and one document from List C. These must be original and not a photo or scan. The HR office is located in downtown Evanston at 1800 Sherman Ave, Suite 1-100 (by the Starbucks). You do not need to make an appointment. If you prefer to meet remotely, you can schedule a meeting here. Note: You will be asked to hold up the original version of your verification documents in the video call, so you will need to have these on hand.
Fill out Personal data form	All SPARK scholars	No later than December 12	Submit to Joe Kustra (Comm Studies, joe.kustra@northwestern.edu) or Fernando Eloisa (CSD, fernando.eloisa@northwestern.edu)
Fill out Federal W4	All SPARK scholars	No later than December 12	Submit Federal W4 to Joe Kustra (Comm Studies) or Fernando Eloisa (CSD)

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Task	Assigned to	Due Date	Notes
Fill out the IL W-4	All SPARK scholars	No later than December 12	The IL W-4 cannot be submitted through MyHR. Students will either have to submit this in person at HR when finishing the I-9 or email it to askHR@northwestern.edu.
Attend first day of class	All SPARK scholars	January 4, 4:00-4:50pm	Frances Searle (FSB) 3-220
Complete CITI Training (Social Science and Behavioral Science Research)	All SPARK scholars	January 11	All students need to take ethics training for research, called CITI Training, or RCR (Responsible Conduct of Research). Upload CITI certification of completion to course Canvas page. Log hours you spend on training in your myHR.
Enroll in *CMN 110: Research Fundamentals in Communication* for spring	All SPARK scholars	February 15 (pre-reg); February 22 (regular reg)	Passcode required.

Additional Resources
Submitting work hours on Workforce from NU Career Advancement (step-by-step instructions)
Timekeeping policies from NU Career Advancement (limits, holidays, etc.)
General timekeeping instructions from NU HR (how-tos, job aids, etc.)