2013-2014 Program
U.S. Student Application Information Packet
Due July 15, 2013
A Message to Prospective U.S. Delegates

Dear Applicant,

Thank you for your interest in the 2013-2014 Stanford U.S.-Russia Forum (SURF) program!

SURF is a truly unique initiative, the only organization at the university level that affords Russian and U.S. students the opportunity to engage on today’s most important issues and work with experts from a variety of fields. As a delegate, you will be exposed to another culture and gain the valuable experience of collaborating in an international context. Additionally, and perhaps most significantly, you will create lasting friendships with your fellow delegates and join a wide-reaching community of past SURF participants. SURF alumnae have gone on to become Fulbright and Boren Scholars, journalists, professors, entrepreneurs, and much more. We welcome applicants from all academic disciplines and majors, regardless of prior exposure to Russia.

Before getting started, please take the time to read the following information before you complete our online application. Then send your resume and transcript to surf.us.officer.team@gmail.com. If you have questions regarding the application process, please e-mail Marilyn Harris at mnharris@stanford.edu with any questions.

This is a rolling admissions process. Please apply as soon as possible. The final admissions deadline is July 15.

If you are a Russian applicant, this is not the correct application. You will need to obtain a Russian Student Application from Kate Markaryan at kate.markaryan@gmail.com.

We look forward to receiving your application!

Kind Regards,

The Stanford U.S.-Russia Forum Officer Team
Program Structure:

SURF is an organization run by students, for students. SURF’s primary objectives are:

• To promote dialogue and collaboration between American and Russian students in areas including science, technology, business, politics, history, literature, and the arts. Through participating in student-driven collaborations, we encourage delegates to embrace new ways of problem-solving while forming lasting friendships.

• To develop creative ideas for improving U.S.-Russian relations that contribute to the ongoing dialogue amongst policymakers, academics, and other members of the professional world. As a SURF delegate, you will be responsible for writing a policy proposal or a project summary that will be distributed to individuals and organizations who influence the course of U.S.-Russian relations.

Our objectives are accomplished through two key components of the SURF program: the Collaborative Research Projects (CRPs) and the Conferences.

Part I: Collaborative Research Projects (August 2013 – March 2013)

The CRP is the core of the SURF program, and delegates will have considerable flexibility in designing and executing their projects. Each team is comprised of 2 Russian students and 2 U.S. students; every team will be assigned a professional mentor and a student advisor to help navigate the collaborative research process. At the closing conference, all groups will give an oral presentation on their research findings or project work.

Project Theme and Structure:

While some of these projects will ultimately emerge as interdisciplinary in their final stages, for now they will be grouped under three general themes:

• Science & Medicine
• Business & Entrepreneurship
• Social Sciences & Humanities

You may structure your project in one of two ways:

• Academic: Your project will culminate in a research paper and (where applicable) a policy recommendation that addresses the issue you are investigating. The early period of the CRP process will be focused on identifying your research question and completing a literature review. You will then work with your professional mentor to devise research
methods most suitable for your project and use the bulk of your time to research and write your paper (12-15 pages in length). Past papers have focused on a wide range of topics, from the impact of oil on Russian governance to potentialities for US-Russian cooperation in securing Pakistani nuclear material. We have also had several projects concentrated on civil society, immigration and many other topics.

- **Applied:** Traditionally, SURF has focused solely on policy papers and recommendations. This year, we are looking for as many as half of the delegates to engage in collaborative projects that culminate in some deliverable other than a research paper. These projects should identify a “need” and leverage your unique experiences and skill sets to create an innovative solution to this need. For example:

  - Create a mobile app to help English-speakers learn Russian and vice-versa
  - Prototype solutions to teen homelessness in urban areas
  - Model energy-efficient fuel sources for mass transit in large cities
  - Find a low-cost way to repair badly damaged roads
  - Generate a system to incorporate more fresh produce and high-nutrient, low-cost foods into public schools

For the applied projects, we are especially interested in candidates with backgrounds in science, engineering, business or entrepreneurship. Experience in coding, design, statistical modeling, analyzing large data sets, finance, non-profit management or other related areas is desirable. Your final project does not necessarily have to pertain to a problem specific to the U.S.-Russian space; it may address a global concern or one specific to a different country or region. We are excited for how your unique perspective and skills will contribute to addressing these issues in an international collaborative context.

**Timeline:**

- **Summer:** During the first six weeks of the program, you will get acquainted with other delegates in your theme group and develop your research question or project objective. Throughout August, you will meet several times over Google Hangout. Based on your conversations with your theme group, your skill sets, and your interest in particular projects, you will eventually break up into teams of 4, with 2 Russians and 2 Americans on each team.

- **Fall:** Prior to the Fall Conference (discussed in more detail below), Academic delegates must have a literature review completed. By the end of August, Applied delegates will have developed a list of fixed project deadlines with the help of their Professional Mentors and Student Advisors. Exact dates will vary project to project, but it is expected that the Applied delegates will have made substantial progress prior to the Moscow conference so as to leverage their time together in Moscow effectively towards project completion.
• **Winter/Early Spring:** Each Academic group will have to turn in a detailed topic outline in November, a research summary in January, a rough draft of their paper in mid-February, and a final draft in mid-March. Throughout February and March, **Applied delegates** will also write a 8- to 10-page project summary to be included in the **SURF Journal.**

**The Research Process:** Research groups will be responsible for organizing their own collaboration virtually via email, teleconferencing, and videoconferencing (groups will receive more detailed instructions and advice on how best to approach the collaborative process later). Your Student Advisors and Professional Mentors will act as guides, but the most successful delegates will be skilled self-starters who communicate **early** and **often** with their fellow group members and Student Advisors. *These projects will require you to conscientiously balance your academic workload with your commitments to SURF. Although it is at times demanding, it is a very rewarding process.*

**Part II: The Conferences**

**Moscow Conference (Mid- to Late October 2013):** At the five-day Fall Conference, delegates will meet in person for the first time and further develop their research and applied projects with their group members. Conference events will include panel discussions and seminars with leading experts in policymaking, academia, and business.

SURF will arrange all lodging, food, and event-related costs in Moscow. However, delegates will be responsible for arranging their own travel to and from Moscow. SURF will work with delegates to arrange the travel and visas and will provide instructions on this process at a later date.

**Stanford Conference (Mid- to Late April 2014):** To conclude the SURF Program, delegates will reassemble for a five-day conference at Stanford University. Groups will have the opportunity to present their work to the other delegates and conference attendees. Additionally, we will have panels and seminars on U.S.-Russia relations, business, technology, and more. There will be several exciting field trips and time for sightseeing in San Francisco.

SURF will arrange all lodging and event-related costs as well as most food-related costs at Stanford. We do not cover souvenirs or other miscellaneous expenses, so delegates should budget $50-$150 for personal purchases. However, delegates will be responsible for arranging their own travel to and from Stanford. SURF will work with delegates to arrange the travel and visas and will provide instructions on this process at a later date.
**Financial Aid:** One common question we get during the application process is about the financial aid system. As stated above, SURF covers all costs for the duration of both conferences. We do not cover any travel expenses (flights, taxis, or other incidentals) or visa fees. However, **SURF is committed to ensuring that all delegates can attend both conferences regardless of financial need.** We are proud to have a need-blind application process and indicating your financial situation at any time during the application or interview process will in no way affect your application. After acceptance, delegates wishing to apply for financial aid may submit a financial aid request form, which will be made available on the website over the summer.

**Application Tips:**

- **Tell us about your intellectual passion.** We want students who have demonstrated an interest and engagement outside the classroom. If your interest has little to do with Russia or foreign relations, don’t worry – as long as you communicate to us what it is that really excites you. We want to know why you are excited to engage in an international dialogue and collaboration with the other delegates. We are looking to recruit students of varied backgrounds, and a willingness to learn and create something new is a quality we value.

- **We are looking for leaders who are self-motivated.** Delegates who work independently and proactively are those who will see a richer, more nuanced result at the end of the CRP process. Your resume and essays should reflect not just involvement but commitment to activities and projects you have pursued in the past.

- **Think forward, and think big.** We are looking for outside-of-the-box ideas, for change catalysts and for delegates with bold vision for creating something better, both in terms of the U.S. and Russia but more broadly as well.