



## GUIDE TO APPLYING for NATIONALLY COMPETITIVE STUDENT SCHOLARSHIPS and AWARDS

These external scholarships and awards are **highly competitive opportunities** to receive funding for tuition for undergraduate or graduate school, as well as access research or teaching English as a second language opportunities abroad. These scholarships, awards, and fellowships **require that you be nominated by your institution**, with support from faculty and administration in the application process. Most use an electronic submission process.

**Only a small number of these awards are given each year, so why apply?** Even if you are not the recipient of one of these awards, the process of applying can help you improve your writing or interview skills, recognize your strengths and talents, build your long-term academic or career plans, or prepare for applying to graduate school. Even to be nominated or to be a finalist imparts a degree of distinction that sets you apart from your peers.

**What makes you competitive for these awards?** Maintaining a high grade point average (GPA) is essential. Most award programs expect a GPA of 3.7 or higher. Having a specific GPA does not guarantee consideration; you must distinguish yourself from your peers in very specific ways. The following “tips” should assist you in preparing for the application process as you are considered for specific awards.

### TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- 1) **START EARLY!** Even though you may not be applying until junior or senior year, you need to begin the types of activities, research and leadership opportunities as a freshman or sophomore that are valued by these awards and scholarships.
- 2) **Carefully consider the awards you may be interested in and read the award information on each website thoroughly.** Many of the websites contain profiles of the types of students who are successful in their competitions, which can help you discern the kinds of experiences you should cultivate over the next year or two.
- 3) **Get to know your professors.** Introduce yourself to your professors and talk with them about specific topics in a course, their research interests, and current issues in their field. Creating relationships with professors early can create opportunities for working with them (or their colleagues) one-on-one, which can be an integral component to many of the awards. Letters of recommendation from professors will be a significant part of the application process; they will need to know you well and be able to write very specifically to your suitability for an award.
- 4) **Demonstrate your interests through your activities.** There is no “right” set of activities to pursue, but you should look for those that fit the criteria of a specific scholarship or award that interests you. Many foundations look for activities outside the usual campus venues, although on-campus activities are important, too. **Many awards value serious service and community engagement work that is both substantive and on-going.**

- 5) **Demonstrate leadership.** Just being an officer of clubs or organizations is not enough. How you lead is what matters. Showing creativity and initiative, being a “change agent,” taking on risks and challenges, making yourself heard, and demonstrating your leadership ability will be the determinant for these awards.
- 6) **Take challenging courses.** Opting for seminars, writing-intensive courses, honors courses, and independent studies involving research illustrates your commitment to academic work and shows that you are willing to work hard to excel.
- 7) **Take advantage of special opportunities.** Many awards require that you have worked closely with a professor(s) on a research project that could be continued after graduation or abroad. Opportunities that involve internships, working with local or state government, working with a non-profit, or working with professional organizations will enhance your knowledge, leadership experience, partnerships with professionals and professors, and make you more competitive with your peers. Additionally, study abroad experiences are highly valued by those granting external awards. Such experiences should also involve in depth service and/or research projects with faculty while abroad.
- 8) **How do I start the actual nomination process?** A professor may approach you about an award, or may actually nominate you. Or, if you are interested in a specific award, first check the website for the award to make sure that you are suited for it, then talk with either a professor or your advisor about starting the application process. There is a listing of major awards at <http://www.nafadvisors.org/scholarships.php> or on the university’s faculty development website: <http://www.bellarmino.edu/FacultyDev/studentawards/>. You may also contact Dr. Anne Bucalos at [abucalos@bellarmine.edu](mailto:abucalos@bellarmine.edu).

**NOTE: Each scholarship or award opportunity has its own specific application process and deadline. Nominations and subsequent applications must go through Bellarmine’s process prior to being submitted to the external scholarship or award committee. Therefore, you will need to complete some or all of the application process according to Bellarmine’s timeline first.**