

THE 2010 GOLDWATER SCHOLARSHIP

Policies and resources for Stanford Undergraduates

The Goldwater Scholarship is an opportunity for exceptional students with research experiences and interests in the sciences, mathematics, and/or engineering.

Stanford University may only nominate four students per year to the national competition. Stanford's internal deadline for this nomination process will be **5:00 pm Monday, December 7th, 2009**.

All interested students should thoroughly read the materials found at the Goldwater website (<http://www.act.org/goldwater>).

Eligibility:

Read carefully “Conditions of Eligibility” in the online application materials.

The Goldwater Scholarship is open to current Sophomores and Juniors.

The Goldwater Foundation requires that each applicant have a grade-point average of at least “B” or the equivalent, and be in the upper fourth of her or his class. However, experience indicates that only students with a GPA of 3.7 and above will can expect to be successful in the competition.

Deadline:

The deadline for submission of completed applications is **5:00 pm Monday, December 7th, 2009**. All of the materials described at the Goldwater website must be submitted by this deadline:

All materials in the online application form must be submitted through that form.

- <https://actapps.act.org/rsp/?realm=28330775>

All materials in the Supporting Documents Checklist must be brought to the front desk on the first floor of Sweet Hall.

- <http://www.act.org/goldwater/apply/pdf/yycklist.pdf>

Letters of Recommendation:

The online application form will request contact information for three recommenders. We strongly encourage you to talk with your intended recommenders and/or Brian Thomas (bthomas@stanford.edu; Stanford's Goldwater nomination representative) BEFORE you enter this information. We additionally recommend that you provide your intended recommenders with Dr. Thomas' email address, and invite them to ask questions about the Goldwater program and/or the required letters of recommendation.

Nomination Process:

Stanford applications are reviewed by a committee of faculty and academic staff. Nomination decisions will be announced in January, and nominees will receive comments from reviewers in addition to an opportunity to revise their applications. The Office of Undergraduate Advising and Research will submit final hard-copies of the materials on the Supporting Documents Checklist by the end of January.

Resources:

Students should work closely with their faculty mentors while writing application essays. UAR also has a binder of application materials from past Stanford Goldwater winners is available for review on the first floor of Sweet Hall. Students may additionally request a meeting with Dr. Thomas by contacting him directly or by contacting the front desk on the first floor of Sweet Hall. Not all student appointment requests can be answered; please plan ahead.

ASKING FOR LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

Scholarship selection committees depend heavily on recommendation letters to gain insight into applicants' personal strengths, weaknesses and accomplishments. This kind of information cannot be readily gleaned from transcripts and test scores, so it is in your best interest to help your recommenders write the most accurate and detailed letters possible.

You should begin to cultivate close working relationships with faculty early in your undergraduate career. Once you've become acquainted with faculty members through coursework, research or other ways, consider stopping by their offices once a quarter to discuss your interests and to keep in touch. When the time comes, you need not feel shy about requesting a recommendation. All faculty members and graduate students had the same service done for them, and they regard this as a familiar process. Refer to the following guidelines for managing your letter requests:

Choose the people who know you best. Many students wonder whether they should ask a "big name" professor who knows only their face and final grade or a less-known professor who knows them better. Letters by famous people or well-known scholars *only* carry more weight if the famous person knows you *well* and can write a substantial, convincing letter. The more detailed and personalized a letter is, the more likely it is to make a strong impression on a selection committee, so you should ask your instructors with the most extensive, personal knowledge of you and your work.

Ask early. It is common courtesy to allow recommenders *at least* three weeks to prepare and submit their letters. We highly recommend involving them in the early stages of your application process, while you are deciding what to write about and how to present yourself in the application materials. Their insights will prove invaluable, and they will be well-informed of your interests when they write their recommendations. You should thus begin your request with a substantial conversation about your interests and goals, and then ask them if they can write a strong letter of recommendation. Most likely they will say yes. In some cases, however, the faculty member may say no or that he or she can only write a recommendation citing certain qualifiers or weaknesses. In this case, you should accept his/her judgment graciously and consider asking for more feedback about your goals and plan for study.

Once faculty have agreed to write your letters, provide them with copies of your application materials. The following items will help them to write accurate and purposeful letters:

- photocopies of key pages from the application brochure, describing the nature and purpose of the scholarship
- a copy (or a draft) of your application essays, or a summary of your career and educational goals
- a list of your activities (sports, organizations, leadership and volunteer positions, etc.)
- a description of pertinent work or research experiences
- a copy of your transcript

If a number of quarters have passed since you worked with a recommender, you should also provide her/him with a copy of your paper or class project.

Write out all submission instructions and deadlines. There should be no question as to when and where to submit the finished letters. Provide properly addressed, typed and stamped envelopes.

Keep in touch with your recommenders. After submitting your application, send recommenders a thank you note expressing your appreciation for their guidance and support. Update them on your progress throughout the stages of the competition and inform them whether you are selected for the award or not. Should you need a recommendation in the future, this kind of follow-up communication will continue to foster a close, positive relationship with your faculty sponsors.