



Office of Undergraduate Scholars and Fellows Nationally Competitive Scholarships

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2021 Duke Goldwater Recommendations

Congratulations! You have been asked to recommend a student for a highly competitive national scholarship. This is both an honor in that you are mentoring an ambitious and promising student, and a responsibility in that you likely wish to write a letter that can help your student stand out from a pool of other highly promising young people.

Please note:

- ❖ You are *never* required to write for a student. Please only write for those students for whom you believe you can make a good case.
- ❖ All students have waived their rights to see your letters.
- ❖ It is against NCS-OUSF policy to accept letters originally authored by students.

At any time in this process, from brainstorming the first draft to finalizing your letters, we are delighted to help. Please contact ncs-ousf@duke.edu.

The mission of the Goldwater Foundation and its scholarship program is to help develop the nation's next generation of researchers in the natural sciences, mathematics, and engineering. Your letter should discuss the nominees overall potential and, in particular, the nominee's potential to become a successful research scientist, mathematician, or engineer. It is important, of course, for you to describe the context in which you know the student and for how long you have known the student. Do you see in this student the motivation, creative thought, stamina, and ability to collaborate that are characteristics of those successfully practicing in these areas? Particularly helpful to the reviewers are your comparisons of the nominee to other students you have known and worked with who have successfully pursued doctoral degrees and/or have previously won Goldwater Scholarships or other nationally competitive awards. If there are any special circumstances or challenges the student has had to face that have negatively affected the student's performance or that the student has faced and has successfully addressed and performed well in spite of these challenges, please discuss these in your letter. Finally, specificity strengthens your letter. Please provide specific examples of your work with the applicant.

Goldwater Scholarship Recommendations Process

Criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Academic Merit ❖ Potential to become a successful research scientist, mathematician, or engineer ❖ Do they have any of the characteristics of successful researchers, i.e.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Motivation <input type="checkbox"/> Creative Thought <input type="checkbox"/> Stamina <input type="checkbox"/> Ability to Collaborate
Endorsement required?	Yes. This is a multi-stage process and Duke is allowed to nominate four students annually.
Length	1.5-2 pages; Never more than 3 pages
Number of Recommenders	Three; normally made up of a PI, former research mentors and science faculty.

Application Stages	Stage	Description	Deadline
	On campus selection	NCS convenes a committee to decide which applications will go forward in a given year. We do not need a full letter, but please send a 2-3 paragraph email detailing their research/academic strengths to ncs-ousf@duke.edu . <i>At this stage we only require one letter.</i>	Nov. 1, 2021
	National Foundation Submission	Once endorsed, your student will let you know their status and you will send a polished letter signed and on letterhead to ncs-ousf@duke.edu to be submitted with the application .	Jan. 24, 2022
	Scholars Named		Early April

FAQs

Where do I submit?

For the Endorsement Stage: Please send a 2-3 paragraph email or full letter to ncs-ousf@duke.edu.

For the Foundation Stage: Please send a signed PDF on letterhead to ncs-ousf@duke.edu. NCS is required to upload the letter for you.

To whom should I address the letter?

For the Endorsement Stage: NCS/Duke Endorsement Committee

For the Foundation Stage: Dr. John Mateja and Goldwater Selection Committee Members

What is the difference between an Endorsement stage recommendation and my letter for the foundation?

The email or letter to the Duke committee is essentially a draft of the final letter for Goldwater. We only require one letter per student at this stage. It should be *explicit* about how this student stands out at Duke, noting the depth of their research and your assessment of their potential as a research scientist.

The final letter to the Foundation is signed and on letterhead, and may include comparisons to other students you have taught who have gone on to complete graduate degrees. Again, the letter should be *explicit* about how this student stands out at Duke, noting the depth and relative importance of their research, their academic strengths, originality of thought, and your assessment of their potential as a research scientist.

My student plans an MD/PhD, does that qualify them for this scholarship?

Goldwater expects students who plan an MD/PhD career to see their career as primarily research oriented. The scholarship is set up to encourage research careers not clinical careers. Students are expected to be able to say why the MD is necessary to do their research.

My student plans a research career in industry, does that qualify them for this scholarship?

Yes. Goldwater makes no distinction between an academic or industry centered career.

How will I know whether a student is endorsed?

Students will be instructed to let you know if they have been endorsed.

Things to keep in mind?

Always remember the adage, “Show don’t Tell.”

Readers at the national level have many letters to read in a short period of time; be sure to highlight your key points early in the letter, if you can.

What should the letters contain?

- ❖ Tell the story of the candidate from YOUR point of view.
- ❖ How do you know the student?
- ❖ Why do you believe they will make a good research scientist?
- ❖ Do they have originality of thought?
- ❖ Do they collaborate well?
- ❖ Could you tell us a story about a time the student impressed you?
- ❖ How does their study plan fit into their future ambitions?
- ❖ How does this student compare to other students you know? For instance, is the student is in the top 10% of students you have taught, or are even the best in your teaching career?

Further Resources

On Goldwater Recommendations from the [Foundation](#).

Stronger Recommendations from Inside Higher Ed: <http://bit.ly/stronger-letters>