

The Goldwater Scholarship

2026 Goldwater Open House

John Mateja, PhD
President

www.goldwaterscholarship.gov

Open House Members

Goldwater Foundation

- John Mateja, Shellby Padgett, and Doug Antos

Scholarship America

- Linda Zuhlsdorf and Laura Mickle

Open House (Reviewers and Fellowship Advisors)

- Bert Holmes
- Kerry Karukstis
- Julio Turrens
- Paul Urayama
- Babs Wise
- Paul Zorn



No Changes in 2026 to Goldwater's:

Mission

- To identify, encourage, and financially support this Nation's next generation of research leaders in STEM.

Level of Financial Support

- Sophomores up to \$15,000, Juniors up to \$7,500

Eligibility Requirements

Fields of Study

- Determines background of reviewers who read applications

Application Elements

- Online application, transcripts, 3 letters, research essay

New for 2026

Three AI Questions:

- Was an AI Tool used in this application?
- What AI tool was used?
- How was AI used to prepare your Goldwater application?

Student answers to these questions **WILL** be provided to the reviewers in 2026.



Changes over the past 6 years

Doubled the number of scholarships in 2019

Review by discipline, not by state

Transfer and Veteran Student Initiatives

- A 5th student can be nominated if one or more of your nominees is a transfer student or a veteran. A 6th student can be nominated if a transfer student AND a veteran are nominated.

Students who transfer to an accredited 2- and 4-year U.S. academic institution may still be nominated by the school FROM which they transferred.

In the year nominated, students do NOT have to be enrolled full-time but must be enrolled full-time during academic terms they receive funding.

Changes over the past 6 years

Selection Process



Files are reviewed holistically

- Balanced consideration of review categories, with selection based on merit, not financial need.

Review Areas (*rubric*)

- 1) Career goals, 2) research essay/research experience, 3) academic course of study and performance, 4) reference letters, and 5) other considerations

How Nominations are Distributed among Reviewers

- A packet of 30 nominations is read by a two-person review team
 - Select 6-7 Scholars – team members must agree
 - Select 2 nominees for additional review – team members must agree
 - A reviewer may identify 1 student for “**Diamond**”(hidden gem) consideration at the Foundation level.

What does Diamond signify?

Enables reviewers to “level the playing field” – i.e., account for the fact that all students don’t have the same opportunities.

Diamonds are expected to exhibit ability, promise, and interest in a research career, but due to various life challenges, they do not have the same level of productivity/experience as other applicants.

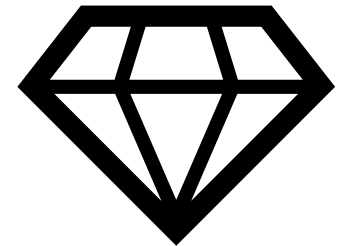
Some characteristics that ***MIGHT*** lead a reviewer to designate a student as a Diamond: Low-income, first-generation, non-traditional, community college, health challenges, homelessness, among others.

Diamond is an internal designation only. Once selected, a GOLDWATER SCHOLAR is a GOLDWATER SCHOLAR!

CRs should **NOT** be reluctant to nominate applicants who have faced life challenges but who have persevered and show promise and ability to pursue a research career.

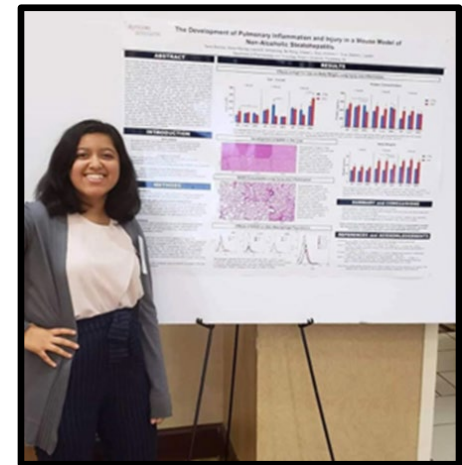
Diamond is **NOT** a NOMINATION category;

Diamond is a REVIEW category



Online Application: Personal Information (optional statement)

Describe an activity, experience, or life circumstance(s) that influenced your education - either positively or negatively - and how you utilized or dealt with it.
(optional statement)



What makes an application more competitive?

There is no single “recipe” for winning a Goldwater Award

What are the characteristics of a strong application?

- Well articulated career goals (details add credibility)
- Academic accomplishments that support career trajectory
- Research that identifies students’ intellectual contributions and skills
- Letters that speak to ability, promise, and research career direction
- Evidence that students have made the most of the opportunities available to them

Resources for Campus Reps

Goldwater Foundation and Scholarship America

- **Policy questions:**
 - Goldwater President
(goldwaterpres@goldwaterscholarship.gov)
 - Goldwater Administrative Staff
(goldwaterao@goldwaterscholarship.gov)
- **Questions regarding student online applications and CR dashboard:**
 - Scholarship America Help Desk
(goldwater@scholarshipamerica.org)
- **Questions regarding student payments**
 - Goldwater Administrative Staff
(goldwaterao@goldwaterscholarship.gov)

Reviewers and Fellowship Advisors

- Note that all the reviews and fellowship advisors are available for consultation between Open Houses

Resource for Students (and CRs)

Goldwater Scholar Community

- **Goldwater Ambassadors Program**
 - Sydney Nelson (sydney.e.nelson@vanderbilt.edu)
 - Kayla Smith (kaylasmith1@arizona.edu)



Open Houses

(August - October)

August through October Sessions

- August 20: “The Goldwater Scholarship: 2026”
- August 27: “CR Dashboard Walkthrough”
- September 3: “The Goldwater Scholarship: 2026 (Repeat of August 20 session)”
- September 10: “Question-and-Answer”
- September 17: “Goldwater Scholar Community Ambassador Program” – **STUDENT SESSION!**
- September 24: “Building a Campus Goldwater Committee
- October 1: “Question-and-Answer”
- October 8: “Goldwater Application Process: Myths and Missed Opportunities
- October 15: “Question-and-Answer”
- October 22: “A Conversation on Reference Letters”
- October 29: “Questions-and-Answer”

Every Wednesday at 4 p.m. Eastern Time from August 20, 2025, through January 28, 2026 (excludes holiday weeks – Nov. 26, Dec. 24, Dec 31)

Contact Information



BARRY GOLDWATER
SCHOLARSHIP & EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION FOUNDATION

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