The Goldwater Scholarship Program, one of the oldest and most prestigious national scholarships in the natural sciences, engineering and mathematics in the United States, seeks to identify and support college sophomores and juniors who show exceptional promise in scientific research.

The Goldwater Foundation is looking for the following characteristics in a successful applicant:

- strong commitment to a career in math, the natural sciences, and engineering,
- potential for a significant future contribution in the applicant’s chosen field(s),
- clear intention to pursue a doctoral degree with the goal of making their primary contribution to their professional community through research*.

* Interested candidates intending to eventually study and practice medicine outside of an MD/PhD program and research track are not appropriate for the Goldwater process.

Applying for Campus Nomination at the University of Iowa

Many national scholarship and fellowship opportunities – including the Goldwater - require that prospective applicants participate in a campus nomination competition before they may be chosen and endorsed by their institution for consideration by the sponsoring funding organization. At the University of Iowa, this institutional endorsement process is lead by our Director of Scholar Development and supported by the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education and the UI Undergraduate Scholar Development Committee (USDC), a diverse group of faculty, staff, community experts, and past scholars whose relevant knowledge and experience shape selection and strengthen the preparation of our national and international fellowship nominees.

At the campus-level, we will prioritize the following in the selection of our four UI Goldwater nominees:

- Grade Point Average > 3.75
- Course work appropriate for graduate school goals
- Research experience or well-developed research plan
- an application where every response suggests a research career
- In-depth essay concentrating on expected or obtained research results
- Three strong letters of recommendation that address different/complementary aspects of their applicant’s experience

2018-19 Goldwater Deadline Schedule:

- **Monday, November 12, 2018** | Deadline to Apply for Campus Nomination
  Recommenders are asked to share an electronic copy of their letters with the Director of Scholar Development by emailing it to kelly-thornburg@uiowa.edu by the established date. At the campus level, previous recommendations or DRAFT letters can work if writers are pressed for time, but we do prefer to work with current detail when selecting our nominees. If their student is selected to represent the university as a nominee, recommenders will have an opportunity to refine their letters.

- **First Week of December 2018** | Notification of Campus applicants

- **Thursday, January 24, 2019** | Final Submission Deadline for UI Recommenders & Nominees
  Because online application portals can and do malfunction, I ask writers to email their final letters to me by 10:00 AM on Thursday, January 24, 2019 to allow me adequate time for submission and to manage parallel deadlines.
What recommenders can expect from their applicants

In addition to this message, I encourage each applicant to provide the following information to help their referees build a strong, representative letter of recommendation that speaks directly to their goals as well as the objectives of the Goldwater Scholarship. To do this, they should offer you:

- a brief explanation of their interest in the opportunity,
- a description of their research interests and the concept/question driving their research statement,
- an up-to-date curriculum vitae, and
- a sense of why they invited you to write for them. What perspective are you to focus on in your letter? Are you to evaluate them as a researcher, as a contributor in the classroom, or in another scientific/public context?

As a reminder to those of you who have supported applicants in the past and to orient faculty and investigators who are new to the Goldwater process, I have included some guidance on content and focus below.

Just like research, recommendations must be evidence-based

At this level of competition, letters should include evidence. Selectors at the national level frequently stress how impactful stories can be when offered as a demonstration of a candidate’s intellect, skill, or instincts. Because all of the students who advance as institutional nominees are genuinely impressive, decision-making often comes down to what they know about how and why students do the work they do, not just that they do it.

What kind of evidence is useful to the committee?

One of the best ways to give depth to your letter can be to connect your assessment of a student’s strengths and skill sets to a:

- description of a definitive experience with the student where her contribution to your lab, research group, or a classroom experience clearly stood out in your mind and why,
- shared memory or story which illuminates for the committee the clear commitment she makes to her studies and the intensity of her commitment to the exploration of ideas,
- or more concrete evidence of her skills as a teacher, mentor, or innovator. An example of this would be to include measures of advancement or to describe how her membership on your research team, student organization or classroom community made a significant impact on overall progress.

Appropriate length and formatting

Selection committees at the nomination level expect enough detail and context to fill in one and a half to two pages. The Goldwater Foundation requests that final letters be addressed to the 2019 Goldwater Scholarship Selection Committee and:

- formatted with one inch margins,
- drafted using a 12 point font (Calibri or Segoe UI are good options if you aren’t a fan of Times New Roman),
- submitted to me on letterhead (I handle final submission), and
- no more than two pages in length.

Questions? Contact your University of Iowa Goldwater Campus Representative:

Kelly Thornburg, Director of Scholar Development at
W: 319-335-1874  C: 319-450-9842  E: kelly-thornburg@uiowa.edu
Find additional resources for recommenders at: https://honors.uiowa.edu/supporting-recommenders