

Undergraduate 4-Year Plan for Applying to Fellowships

Applying for a prestigious fellowship is not a decision made overnight. There are many steps along the way that will lay the groundwork for your fellowship application. The earlier you start to think about those processes the more experiences you will gain. These awards don't just go to the students with the highest grades, they go to the students that have demonstrated excellence in the classroom, have taken the initiative to make their community a better place, and now wish to use their passion, their intellect, and their energy to change the world. There is not a simple checklist that every fellowship grantee has in common. The students who win these awards have diverse interests, hopes, and dreams. This goes to show that there is not a particular formula to follow when pursuing a fellowship. However, there are milestones to keep in mind that will set you up for a successful college career and help prepare you for applying to fellowships.

The following 4-year plan should be used as a reference as you move forward in your education:

Freshman Year:

- Take advantage of academic opportunities. Take classes that you find interesting and engaging. Do well in them. For classes you are very passionate about, talk to your professors about research/opportunities to pursue your favorite topics in depth.
- Reach out to your professors, academic advisors. Go to office hours and take advantage of opportunities to learn more and become more involved in your classes. Additionally, this will help you build those relationships you may rely on later on.
- Look for opportunities to do something you find interesting over the summer (research, internships, etc.). Start thinking about it earlier rather than later in the academic year.
- Be proud of what you do: Enter competitions and apply for departmental awards for work you're proud of.
- Have fun: get involved in activities that you find engaging. Meet people, share ideas, do different things.

Sophomore Year:

- Continue to do well academically and build on your connections to the campus community.
- Take challenging courses and courses that interest you.
- Search for ways to make a difference on campus. Whether that be joining an organization, campus committee, or making a difference within your community.
- Continue to pursue research or internship opportunities,
- If they suit your interests, apply for undergraduate fellowships (Udall, Goldwater, ect.)

Junior Year:

- A lot of applying takes place during your junior year. You're still eligible for the Udall, Goldwater, and other undergraduate fellowships, but it's also time to start preparing your application for post-graduate opportunities including the Rhodes Scholarship, the Marshall Scholarship, or a Fulbright Grant. Stay in contact with the fellowship advisor and make an appointment in the spring in order to begin laying the groundwork for your application.

- By now you have found your footing in the community, now it is time to take it up a notch and challenge yourself. Become a leader in your community or organization. Take on leadership roles in clubs, activities, and events. Do extensive academic research.

Summer before Senior Year: A lot of applications are due at the beginning of the fall semester. Start contacting faculty or other individuals for letters of recommendation. Take this time to start brainstorming, outlining, maybe even writing your fellowship proposal so that once you return to campus we can work together on refining your proposal to turn it into a quality presentation of who you are, what you've done, what you want to do, and how a fellowship will help get you there.

Senior Year:

- Apply!
- Fellowships require anywhere from three to eight letters of recommendation. Keep this in mind throughout your college career. Ask professors and individuals who can attest to your academic ability, intellectual curiosity, and your potential. Be sure to ask your recommenders early in the application process. See the Recommendation Letter Request tab for more tips!
- Prepare for interviews: for most fellowships the next step in the process is interviews. For more tips see our page on preparing for interviews!