



GUIDE FOR STUDENTS

Office of Major Scholarship Advising at PFW

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2024

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Find a [WEBINAR](#)
version of the
Student Guide on
the OMSA website.




PART I: INTRODUCING OMSA

What is a major scholarship?



- **Highly competitive.** Most award rates are below 30%. Many are below 10%.
- **National/international.** Applicants come from all over the country or all over the world.
- Supports outstanding **educational and professional opportunities**, including travel, language learning, and Ph.D. study.
- Many have **high name recognition**. E.g.: Fulbright, Rhodes, Gates, Marshall.
- Major scholarships rarely support professional degrees (e.g., in law, medicine, business) or Master's degrees.

What is OMSA?



The Office of Major Scholarship Advising assists PFW and IUFW students and recent alumni and IPFW alumni when they apply for major scholarships. Most scholarship competitions expect applicants to work closely with scholarship advisors while preparing an application.

OMSA can help you:

- Identify the scholarships that are most appropriate for you.
- Put together competitive applications for scholarships.

Are you a good fit?

If more than one of the statements below are true, you are a good candidate for a major scholarship.

- You are ambitious; you want to excel in your career.
- You are interested in travel and learning languages.
- You have a high GPA (over 3.7).
- You enjoy doing original research in your academic field.
- You plan to go to graduate school.
- You have a record of leadership in extra-curricular activities.
- You are willing to work hard in pursuit of your dreams.



Next steps

- Familiarize yourself with the information in this guide.
- Contact OMSA (pg. 6). Even if you are several years away from applying, there is no better time than NOW to start thinking about an application!



Meet the director



Dr. Noor Borbieva O'Neill

- Fulbright recipient (Kyrgyzstan)
- PFW Professor of Anthropology
- Director of OMSA since 2020

CONTACT ME!

- Phone: 260-481-6266
- Schedule a meeting:
<https://calendly.com/noorborbieva/office-hours>
- Input your info and I'll reach out to you:
https://purdue.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_bloFKROHAfmXixM
- OMSA Website:
<https://www.pfw.edu/omsa/>
- Zoom room: <https://purdue-edu.zoom.us/j/3552569263>





PART II: TYPES OF MAJOR SCHOLARSHIPS

Diverse opportunities



- Major scholarships are available for students during **any year of study** (including during graduate study). Alumni qualify for some scholarships.
- Major scholarships support **diverse disciplines**, but especially international study, STEM, public service, and education.
- Many major scholarships are designed for **members of under-represented groups**.

The OMSA Top Ten

(Most popular with PFW students)

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INTERNATIONAL

- [Boren Scholarship](#): Supports a semester or full year of undergraduate study abroad, including language study, in a State Department-designated “strategic” region. Deadline: January.
- [Critical Language Scholarship](#): Supports a summer intensive language program abroad. “Spark” scholarship supports an online summer intensive language program to study Arabic, Chinese, or Russian. Deadline: November.
- [I.I.E. Fulbright Student Grant](#): Supports a year of graduate-level study, independent research, or teaching abroad. Deadline: October.
- [Gilman International Scholarship](#): Awards up to \$5,000 to support undergraduate study abroad. Deadline for spring start: October. Deadline for fall start: March.

PUBLIC SERVICE AND TEACHING

- [Carnegie Endowment Junior Fellows Program](#): Supports a one-year, post-graduate internship at the Carnegie Endowment in Washington DC. Deadline: January.
- [Truman Scholarship](#): Supports graduate work in a public service field. Deadline: February.

The OMSA Top Ten (continued)

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, MATH

- [DAAD Rise](#). Summer internship in a STEM field in Germany (German language not required) for undergraduate and graduate students. Deadline: December.
- [Goldwater Scholarship](#): Up to two years of tuition support for STEM undergraduate students who intend to pursue a graduate research degree. Deadline: January.
- [Hertz Foundation Scholarship](#): Funding to support a Ph.D. in a STEM field. Deadline: October.
- [NSF Fellowships](#): A variety of opportunities available to support students in STEM fields. Deadline: Varies.

TRAVEL

- ▶ Boren Scholarship
- ▶ Critical Languages Scholarship
- ▶ Fulbright Grant
- ▶ Gilman Scholarship

Boren Scholarship

- ▶ Supports undergraduate and graduate students to study up to a year abroad, with a focus on foreign language.
- ▶ Supports languages designated “strategic” by the U.S. government.
- ▶ Some programs require proficiency in the target language; some support beginners.
- ▶ Priority given to students interested in policy and/or with a history of military service.

JANUARY DEADLINE

Critical Language Scholarship

- ▶ CLS: Support for summer language study abroad for undergraduate or graduate students. CLS Spark: Support for summer language study online.
- ▶ Supports languages designated “strategic” by the federal government, including Korean, Japanese, Chinese, Russian, and Arabic.
- ▶ Some language programs require previous study, others do not.

NOVEMBER DEADLINE

Fulbright Grant

- ▶ Support for one year of research, teaching, or graduate study abroad.
- ▶ Apply senior year or later.
- ▶ Open to students in any academic field.
- ▶ Apply by country.
- ▶ Requires university nomination and interview.

OCTOBER DEADLINE

Gilman International Scholarship

- ▶ Awards up to \$5,000 to support undergraduate study abroad.
- ▶ Available only to students eligible for federal Pell Grants.
- ▶ Applicants should work with OMSA as well as the PFW Study Abroad and Financial Aid offices

OCTOBER AND MARCH DEADLINES

PUBLIC SERVICE AND TEACHING

- ▶ Carnegie Junior Fellowship
- ▶ Truman Scholarship

Carnegie Endowment Gaither Junior Fellowship

- ▶ Apply senior year.
- ▶ Fellows live in Washington DC and work for the Carnegie Endowment.
- ▶ Fellows receive a small stipend to cover living expenses.

JANUARY DEADLINE

Truman Scholarship

- ▶ Supports graduate study in a public service field.
- ▶ Extra-curricular record of leadership is weighed as heavily as academic record.
- ▶ Apply junior year.

FEBRUARY DEADLINE

STEM

- ▶ DAAD Internship
- ▶ Goldwater Scholarship
- ▶ Hertz Fellowship
- ▶ NSF

DAAD Rise Internship (German Academic Exchange Program)

- ▶ Paid summer internship to work on a research project with a team in Germany.
- ▶ German language ability not required for most internships.
- ▶ Open to students from most countries.

DECEMBER DEADLINE

Goldwater Scholarship

- ▶ Tuition support for undergraduates studying STEM fields.
- ▶ Awarded to students intending to enter a career in research.
- ▶ Apply sophomore or junior year.
- ▶ Requires university nomination.

JANUARY DEADLINE

Hertz Doctoral Fellowship

- ▶ Supports doctoral study in a STEM field for students pursuing a career in research.
- ▶ Apply senior year or at the time you apply for a Ph.D. program.

OCTOBER DEADLINE

National Science Foundation

- ▶ Many opportunities: Undergraduate research, graduate degree study, etc.

VARYING DEADLINES

Award Rates

(selected)

- Carnegie: 5%
- Critical Language: 10%
- Fulbright: 20%
- Gilman: 25%
- Goldwater: 32%
- Hertz: 2%
- Truman: 8%



Beyond the Top Ten

Many scholarships are available beyond the Top Ten. Students are encouraged to use the following funding databases to identify appropriate opportunities. If this is new to you or you can't find what you are looking for, work with the OMSA director!

- [SCHOLARSHIP UNIVERSE](#). All PFW students have access to this resource. Use your PFW credentials to log on and keep your profile updated.
- [HANDSHAKE](#). PFW Career Development Center sponsors this database for jobs and internships. Contact the [CDC](#) if you have trouble accessing.
- [Florida State University scholarship database](#) is user-friendly and open-access.
- [CIEE](#) is an open-access database listing study abroad scholarships.
- [Pathways to Science](#) is an open-access database listing STEM opportunities.



Past Winners (selected)



2021

Fulbright—Chelsea Bihlmeyer

2018

Fulbright—Kyler Hudson

2017

Fulbright—Nathan Brophy, Cody Fuelling

2016

Fulbright—Alexander Allison

2014

Carnegie—Chayenne Polimedio

Goldwater—Micah Rapp

2013

Gilman—Sadie King-Hoffmann

2012

Phi Kappa Phi—Hiu (Alan) Tse

2011

USA Academic Team—Jennika Laird



PART III: HOW TO PREPARE

How to prepare: Several years out



- Maintain a high GPA while taking challenging courses.
- Explore subjects and disciplines until you find topics you are genuinely passionate about.
- Read! Subscribe to major periodicals and read nonfiction publications about topics that interest you.
- Pursue research opportunities with faculty mentors.
- Present your research at a conference or publish it.
- Get involved with extracurriculars—prioritize fewer but meaningful involvements.
- Study international languages, preferably earning credit for your study.
- Familiarize yourself with scholarship resources such as OMSA, Scholarship University, and other scholarship databases.

How to prepare: Within a year of deadline



- Set up a meeting with the director of OMSA.
- Identify one or two scholarships you want to apply for in the next year.
- Put the deadlines in your calendar.
- Read the “how to apply” webpages of the scholarships you want to apply for. Download application materials.

How to prepare: Approaching the deadline



- Meet with the director of OMSA regularly.
- See Part IV (pg. 31) of this guide for more information on preparing an application.



PART IV: THE APPLICATION PROCESS

Elements in an application



Nearly all major scholarship applications require the following elements:

- **Essays.** This is the most time-consuming part of the application. Start working about 3 months before the deadline. See pg. 33 for more.
- **Letters of recommendation.** Ask potential letter writers up to three months ahead of the deadline, but no later than three weeks before the deadline. See pg. 34 for more.
- **Transcripts.** Give yourself time to figure out which transcripts you need and how to order them.

Some require these additional elements:

- **Institutional nomination.** OMSA will take care of this if a competition requires PFW nomination.
- **Interview.** Some scholarships require that all applicants interview (this is true of Fulbright). Others only interview finalists.

Essays

Most major scholarship competitions expect you to write essays that answer questions (“prompts”) provided on the application. These questions usually address one or more of the following:

- **WHERE YOU HAVE BEEN.** What have you done to prepare for the scholarship? What relevant courses have you taken or research papers have you written? What personal qualities, skills, and knowledge do you possess that will allow you to succeed if you win the scholarship?
- **WHERE YOU ARE GOING.** How will winning the scholarship help you meet your long-term professional and personal goals? What will you do after the scholarship?
- **YOUR PASSION.** What values and goals motivate you to pursue the scholarship?
- **FIT.** To what extent are your values and goals aligned with the mission of the funding organization and its goals for the scholarship?
- **If the scholarship supports research: A RESEARCH PROPOSAL.** What research question will you explore during the scholarship period? What methods will you use? How will you present your findings?

Reference letters



- Ask mentors who know you well.
- Ask mentors who understand your work.
- Be strategic: get letters from several faculty and professional mentors who collectively speak to a variety of your strengths.
- Give your letter writers at least three weeks' notice before a deadline.

Submission



- Every scholarship's submission process is different, but they are all complicated. Start early and read the directions carefully!
- Some scholarships require PFW nomination and/or submission through PFW.

Set up your Plan B



It is extremely difficult to predict an applicant's chance of winning. Award rates vary from year to year for all competitions, and evaluators' experiences and subjective judgement always play a role in selection.

Even if you and I are confident that your application is competitive, make sure you set up a Plan B—an alternative path for meeting your goals that is available to you if you don't win the scholarship.

If you win...

CELEBRATE!

If necessary,

- Find someone to take over your lease
- Renew your passport
- Buy plane tickets
- Start packing



If you don't win

It is disappointing to put a lot of effort into an application and not to win. These competitions receive many times more deserving applications than they can select as winners. Often, final selection comes down to happenstance--the changing popularity of specific topics and places and the unique perspectives (and whims) of evaluation committees. Having served on many of these selection committees, I can assure you that your submission was given serious consideration and made the evaluators' job difficult.

As you reflect on your experience applying for a major scholarship, you should know that by submitting an application, you joined an elite group of PFW students and alumni. Only the most ambitious and talented PFW students apply for major scholarships. Give yourself some credit for taking risks and working hard on behalf of your dreams.

After getting disappointing news, it's ok to feel bad. Take time to recover. Do something nice for yourself. Note that if you are ambitious, this is not the last time you will hear "no." Develop coping mechanisms for dealing with the "no's" you will hear as you pursue your dreams. Be patient and have faith that if you work hard and tune into where your passions truly lie, you *will* hear "yes."

After getting disappointing news, it doesn't hurt to review your materials with me and your other mentors to identify aspects of your materials you can strengthen or ways to improve your background so that you are more competitive next time. Even if the application you submitted was the best you could submit at the time, acquiring a new skill or more background in your research area could improve your chances next time.

Whether you win or lose, keep your focus on your long-term goals. You may discover that not winning one scholarship opens up an alternative path that better suits you given your unique ambitions. Fate works in strange ways.



PART V: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: Can non-PFW students work with OMSA?

A: OMSA is funded by PFW's Office of Academic Affairs to work with PFW students and alumni, IUPUI students and alumni, and IPFW alumni. PFW applicants are not eligible for advising until they matriculate. Students and alumni of other Purdue campuses are not eligible for advising from OMSA unless they enter a degree program at PFW. Purdue West Lafayette students should seek advising from their campus's scholarship advising office.

Q: Can OMSA help PFW students fund their PFW studies?

A: Some study abroad scholarships (one is the [Gilman](#)) can be used to pay for credits students will use toward their PFW degrees. Only one major scholarship from the Top Ten provides tuition support to students while studying at PFW (the [Goldwater](#), a STEM scholarship for undergraduates interested in research). Students looking for financial support for their studies at PFW should contact the Office of Financial Aid and their academic advisors. Students should also set up and monitor an account on [Scholarship Universe](#).

Q: Can international students apply for major scholarships?

A: International students (students without US citizenship or permanent residency) will be eligible for only a few major scholarships. This is because many major scholarships are funded by the U.S. government. If you are an international student, communicate your immigration status to me (the OMSA director). Note that a few scholarships are geared toward students who face challenges related to immigration status (e.g., DACA students).

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Q: What if none of the Top Ten scholarships is a good fit for me?

A: The Top Ten scholarships listed in this guide are the most popular scholarships with PFW students. If you have identified other scholarship competitions that you would like to participate in, OMSA may be able to advise you, depending on the nature of the competition. OMSA also helps students use major funding databases to identify opportunities.

Q: Does OMSA submit students' applications for them?

A: Some scholarship competitions require institutional nomination, and in these cases, the director of OMSA will finalize students' applications and when needed submit an institutional recommendation letter or endorsement. Otherwise, students are responsible for submitting their applications on time and correctly.

Q: When do you first meet with applicants and how often?

A: Ideally, applicants start working with me about 3 months before a deadline. Initially, we meet every few weeks. About one and a half months before a deadline, meetings will be more frequent. Students who start later should anticipate more frequent meetings. I have information sheets for several of the Top Ten scholarships. These include a suggested schedule of work aligned with the scholarship's deadline.

Q: What expectations do you have of the students you work with?

A: Students should demonstrate professionalism throughout the preparation process. This includes but is not limited to:

- Undergraduates should address me using my professional titles.
- Students should drive the application process, including requesting appointments with me. Other than occasional nudges, I do not chase students down or try to convince them to apply for scholarships.
- Students should be spending time on applications between meetings. This work might include editing essays, communicating with letter writers and host institutions, ordering transcripts, and completing the online application.
- Students should follow up with me after competition results have been announced. Often students do not want to communicate about disappointing results, but the mission of OMSA is to help students achieve their professional goals whether or not one individual opportunity works out. A debrief and discussion of next steps are always helpful.

Q: What if I don't think I have a good chance? Should I still apply?

A: You will gain much from the process of putting together an application, even if you don't win, including clarifying intellectual interests and professional goals and improving writing skills. Students can use what they learned throughout their lives. As director, I am motivated as much by a desire to develop students' profession potential as by a desire to win any individual competition.

Q: Are you able to predict in advance whether or not I will win?

A: It is extremely difficult to predict whether an applicant will win. Selectivity for many awards varies from year to year. Serving as an evaluator for many of these competitions, I have learned that whether an applicant is selected is determined as much by evaluators' subjective judgments as by objective criteria. I will let you know if I think your application is not going to be competitive or if you are behind in the preparation. All students should have a Plan B (pg. 36) set up. Note that some competitions require institutional nomination. Occasionally, I have had to inform students that an application is not ready and will not receive institutional endorsement.

