

Educational Partnership Program with Minority Serving Institutions
(EPP/MSI) Undergraduate Scholarship Program (USP)

Frequently Asked Question (FAQs)

For Applicants

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Purpose of Scholarship

What is NOAA and what is NOAA's mission?

Established in 1970, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is a Federal science agency within the Department of Commerce (www.doc.gov). NOAA's mission is:

To understand and predict changes in Earth's environment and conserve and manage coastal and marine resources to meet our Nation's economic, social, and environmental needs.

To achieve this mission, NOAA has identified four goals in which to focus agency activities:

- Climate Adaptation and Mitigation: An informed society anticipating and responding to climate and its impacts.
- Weather-Ready Nation: Society is prepared for and responds to weather-related events.
- Healthy Oceans: Marine fisheries, habitats, and biodiversity are sustained within healthy and productive ecosystems.
- Resilient Coastal Communities and Economies: Coastal and Great Lake communities are environmentally and economically sustainable.

NOAA has also identified "promoting environmental literacy" as a cross-cutting priority essential to achieving NOAA's mission in all four of the goal areas. To learn more about the broad range of NOAA sciences, services, and stewardship activities that contribute to the agency's mission, goals, and priorities, explore the NOAA web site (<http://www.noaa.gov>).

What is the purpose of the Educational Partnership Program with Minority Serving Institutions, Undergraduate Scholarship Program?

The Educational Partnership Program with Minority Serving Institutions, Undergraduate Scholarship Program is designed to: (1) increase the number of students who undertake coursework and graduate with degrees in the target areas integral to NOAA's mission; (2) recruit and train students, with an emphasis on traditionally under-represented minority communities, in NOAA-related sciences; and, (3) recruit and prepare students for careers in research, management and operational occupations related to NOAA's overall mission.

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Scholarship Provisions

What does an EPP/MSI USP Scholarship include?

The Educational Partnership Program with Minority Serving Institutions (EPP/MSI) /Undergraduate Scholarship Program (USP) provides selected undergraduate applicants with a scholarship award that includes: a maximum of \$9,500 per year for two academic years of full-time study; two 10-week, full-time internships (\$700/week) during the summer at a NOAA facility; a housing subsidy of \$200 per week for student scholars who do not reside at home during the summer internship; round-trip travel to the internship site including reimbursement for incidentals; travel funds to attend and participate in a NOAA Scholarship Symposium at the completion of the internships; and, participation in two professional conference to present the results of their summer project each year. During the first year of the scholarship, a 2-week mandatory orientation is conducted at NOAA Headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland. During the first year, the internship component of the award begins upon completion of the 2-week orientation beginning in mid May. The internship components are designed to provide student scholars with "hands-on" research training involving in NOAA-related science, research, technology, and policy activities.

How can I get more information about the EPP/MSI USP?

For more information about the EPP/MSI USP Scholarship, contact: NOAA Office of Education, EPP/MSI at epp.usp@noaa.gov or call (301) 628-2913.

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Eligibility Requirements

Who is eligible to apply for an EPP/MSI USP Scholarship?

To be eligible to apply for an EPP/MSI USP Scholarship, at the time of application (annually September through January) you must:

- be a U.S. citizen;
- attend a minority serving institution as defined by the U.S. Department of Education to include: Historically Black Colleges and Universities; Hispanic Serving Institutions*; Alaskan Native and Native Hawaiian Institutions; and, Tribal Colleges and Universities? * Applicants who attend **Hispanic Serving Institutions** must submit an official letter from their schools verifying the institution is a U.S. Department of Education recognized Hispanic Serving Institution at the time of application. If an applicant transfers to another school during the scholarship period, verification of the institution's MSI status is also required. The verification letter from the school must be uploaded in PDF format along with the transcript, as part of the scholarship application process.
- be currently enrolled or accepted as a full-time 2nd year student in a four-year academic program or as a full-time 3rd year student in a five-year program at an accredited minority serving institution (college or university within the United States or U.S. territories);
- earn and maintain a minimum 3.2 grade point average on a 4.0 scale (or equivalent on other identified scale) in all completed undergraduate courses each semester or quarter, as well as have and maintain a cumulative 3.2 GPA in your major field of study. The grade point average requirement applies for every semester or quarter, cumulative, and in your major field of study prior to and at the time of application for a scholarship, for the period between application and award notification, and after award distribution; and,
- have and maintain a declared major in a discipline including, but not limited to, oceanic, environmental, biological, and atmospheric sciences, mathematics, engineering, remote sensing technology, physical information and social sciences including geography, physics, hydrology, or geomatics that support NOAA's programs and mission.

The eligibility requirements state that applicants must have full-time sophomore academic status in the Fall term, at the time of application. If I am a senior in the Fall term (at time of application), am I eligible to apply?

Eligible EPP/MSIUSP applicants include 2nd year students in a four-year academic program and 3rd year students in a five-year academic program. To maintain eligibility, students must demonstrate full-time status for both academic years during which they are EPP/MSI USP scholars. Applicants entering their 4th academic year in the Fall and expecting to graduate at the end of the same academic year are **not** eligible.

This academic term I am having difficulty with a particular course and would like to drop it. Will I be dropped from the EPP/MSI USP?

EPP/MSI USP student scholars are required to maintain a full-time status each academic term. Full-time status varies depending on the academic institution. If a scholar is enrolled in a less than full-time status, **yes**, you will be terminated from the EPP/MSI USP.

If I receive another NOAA scholarship, am I still eligible to receive an EPP/MSI USP Scholarship?

Yes. Providing the program requirements do not conflict with those of the EPP/MSI USP Scholarship.

If my major is not listed under the areas of discipline on the application, am I still eligible to receive an EPP/MSI USP Scholarship?

If a particular major is not listed on the application under "Field of Study," you may still be eligible. Scholarships are limited to the fields of study identified on the application, NOT to the majors listed under those fields. A wide variety of general undergraduate academic programs can be applicable to NOAA's mission. Application reviewers will look specifically at applicant's coursework and statements of academic and career interest to assess how a particular course of study relates to NOAA and how it provides the training necessary to pursue a NOAA-related career.

If I am a student intern in the Pathways Program, am I eligible to receive an EPP/MSI Undergraduate Scholarship?

No, student interns in the Pathways Program are Federal employees and are **not** eligible to receive an EPP/MSI undergraduate scholarship. Federal employees are not eligible to receive scholarship funds from the Federal government. A student intern in the Pathways Program must choose either that appointment **or** the scholarship.

I want to participate in a university sponsored Certified Cooperative Education Program for one academic term; will my EPP/MSI USP eligibility status change; and will I continue to receive the EPP/MSI USP academic stipend?

Student scholars are required to enroll in credit earning courses that earn Quality Points. Each academic term a scholar is required to earn a minimum 3.2 grade point average (GPA). A student scholar receives the academic stipend during each academic term they are enrolled "full-time" in credit earning courses and receive Quality Points.

Application Process

How do I apply for an EPP/MSI USP Scholarship?

To apply for an EPP/MSI USP Scholarship, students can visit <https://oedwebapps.iso.noaa.gov/uspa>. The application is available annually September through January. If you do not have Internet access, hard-copy applications can be requested by contacting: NOAA/Office of Education (OEd), 1315 East West Highway, 10th Floor, Silver Spring, MD 20910-6233, Attn: EPP/MSI USP Team, or you may email: epp.usp@noaa.gov.

What must I submit to apply?

Applicants are required to submit ALL of the following items for an application to be deemed complete and eligible:

- A completed scholarship application;
- One essay;
- Unofficial college transcript(s) (one for each institution attended; uploaded into the on-line application; and,
- Two academic references sent from the applicant's university/college faculty member. References from employers, parent's friends, neighbors, high school teachers, teaching assistants, etc. will not be accepted.

When are the EPP/MSI USP Scholarship applications due to NOAA?

All applications and supporting materials must be received by the end of January. If supporting documents (i.e. academic reference forms, official transcripts, etc.) are not received by the deadline, the application will be incomplete and, therefore, deemed ineligible for consideration.

What if I miss the deadline date?

NOAA's Office of Education **will not** review scholarship applications or supporting materials received after the deadline date. Applications and materials that are received **after** the application deadline will be deemed ineligible. Due to the number of applications received annually, NOAA strictly adheres to the application deadline date. Therefore, NOAA strongly encourages scholarship applicants to check the status of their on-application to confirm that the submitted application and all supporting materials have been received prior to the deadline date. This may be accomplished by checking the status box in the application system. NOAA's OEd strongly advises applicants to ensure that their two academic references have also submitted recommendations to meet the application deadline.

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Evaluation Process

What is the Administrative Review?

NOAA's Office of Education EPP/MSI scholarship team conducts an initial administrative review of scholarship applications (which includes the application form, one essay, two academic references, and all official transcripts) to determine compliance with requirements and completeness of applications. Only complete applications that meet all eligibility requirements, described under the Eligibility Requirements, will be considered for a merit review. Applications identified as incomplete or that do not meet the eligibility requirements will be deemed ineligible.

What is the Merit Review?

All complete and eligible scholarship applications undergo a review by a panel of scientific experts in the areas of study related to the EPP/MSI USP Scholarship. Panel members rate applications based on the evaluation criteria described below.

How will my scholarship application be evaluated?

Total evaluation points for the EPP/MSI USP are 110 points. Applications are evaluated by a review panel on the following criteria:

1. Relevant course work (30 points).
2. College education plan and career goals (30 points).
3. References and/or endorsements (reference forms) (20 points).
4. Additional relevant experience related to diversity of education; extracurricular activities; honors and awards; non-academic, entrepreneurship and volunteer work; interpersonal, written, and oral communications skills (20 points).
5. Interview (10 points).

How is my scholarship application scored?

Each application is reviewed by three independent panel members. A numerical score ranging from 0 to 110 is assigned to each application based on the average of the panelist's individual ratings and the interview score. The Deputy Director of NOAA Education determines the final scholarship award recipients.

Are advanced placement (AP) credit hours used to determine academic status?

No. Only undergraduate coursework that received a grade will be considered to determine academic status because grade point average (GPA) is an eligibility criterion.

Selection Process

Are there additional selection factors NOAA considers when determining EPP/MSI USP Scholarship Awards?

In determining final awards, the NOAA selection official reserves the right to select student candidates out of rank order based on program-specific objectives and to ensure distribution across academic disciplines, type of institution, and geographic location.

When will I be notified with a decision?

If selected, EPP/MSI USP scholarship recipients are notified by e-mail and/or a telephone call the first week of April. Applicants not selected for the EPP/MSI USP scholarship are notified by e-mail at the end of April.

Can I receive my scores and the review panel's comments?

Scores will not be released. All applicants who received a merit review may receive reviewer comments by the end of April, upon request.

How many EPP/MSI USP recipients are selected annually?

Approximately, 10 EPP/USP Undergraduate scholars are awarded based on appropriated funds from Congress.

- In 2001, 8 EPP/MSI USP scholars were selected.
- In 2002, 8 EPP/MSI USP scholars were selected.
- In 2003, 10 EPP/MSI USP scholars were selected.
- In 2004, 20 EPP/MSI USP scholars were selected.
- In 2005, 28 EPP/MSI USP scholars were selected.
- In 2006, 15 EPP/MSI USP scholars were selected.
- In 2007, 15 EPP/MSI USP scholars were selected.
- In 2008, 16 EPP/MSI USP scholars were selected.
- In 2009, 11 EPP/MSI USP scholars were selected.
- In 2010, 10 EPP/MSI USP scholars were selected.
- In 2011, 11 EPP/MSI USP scholars were selected.
- In 2012, 12 EPP/MSI USP scholars were selected.
- In 2013, 11 EPP/MSI USP scholars were selected.
- In 2014, 7 EPP/MSI USP scholars were selected.
- In 2015, 12 EPP/MSI USP scholars were selected.

How many EPP/MSI USP applications does NOAA receive annually?

NOAA receives an average of 75 EPP/MSI USP Undergraduate Scholarship applications each year.

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