

Student Opportunity Scholarship

Guidelines for Applicants

INTRODUCTION

The Student Opportunity Scholarship program serves Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) college students by providing need-based aid for sophomores, juniors, and seniors who are full-time, first degree students attending accredited institutions in the United States. Preference in this program is extended to racial ethnic students in order to promote diversity. In 2010, Financial Aid for Service reviewed and revised certain elements of the program to promote leadership development and discernment of vocation.

The Student Opportunity Scholarship will include three cohorts of 20–25 students, providing up to 80 awards. Those students will have an opportunity to renew the scholarship provided that they maintain a 2.5 GPA and demonstrate financial need.

APPLY

Go to pcusa.org/sos/applynow between April 1 and June 1 to download the application. The application includes Getting Started, Resume, 500 to 1000-word essay, Pastor Endorsement/Church Membership Form. Students who complete this first section of the application will be asked to complete a financial information form. Applicant must apply for financial aid from the college or university they plan to attend and complete the FAFSA prior to June 1.

Students who have been awarded in the previous academic year will be emailed a link to the renewal application in April.

SELECTION

Applicants may be subject to competitive selection if the eligible applicant pool at deadline includes more applications than can be provided maximum awards from the funds available in the program.

This program includes funding from donor restricted funds with preferences by race and/or ethnicity, geographic region, and vocational aspirations. Fund restrictions dictate that approximately 60% of the funding in this program will be used to support racial ethnic students.

When an eligible student has submitted an application, staff will request by email a Financial Information Form and transcript. You may want to add pcusa.org as a safe domain in your email program to assure that our emails reach your inbox.

Please do not send transcripts until we request them by email.



ELIGIBILITY

Presbyterian Church (USA) members who are:

- Be a full-time sophomore, junior, or senior at an accredited college or university in the United States.
- Maintain a 2.5 cumulative GPA on a 4.0 scale
- Demonstrate Financial Need

RANGE OF AWARD

Minimum: \$250

Maximum: \$4,000

DEADLINES

May 15: Getting Started, Essay, Resume, Church Membership / Pastor's Endorsement

June 15: Financial Information Form



ESSAY OVERVIEW

SOS awardees are required to write an essay each year. The purpose of the essays is to explore vocation by thinking about who God created you to be. Over the next two years we will work together to understand what you are good at, what makes you feel inspired and happy. We'll ask you to think about community, and about how the Gospel is seen and felt in the world, and where it ought to be. Before you graduate, we'll challenge you to think about the ways you are called.

THE ESSAY TOPIC

Rising Sophomore essay: What is Christian Vocation?

Reflect and discuss with parents, pastor, and peers: Who is someone you admire because they are faithful to their call? What distinguishes this person?

Junior Essay: God gives us gifts and talents to enjoy as well as share. Which gifts and talents do you enjoy about yourself? What are you good at? What makes you feel inspired and happy? Discuss with friends; how do your gifts and interests address what you perceive to be the challenges facing your generation?

Senior Essay: Synthesize what you've learned through the essays you've written for your scholarship program and answer this series of questions: What's next for you? For the church? For the world? Students may respond by writing an essay or by submitting a video responding to the question. Guidelines for the video are found at: www.pcusa.org/seniors/WhatsNext

ESSAY GUIDELINES

Your essay should be 500 to 1,000 words long. Readers will be instructed to consider how creatively and comprehensively you address the question. Approximately half of the SOS readers are high school teachers and will expect your work to be appropriate to grade level and thoroughly proofread.

Essays should be double spaced and on plain white paper. They may be faxed or submitted by email, but they will not be altered in any way. The essay should be written in the language of instruction; students attending Universidad Inter-Americana may submit their essay in Spanish.

RESUME GUIDELINES

One- to two-page summary of education, community/church involvement, and employment, prepared *without* personal photograph.

DISCLOSURES

Study Abroad

The Student Opportunity Scholarship may not be used for study abroad.

Students must be enrolled full-time at an accredited college or university in the United States, complete an academic year, maintain a cumulative 2.5 GPA, and demonstrate financial need in order to be considered for renewal.

Transfer

Contact Financial Aid for Service if you plan to transfer.

Renewal

The scholarship may be awarded three times prior to graduation.

Multiple Awards

Financial Aid for Service may make additional supplemental awards from time to time, but generally provides no more than one grant or scholarship award per year per student.

Church Membership

Students requesting renewal who are no longer members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) because their home church has severed its relationship with the denomination will have one year to transfer their membership to another Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) congregation.