ONSA Encourages Students to Pursue National Scholarships
On April 6, the Office of National Scholarship Advisement begins a month-long series of workshops and information sessions to educate UMass Amherst students about national scholarships and fellowships such as Fulbright, Marshall, and Rhodes.

“These opportunities are realistic,” said Dr. Madalina Akli, director of UMass Amherst's Office of National Scholarship Advisement (ONSA). With the month of workshops, ONSA strives to spread awareness about these programs and encourage more UMass Amherst students to put applications forward.

Though GPA is an important consideration for some scholarships, Akli stresses that “not all scholarships need a 4.0.” Students who win these awards tend to be engaged in co-curricular activities, volunteering, and leadership. Aside from academic achievement, vision and a desire to make a difference in the world are key attributes in a strong application.

Through advising, mentoring, and teaching, ONSA helps students from across campus put their best applications forward. “We are here to help,” said Akli, explaining that the process is meant to be empowering and not discouraging. The application process is an enriching one. Whether or not they achieve the national scholarship, students walk away with valuable skills in interviewing, resume-building, and clarifying their post-graduation goals.

ONSA is available to everyone—juniors and seniors who may be putting an application together right away, as well as freshmen and sophomores who are curious to learn more about the opportunities that exist. “Time can be a good friend to students who are considering these scholarships,” continued Akli. First- and second-year students have ample time to reflect, refine their post-graduation goals and objectives, and include experiences in their college careers that will set them up for success with these applications.

One such opportunity is the International Scholarship Program (ISP), a selective, three-year program for Commonwealth Honors College students interested in global issues and overseas experiences. After applying in the spring of their first year, ISP students participate in two preparatory classes on international issues and inter-cultural communication to prepare for study abroad. Upon returning, seminars help them reflect on their international education.

As director of both programs, Akli says that ISP is “one of the best pipelines” for ONSA’s nationally competitive scholarships and fellowships. ISP students have already had extended international experiences, as well as taken the time to reflect and build upon them at UMass.

Akli hopes to see more applicants for all fellowships and scholarships, emphasizing that students should not rule out the possibility of achieving one. “Don’t go by assumption,” she said. “If you’re not sure, come and find out.”

All students are invited to attend a series of workshops and information sessions offered by ONSA throughout the month of April, and are encouraged to register online for sessions before spaces fill up. Start the process today by submitting a scholarship interest form online to ONSA.