Preparation Tips

Start exploring fellowships early in your college career. Preparing for these wonderful opportunities requires work well in advance of submission deadlines. Look for fellowships that match your interests and experience, and think about how you can develop your qualifications to the fullest by the time you are eligible to apply. Our applicants know themselves and their goals much better by the time their applications are submitted, whether or not they win the fellowship. Use this website to start your exploration. In addition, consult your professors, and others. Watch for announcements and information meetings throughout the year, and do visit ONSA to tell us about yourself, your interests, and your vision for the future!

This is a brief list of tips to get you started. For more complete information, check out our Preparation Tools site.

**Start early.** These scholarship applications can be lengthy and require a great deal of thought and preparation. You need time to collect all the pieces needed for the application -- from transcripts to recommendations.

**Determine your goals and focus on them.** Use your time in college to the best advantage. It will benefit not only your scholarship chances but also your enjoyment of college if you have a clear sense of purpose.

**Develop your personal statement NOW.** It is never too early to begin work on your
personal statement, which is a key component for many of these prestigious awards. Keep an up-to-date resume. It's much easier to put together your resume if you add new items on a consistent basis rather than to wait until a deadline. You'll also be less likely to forget important information.

**Identify (or ask) faculty to write letters of recommendation for you.** Once you've identified a scholarship to apply for, you will be asked to provide the names of faculty members who can write letters to support your application. By thinking about who these faculty might be ahead of time, you'll be more likely to get those letters in a timely fashion. If you're ready to apply for a scholarship now, ask for these letters as soon as you begin working on your own application.

**Look into research opportunities.** Take advantage of openings offered by professors and grad students in your department. If someone's work is of particular interest to you, see if you can volunteer with that person even if no formal openings exist.

**Get some practical experience.** Internships (paid and unpaid) are great ways to enhance your experiences in the classroom.

**Look for foreign travel opportunities.** Exposure to the cultures, languages, and concerns of people in other countries provides an invaluable perspective that will broaden your horizons.

**Stay up on current events.** Read a GOOD national paper or online site every day (e.g. The New York Times or The Wall Street Journal) and at least one periodical that deals with issues a month (e.g. The Atlantic Monthly or The New Republic). Sign up for the ScholarWeb on Twitter to get quick and timely updates.

For more detailed scholarship preparation tips, please click here.

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