

Morris K. Udall Scholarship

www.udall.gov

Deadline: national deadline: March 2, 2010; Campus deadline: February 2, 2010

Fields of Study

Open to sophomores or juniors in any field planning a career that is related to the environment.

Description

The Udall Foundation honors Morris K. Udall's legacy of public service by encouraging the continued use, enjoyment, and exploration of our nation's natural resources, by training Native Americans in health care and tribal public policy, and by training professionals in environmental issues.

The Udall Foundation awards 80 scholarships of \$5,000 to outstanding students. Fifty students are also named "Honorable Mention" recipients and receive awards of \$350. These awards are made on the basis of merit to two groups of students: 1) Students who are college sophomores or juniors in the current academic year, have outstanding potential, and who study the environment and related fields. And, 2) Native American and Alaska Native students who are college sophomores or juniors in the current academic year, have outstanding potential, and are in fields related to health care or tribal public policy.

WPI may nominate six students from either or both categories. Scholarship recipients are eligible for one year of support per application year. The scholarship funds may be used to pay for tuition, fees, books, room and board. Udall Scholars also *required* to attend a special three-day workshop during the summer. Scholars or unsuccessful applicants may reapply in future years.

Criteria for Selection

- Strong commitment to improving the environment. According to representative of the Udall Foundation, this area of the application is often too unfocused. Rather than general statements about wanting to save the world, applications should focus on career goals, on future aspirations and plans to improve the environment. Such focus gives confidence that the nominee is likely to have an impact on his or her field.
- Personal characteristics, especially leadership and public or community service. Evidence of leadership is crucial, and could date to high school years. Letters of recommendation should be able to comment on leadership and other personal characteristics.

- Academic achievement. The Foundation looks at transcripts for course loads, for the complexity and relevance of courses to the career objectives regarding the environment. Sophomores and juniors with a GPA of 3.0 and above are eligible. The average GPA of recent Udall Scholars is 3.7 or above. The Udall Foundation is looking for well-rounded people who demonstrate leadership, community service, and personal qualities. Udall Scholars have had GPA's as low as 3.0 along with accomplishments that are exceptional and distinguished in other areas.
- Knowledge and understanding of Morris K. Udall's legacy of public service, particularly as it relates to career goals, as demonstrated in a personal essay. As a memorial to Morris K. Udall, the application asks nominees to describe one of Udall's speeches and relate it to their own goals. (See below.) Essays may be critical of a speech as long as they are well argued; disagreement with Udall's opinions does not count against a candidate. The Foundation is non-partisan, and scholars come "from all sides and angles."
- Strong letters of recommendation. The best evaluations are from faculty members in the candidate's field of study who demonstrate strong personal knowledge of the student. Letters from people who do not know the student well do not help.

Application Procedure

Institutional nomination by WPI is required. WPI will select up to six nominees for the Udall Scholarship through an on-campus competition. Interested sophomores or juniors students should speak to the Udall Faculty Representative, Prof. Hansen. To be considered for nomination, please submit a preliminary application that includes the following:

1. Complete Udall Nominee Information Form, available from the Udall website;
2. Outline of an essay concerning a significant speech, legislative act, or policy statement by Congressman Udall and its impact on your field of study, interests, and career goals.
3. Unofficial WPI transcript (an official transcript will be required of nominees);
4. Names and email addresses of three people who have agreed to write recommendation letters if you should be nominated.

These materials should be submitted to Prof. Peter Hansen, Dept. of Humanities and Arts, (phansen@wpi.edu) by February 2, 2010. Nominees should expect to revise their applications and obtain the letters of recommendation before the application is submitted to the national competition at the beginning of March.

Application advice: The career statement is very important. Candidates should spend some time writing a clear and concise career goal. The rest of the responses should support that goal. Make sure the statement is relatively focused and not too vague. The selection committee writes the comment "too vague" more often than any other comment on applications.

The "Nominee Essay" is the centerpiece of the application. The essay should describe one of Udall's speeches or legislative acts and relate it to your own aspirations regarding the environment. Dig deep and find a topic that ties in well with your field of study and career objectives. Start by exploring the website at www.udall.gov and become familiar with Udall and the Foundation. Then check the links—especially to the University of Arizona archives. The Foundation suggests that

“you spend the first half of the essay or so discussing the particular speech or piece of legislation, and demonstrate to the readers that you have done your research and have a solid understanding of it. It is critical that you answer the second part of the question! Spend the second half or so integrating that particular speech or legislation in with your field of study and career objectives. It is essential that you effectively tie the two parts together, which is why it is critical you focus on a topic that relates well to your field.”

The speeches/acts most commonly chosen are: “The Environment at Valley Forge,” “Environment vs. Economy; Exploding a Phony Issue,” “Man: Endangered Species,” “American Indians and Civil Rights,” and the “Alaska Lands Act and the Central Arizona Project.” Students need to do a bit more if they choose these topics in order to make their essay stand out from the rest. By far the most popular topic is the Alaska Lands Act. The informal advice from the Udall Foundation is to look beyond this legislation to find a different topic.

In the section that asks if there is anything else to share with the selection committee, be sure to write something interesting that has not already been addressed. This is also an appropriate spot to mention any hardships or extenuating circumstances experienced by the student.

Additional Information

Because environmental issues can be approached in a multidisciplinary way the scholarship is offered to students from a broad range of disciplines. Majors have included environmental science or engineering, agriculture, biology and other natural sciences, natural resource management, political science, sociology, anthropology, geography, cultural studies, history, public policy, public health and pre-law. Likewise, Native American and Alaska Native scholars have come from such backgrounds as American Indian studies, political science, sociology, geography, anthropology, tribal policy, economic development, government, health care, health sciences, and health policy. It is anticipated that the candidate's plan of study will include coursework in ethics and public policy and/or public or community service experience in the area of the candidate's career field.

In its earliest years, the Udall Scholarship had a focus on environmental “policy” but this is no longer the case. The emphasis on the environment is no longer as restrictive, and the definition of eligible fields embraces all majors or fields of study relating to the environment. A representative of the foundation said: “Note that in recent years we have broadened our horizons past environmental public policy. It is NOT necessary for students to be interested in pursuing studies or a career in policy to apply for our scholarship. While it definitely wouldn't hurt, we are also looking for students in a variety of fields including natural and social sciences. Over the past few years, we have had several scholarship recipients studying environmental journalism, zoology, natural resource management, conservation biology, environmental engineering, chemical engineering, landscape architecture, urban planning, geology, geography, anthropology, etc. We have even scholars majoring in environmental theatre and environmental art.”

An excellent article describing how the applications are read and rated in the selection process is available online: http://www.nafadvisors.org/newsletter_1102.htm