



United States Department of Agriculture



USDA/HSI SCHOLARS PROGRAM APPLICATION

HIGH SCHOOL

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for your interest in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSI) Scholars Program. The USDA/HSI Scholars Program was established to strengthen the long-term partnership between the USDA and Hispanic-Serving Institutions by increasing the number of students studying, graduating, and pursuing careers in food, agriculture, natural resources, and other related fields of study. The program is available to high school seniors and rising college sophomores and juniors, who exhibit leadership and community service and desire to attend a HSI. The scholarship is highly competitive and provides full tuition, employment, employee benefits, fees, and books for up to 4 years to selected students pursuing a bachelor's degree at a HSI.

The USDA/HSI Scholars Program is implemented under the USDA Fellows Experience Program (FEP). HSI Scholars accepted into the program will be appointed using the Schedule A authority (5 CFR § 213.3102(r)) and are not eligible for noncompetitive conversion to full-time employment upon graduation. However, all USDA/HSI Scholars are required to compete for appropriate employment immediately after graduation and, if selected, commit to at least one year of service to USDA for each year of financial assistance provided.¹

The USDA/HSI Scholars are required to:

- Compete for appropriate employment immediately after graduation and, if selected, commit to at least one year of service to the USDA for each year of financial assistance provided.
- Reimburse the USDA Sponsoring Agency for incurred costs of education (excluding the employee's pay and allowances) if the Scholar voluntarily departs from service with the USDA Sponsoring Agency before the end of the established service commitment.
- Consult with and obtain the approval of the Sponsoring Agency prior to making any changes to his or her academic program. Unapproved changes will affect the Scholar's continued participation in the program.

Thank you for your interest in the USDA/HSI Scholars Program and best wishes in your pursuit of academic excellence!

¹ *Specific details of this "service requirement" will be outlined in the agreement entered into by the selected Scholar, the University at which the Scholar is matriculating, and the USDA Sponsoring Agency. The "service agreement" is subject to change.*

OVERVIEW

The USDA/HSI Scholars Program is a partnership between the U.S. Department of Agriculture and select Hispanic-Serving Institutions. The program awards scholarships to students accepted to or attending a Hispanic-Serving Institution in pursuit of a bachelor's degree in agriculture, food science, natural resources science, or a related academic discipline(s). The Hispanic-Serving Institutions participating in this partnership are:

- California State University, Fresno, CA
- Northeastern Illinois University, Chicago, IL
- San Diego State University, Imperial Valley Campus, Calexico, CA
- University of Texas, Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX

AUTHORITIES

- Code of Federal Regulations. Title 5, Excepted Service, Schedule A, § 213.3102(r)
- Code of Federal Regulations. Title 5, Part 410—Training
- Executive Order 13562, Recruiting and Hiring Students and Recent Graduates (1994)
- Executive Order 13171, Hispanic Employment in the Federal Government
- Executive Order 13555, White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics
- Higher Education Act; Title V, Part A, Sec. 501 (b-c)
- Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996
- Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002; P.L. 107-171; H.R. 2646

PURPOSE

The purpose of the USDA/HSI Scholars Program is:

- To strengthen the long-term partnership between USDA and the Hispanic-Serving Institutions;
- To increase the number of students studying and graduating in food, agriculture, natural resources, science or other related fields of study;
- To develop a pool of scientists and professionals to fill jobs in the food, agricultural, natural resources system; and
- To create a talent pipeline for USDA.

AWARD

Scholarships are awarded annually and must be used at one of the Hispanic-Serving Institutions listed in the overview. Each award provides full tuition, as well as fees, books, and is renewable each year for the term of the scholarship. The scholarship renewal is contingent upon satisfactory academic performance and normal progress toward the bachelor's degree.

GENERAL ELIGIBILITY

Applicants must:

- Be a U.S. citizen.
- Have been admitted to or enrolled in one of the Hispanic-Serving Institutions listed in the overview.
- Have a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or better on a 4.0 scale.
- Intend to study agriculture, food, natural resource sciences, or other related academic disciplines.
- Demonstrate leadership and community service.

APPLICATION DEADLINE

All application materials must be postmarked no later than February 23, 2018, and submitted to the USDA/HSI Program Liaison at the University or Universities selected by the applicant.

INSTRUCTIONS

Only complete application packages submitted by February 23, 2018, will be considered. Complete application packages must include the following:

- Completed Privacy Act Advisory Statement and Release Form.
- Completed Biographical Questionnaire.
- Current Resume.
- High School Counselor's Assessment Report (see page 12) in a sealed envelope.
- High School Teacher's Assessment Report (see pages 13-17) in a sealed envelope.
- Submit a current official transcript with the school seal and/or the signature of an authorized university official (preferably through the most recent semester).
- Submit a 500-800 word essay describing: 1) Your motivation to pursue a career in public service at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and how USDA will benefit if you are selected for this scholarship; 2) How you envision the scholarship will help you achieve your educational and career goals as a public servant; and 3) How did you become interested in studying food, agriculture, and natural resource sciences (or other related discipline in college).
- Signed and dated application (including signature of parent or guardian, if the applicant is under the age of 18).

Applicants are responsible for obtaining the Assessment Reports of the High School Counselor (pages 12) and the High School Teacher (pages 13-17). These Assessment Reports should be in a sealed envelope and included with the application package.

All application materials must be submitted in one application package. The application package must be postmarked by the application deadline, February 23, 2018, and sent to the USDA/HSI Scholars Program Liaison.

All application materials must be originals, with original signatures, seals and /or stamps. Application materials containing photocopied signatures and transcripts will not be considered for the USDA/HSI Scholars Program Scholarship.

PRIVACY ACT ADVISORY STATEMENT

The Privacy Act of 1974 (P.L. 93-579) requires that you be given certain information in connection with this request for information. Accordingly, pursuant to the requirements for this Act, please be advised:

- 1.) Furnishing the information requested is voluntary.
- 2.) The data will be used for selection of USDA/HSI Scholars, printing of certificates, and related activities.
- 3.) The data is maintained in a privacy act system as defined by National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) under Office of Management and Budget (OMB).
- 4.) Failure to complete the form will mean that you cannot be included among those candidates being considered for designation as USDA/HSI Scholar.

Affirmation of Candidacy and Authorization for Release of Information and/or Photographs:

I, _____, understand that I am a candidate for the honor of USDA/HSI Scholars, and have read the Privacy Act Advisory Statement, and affirm my wish to be considered. In the event I am named a USDA/HSI Scholar, permission is hereby given for the release of materials submitted by me for the use of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Hispanic-Serving Institutions as deemed appropriate for purposes of the USDA/HSI Scholars Program.

I further consent to the release of photographs which may be taken of me, by or for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, in connection with the Program. I am (check one) willing unwilling to appear on radio and/or television if such arrangements are made by the U.S. Department of Agriculture in connection with the USDA/HSI Scholars Program.

Print Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

CANDIDATE'S BIOGRAPHICAL QUESTIONNAIRE

The questions that follow are designed to collect information about your background, your interests, and your plans. Your answers to these questions will be used only in connection with your application for this scholarship program and will be divulged only to qualified persons who must see them in the course of their duties.

A. Biographical Information

Legal Name

Last Name: _____ First Name: _____ M.I.: _____

Sex: Male Female

Permanent Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP Code: _____

Age: _____

U.S. Citizen: Yes No

Telephone (Home): _____

Telephone (Cell): _____ Email Address: _____

B. Education

Name of High School currently attending: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP Code: _____

Telephone: _____

GPA: (on a 4.0 unweighted scale): _____

Note: Grade point average should match supporting documentation submitted with the application. Only applicants meeting minimum GPA criteria will be considered for the USDA/HSI Scholars Program scholarship.

List any other schools that you attended in the last 4 years. List the schools in order of attendance, with the one you attended most recently listed first.

Name of School	Location (City & State)	Dates of Attendance

List any advanced or special program, courses, or summer courses you have taken. List the most recent course or program first.

Course or Program	Name of School	Address	Dates of Attendance	Hours per Week

Name(s) of the HSIs to which you are applying:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

If accepted at multiple HSIs, please list in order of preference (i.e. 1- Most Preferred, 3-Least Preferred). *Note: Applicants applying to more than one HSI must submit separate USDA/HSI Scholars applications for each university.*

1st Choice: _____

2nd Choice: _____

What course of study (major) will you pursue?

1st Choice: _____

2nd Choice: _____

Minor(s): _____

C. Extracurricular and Employment Activities

List any activities in which you have participated in or outside of school.

Activity	Dates of Participation	Offices Held	Special Awards, Honors, Recognitions

List all volunteer services or jobs held in the past 4 years (including summer employment).

Volunteer Service/ Jobs	Name of Employer/ Organization	Date of Service/ Employment	Hours/ Week	Special Awards

D. Essay

Submit a 500-800 word essay describing: 1) Your motivation to pursue a career in public service at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and how USDA will benefit if you are selected for this scholarship; 2) How you envision the scholarship will help you achieve your educational and career goals as a public servant; and 3) How did you become interested in studying food, agriculture, and natural resource sciences (or other related discipline in college). (Please attach a type-written copy of your essay to the application.)

E. Assessment Reports

You will need to submit two assessment reports in sealed envelopes from two different sources—one from a High School Counselor and the other from a High School Teacher. The Assessment forms are located on pages 12 - 17 of this application packet and should be provided to the officials completing the assessment to be returned to the student applicant in a sealed envelope for submission.

F. Signatures

Please review this form to make sure you have answered all questions completely.

I certify that I completed this application and that all statements are true and accurate to the best of my knowledge. I understand that a false statement could eliminate me from consideration for this scholarship.

Print your legal name:

Applicant's Signature:

Date signed:

Parent's Signature (If applicant is under the age of 18):

Date signed:

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Applicant's Authorization to Release Academic Information

Applicant's Full Name

Last Name: _____ First Name: _____ M.I.: _____

To comply with the provision of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, a school must obtain signed authorization before it can release student information for use in this scholarship program. Permission is hereby given to school officials to release record and other requested information for consideration in the scholarship program named above.

Student's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Parent's or Legal Guardian's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Applicant: If you have attended this school less than 2 years, you must copy this form and have your previous school also complete this form for you.

Name of School: _____ Telephone: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP Code: _____

The above-named student is a candidate for the USDA/HSI Scholars Program scholarship. To process this application, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the University will need an official secondary school transcript. The transcripts from the student's secondary school record must contain a seal and signature of an authorized school official. Please note that only students with a GPA of a 3.0 on a 4.0 scale are eligible for the USDA/HSI Scholars Program.

Thorough responses will greatly enhance your student's candidacy. This information will be used only in connection with the selection of Scholars and will be seen only by qualified persons involved in the selection process. Please delete all personally identifiable information, such as social security numbers and dates of birth from any supporting documentations.

For questions or more information about the USDA/HSI Scholars Program scholarship, please contact us at hsinp@osec.usda.gov or (202) 720-6506.

USDA/HSI SCHOLARS PROGRAM

Secondary School Report

High School Guidance Counselor Assessment Report

(Please type or print using black ink. If you need additional space to write, please attach a separate sheet to your assessment report.)

A. Counselor

Last Name: _____ First Name: _____ M.I.: _____

Name of School: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP Code: _____

Telephone: _____

B. Are you confident that the student will receive a high school diploma during the current academic year? Yes No

If your answer is no, please explain your reasoning using a separate page.

C. Student's class rank _____

How many students are in the class? _____

D. Student's cumulative grade point average (unweighted on a 4.0 scale) _____

E. Secondary School Report

The applicant's official secondary school transcript (with seal and signature by an authorized official), including grades 9 through 12 must be attached to this section of the application. If the official transcript is not provided, the applicant will not be considered for the scholarship. Applicants applying to more than one HSI must submit separate USDA/HSI Scholars application package to each school. The complete application packages must be postmarked by February 28, 2018.

Counselor's Signature: _____

Dates: _____

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Secondary School Report

High School Teacher Assessment Report

(Please type or print using black ink. If you need additional space to write, please attach a separate sheet to your assessment report.)

The application for the USDA/HSI Scholars Program scholarship requires a carefully considered character and ability assessment by a teacher who knows the student well, including a summary of other teachers' assessment of the student.

A. Teacher

Last Name: _____ First Name: _____ M.I.: _____

Name of School: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP Code: _____

Telephone: _____

B. Length of Relationship: _____

C. Considering this student's interests, work habits, and life goals, what is your assessment as to whether the student will be motivated to take advantage of the opportunities available in college? Please give reasons for your assessment.

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Secondary School Report
High School Teacher Assessment Report

D. What special features are a part of your school's curriculum? Has the student taken advantage of the most challenging opportunities your school has to offer?

E. Has the student shown exceptional talent or originality in agriculture, food, natural resource sciences, and/or related disciplines? Yes No
Please explain:

F. Describe the student's strengths and weaknesses.

Strengths:

Weaknesses:

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Secondary School Report
High School Teacher Assessment Report

G. Sometimes, special circumstances should be considered when evaluating a student's achievement records and test scores. If in your opinion, this student may have been disadvantaged by any such circumstances, please specify.

H. Indicate comments made by teachers about the student relative to the following:

1. Participation in discussion:

- Always involved, often initiates discussion
- Occasionally participates
- Seldom participates
- Not applicable

2. Involvement in classroom activities:

- Active, usually shows genuine interest
- Mild, politely attentive
- Languid, attention often wanders
- Vacillates gently
- Poor understanding

3. Pursuit of independent study:

- Considerable study and major project(s)
- Some study and minor project(s)
- No evidence of independent study
- Not applicable

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Secondary School Report
High School Teacher Assessment Report

4. Evenness of performance:

- Even, varies no more than one mark
- Slightly uneven
- Uneven, often carries two marks
- Erratic, fluctuates greatly
- Inadequate opportunity to observe

5. Critical and questioning attitude:

- Often challenges
- Occasionally probes
- Rarely questions
- Not applicable

6. Depth of understanding:

- Excellent insight
- Good understanding
- Some insight
- Little understanding
- Not applicable

7. Personal responsibility:

- Always accepts fully
- Usually accepts fully
- Sometimes refuses
- Often refuses

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Secondary School Report
High School Teacher Assessment Report

8. Consideration for others:

- Always considerate of others' rights and feelings
- Usually considerate
- Sometimes inconsiderate
- Often inconsiderate

9. Population of the community in which your school is located:

- Less than 500
- 500 – 1,500
- 1,500 – 5,000
- 5,000 – 25,000
- 25,000 – 100,000
- Over 100,000

10. What economic or social conditions characterize the community and most of the parents of the children in your school?

- Rural farming area
- Industrial
- Small town
- Large city, Metropolitan area
- Other

Teacher's Signature: _____

Date: _____

VOLUNTARY MARKETING SURVEY

How did you hear about the USDA/HSI Scholars Program?

Check all that apply.

Event	Location
<input type="checkbox"/> College Fair(s)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Academic Advisor	
<input type="checkbox"/> Professor	
<input type="checkbox"/> Direct Mail/Email	
<input type="checkbox"/> USDA Employee	
<input type="checkbox"/> Place of Worship	
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)	

USDA/HSI Scholars Application Checklist:

1. I have read the eligibility requirements and meet all eligibility criteria.
2. I am submitting an original application and transcript to each HSI of interest (*see mailing addresses for USDA/HSI Scholars Program Liaison on page 19 of this application*).
3. I have applied for admission or am currently enrolled at each of the HSI of interest.
4. I have read and completed the Candidate's Biographical Information section.
5. I have enclosed the following:
 - a. High School Counselor Assessment Report (located on page 12).
 - b. Teacher Assessment Report (located on pages 13 – 17).
6. I have enclosed a 500-800 word essay describing:
 - a. Your motivation to pursue a career in public service at USDA.
 - b. How you envision the scholarship will help you achieve your educational and career goals?
 - c. How did you become interested in studying food, agriculture, and natural resource sciences (or other related discipline in college)?
7. I have signed and dated the application (original signature only).
8. I understand that the application package must be postmarked no later than February 23, 2018, for consideration for the USDA/HSI Scholars Programs Scholarship.



OFFICE OF ADVOCACY AND OUTREACH
HISPANIC-SERVING INSTITUTIONS NATIONAL PROGRAM

Where to Send Application:

USDA/HSI Scholars Program Liaison/Regional Directors

Juan M. Alvarez
Regional Director, Central-Northern
California and Washington

Host: California State University, Fresno
Craig School of Business/ Peters Building
5245 N. Backer Avenue, M/S PB-7
Fresno, CA 93740-80001
Office: (559) 278-8311
Cell Phone: (559) 240-0692
juan.alvarez@osec.usda.gov

Roberto González Jr.
Regional Director,
Southern California/ Arizona

Host: San Diego State University,
Imperial Valley Campus
720 Heber Avenue
Library Annex, Room 12B
Calexico, CA 92231-2403
Office: (760) 768-5523
Cell Phone: (760) 756-8088
roberto.gonzalez@osec.usda.gov

Ruby S. De La Garza
Regional Director, Texas

Host: University of Texas, Rio Grande Valley
1201 W. University Drive
ELABN Room 234
Edinburg, TX 78539-2999
Office: (956) 665-7436
Cell Phone: (956) 587-2656
ruby.delagarza@osec.usda.gov

Julio C. Puentes
Regional Director, Illinois/ Midwest

Host: Northeastern Illinois University
5500 N. St. Louis Avenue, Ste. C-628
Chicago, IL 60625-4699
Office: (773) 442-4235
Cell Phone: (773) 633-8822
julio.puentes@osec.usda.gov

For questions, please contact:

HSI National Program
Office of Advocacy and Outreach, USDA

1400 Independence Avenue, SW.
Room 520-A, Mailstop 0601
Washington, DC 20250
Telephone: (202) 720-6506
hsinp@osec.usda.gov

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NON-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at **How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint** and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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