2021 Summer Scholars Program
Frequently Asked Questions

When and where does the program take place?
● This year’s Summer Scholars Program will be offered virtually from June 7th to August 13th.

Who is eligible to apply?
● Any rising or current senior undergraduate student and full- or part-time graduate students who are enrolled at an accredited college or university are eligible to apply. Applicants must be able to demonstrate financial need (read more about this requirement here). All majors and fields are welcome, but applicants must demonstrate an interest in higher education policy.

What do I need in order to complete my application?
● In addition to a complete application, applicants are required to submit:
  ○ A résumé
  ○ A copy of a recent transcript verifying enrollment status (can be unofficial or official)
  ○ A copy of their most recent financial aid award letter (for undergraduate students)
  ○ A copy of their student aid report (SAR) and a financial aid award letter from their final semester of undergraduate studies (for graduate students), accessible via https://www.nslds.ed.gov/npas
  ○ Contact information for two references (not recommendation letters)

When are applications due? Can I send my transcript at a later date?
● All applications are due on March 12th by 5pm ET and all application materials must be submitted with the application. An unofficial transcript will suffice.

I am a graduate student; can I still apply after I have completed my graduate degree?
● Applicants must be enrolled in a graduate program at the time of application submission even if they plan to graduate before the program begins in June.

Is there an opportunity to talk to previous summer scholars?
● The best way to hear from our alumni is through our Instagram page. You can also read more about our alumni and watch their reflections on our website. Candidates who receive an offer from us will have the opportunity to connect with alumni directly.

I completed only a few credits or even no credits in the spring 2020 due to the pandemic. Will this impact my competitiveness in the application process?
● No. PNPI works on federal higher education issues and as such we understand how unprecedented the spring 2020 semester was. You will not be penalized for any drop in credits last spring.

Do summer scholars need to meet a minimum GPA requirement? What is a competitive GPA?
● The Summer Scholars Program does not have a minimum GPA requirement. The selection process considers all components of the application materials, including the essay, references, resume, and ability to demonstrate financial need.
Do I need recommendation letters? What type of references can I use?

- Letters of recommendation are not required, but you will need to provide two references. These references can be professors or managers whom you have recently worked with and can attest to your work, academic performance, and overall interest in federal higher education policy. The selection committee will reach out to your references if you are selected as a 2021 finalist.

Is there an interview? If so, what is the format?

- A small number of candidates will be invited to take part in an initial screening interview via phone. Once screening interviews are complete, a smaller number of candidates will be invited to take part in a formal interview via Zoom or Google Meet. There may be additional interviews after this second round.

How are candidates selected? And how many?

- Candidates are selected through a competitive process of application review and interviews. A small selection committee reviews and scores each application and essay and recommends candidates to be selected for an interview. Two summer scholars are selected each summer to participate in the program.

What is the timeline for candidate selection?

- Applications are due March 12th by 5pm ET. A small group of candidates will be contacted for an initial interview by late March, finalist interviews will take place by late April, and candidates will be notified by early May. Candidates may reach out regarding the status of their application at any time to pnpi@pnpi.org.

How can I stand out as a competitive applicant?

- By being yourself! While we prioritize applicants who have no prior experience interning at the federal level and/or in D.C., most importantly, we want to see that you have demonstrated interest in federal higher education and public policy. This demonstrated interest can come in many forms—through classes you have taken, papers you have written, places you have volunteered, extracurriculars, former internships, etc. You do not need to have experience in federal higher education policy, but you should be able to communicate how you see the PNPI Summer Scholars Program contributing to your current interests and future goals.

Can I still take summer online courses during the Summer Scholars Program?

- Yes! In the past, summer scholars with academic commitments during the program were able to manage around our program. All scholars are required to work 32 hours per week, between the hours of 9am to 5pm.

What are the working hours for summer scholars?

- Monday–Thursday, 9am–4pm, and Friday, 9am–1pm, with some flexibility depending on events.

What is the compensation?

- Summer scholars earn $15/hour and should expect to work 32 hours per week.

Can I apply for academic credit for the program?

- We are happy to work with your institution so you can receive credit for your participation in the PNPI Summer Scholars Program.

What type of professional development can I expect to receive as a summer scholar?

- As a summer scholar you will be considered a full member of the team and will experience all aspects of our work. In a typical week you might update a factsheet or primer, read reports from higher education researchers and policy organizations, write and publish a summary for our website, attend and reflect on a congressional hearing or federal policy event, and network with policymakers and policy leaders from all sectors of federal higher ed policy.
Is housing provided for the program? Where do scholars live in D.C.?
● Since this year’s program is remote, scholars will need to arrange their own housing. We will provide a one-time housing stipend of $1,650 to help cover rent and other incidental housing expenses.

What kind of office setting can I expect?
● Since this year’s program is remote, you will be working from home and must arrange for a location that has stable internet and access to a computer. To ensure you have the tools you need, we will support you in getting necessary supplies and materials.

Where can I receive support to complete my application?
● Please email pnpi@pnpi.org with any questions or concerns regarding your application.

How can I confirm my application was received?
● You will be notified via email when PNPI has received your completed application.

How many applications do you get each year?
● The number of applications varies year to year and the process is always competitive, with many more applications than available spots.

Would my chances of being selected be lower if I do not have much experience in public policy or service?
● No, not at all! We realize that many applicants are looking at programs like ours to gain experience in these spaces. We ask that you tell us what motivates you to apply and how this program would help you address your career goals.