



**Request for Applications (RFA) No. UNLP-001-25 for
Nuclear Energy Undergraduate Scholarship Opportunities**

Subject: University Nuclear Leadership Program
Undergraduate Scholarship Opportunities – RFA
Issue Date: May 15th, 2026
Application Due Date: July 2nd, 2026, at 5:00 p.m. ET

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Request for Applications (RFA) is for the University Nuclear Leadership Program (UNLP), as administered by the Department of Energy's (DOE) Office of Nuclear Energy (NE), for the 2026–2027 academic year. Under this RFA, NE is seeking applications for two undergraduate scholarship programs:

1. **Four-year College/University Undergraduate Scholarship Program** – provides \$10,000 awards to students attending four-year colleges/universities who are pursuing study in science and engineering disciplines related to nuclear energy such as nuclear engineering, mechanical engineering, electrical engineering, chemistry, health physics, nuclear materials science, radiochemistry, applied nuclear physics, nuclear policy, radiation protection technology, nuclear power technology, nuclear maintenance technology, nuclear engineering technology, computer science, cybersecurity, and nuclear safety.
2. **Trade School and Community College Scholarship Program** – provides \$5,000 awards in support of students receiving training as nuclear energy-related technicians in areas including, but not limited to, nuclear operations, mechanical and electrical maintenance, and radiation protection at United States (U.S.) trade schools and community colleges.

Applications are due by July 2nd, 2026, at 5:00 pm ET. Students must apply electronically at [NEUP.gov](https://neup.gov) and questions should be sent to NEUP@inl.gov.

As part of their application package, students must submit an essay outlining long-term career goals, letters of recommendation, and academic transcripts. Students must have a cumulative 3.0 GPA to apply.

NE anticipates making award announcements in Fall 2026. The number of awards is dependent upon application quality and total available funding. Eligibility is restricted to United States citizens and legal permanent residents.

1 INTRODUCTION

This Request for Applications (RFA) is for the University Nuclear Leadership Program (UNLP), as administered by the Department of Energy's (DOE) Office of Nuclear Energy (NE), for the 2026–2027 academic year. Questions regarding this RFA should be submitted to neup@inl.gov or applicants can review the Q&A forum found on the [NEUP website](#).

UNLP works to attract qualified nuclear science and engineering (NS&E) students to nuclear energy professions by providing undergraduate scholarships, which are awarded for undergraduate study at two and four-year institutions leading to a major or minor degree or certificate in the fields or disciplines of NS&E relevant to the NE mission.

The NE mission is to advance nuclear energy science and technology to meet United States (U.S.) energy, environmental, and economic needs. NE enables innovation, supports unique research infrastructure, and solves crosscutting challenges facing the nuclear energy sector to:

- Keep existing U.S. nuclear reactors operating.
- Deploy new nuclear reactors.
- Secure and sustain our nuclear fuel cycle.
- Maintain U.S. leadership in nuclear energy technology.

All applications submitted under this RFA must demonstrate a strong tie to this mission. Applications focused specifically in areas not of interest to the NE mission, such as fusion energy, medical physics, nuclear forensics, or environmental management, will not be reviewed or considered. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) and National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) administer related programs; therefore, applicants interested in regulatory (NRC) or international nonproliferation (NNSA) careers are encouraged to apply to those opportunities as well.

Ensuring an adequate number of high-quality NS&E students will (1) support the need for qualified personnel to develop and maintain the nation's nuclear energy technology, (2) enhance educational institutions' capabilities to perform nuclear energy related RD&D, and (3) meet DOE's and the National Laboratories' need for highly trained scientists and engineers in support of NE programs.

Prospective students are advised that submission of an application implies a commitment, if selected, to the pursuit of study in a program in the NS&E disciplines relevant to nuclear energy. Acceptance of a scholarship is an explicit acceptance of this commitment and assurance that the student will be duly enrolled in an acceptable program beginning in the fall of 2026.

NE is seeking applications under this RFA for the following opportunities:

1. Four-year College/University Undergraduate Scholarship Program

2. Trade School and Community College Scholarship Program

All information and instructions required to respond to this RFA are accessible at neup.gov. Students must submit their applications electronically through neup.gov. No hard copy applications will be accepted (letters of recommendation, transcripts, and other supporting documents listed in Table 3 will be accepted as described in Section 4.5).

2 ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

It is critical to our nation's economic leadership and global competitiveness that the U.S. educate, train, and retain more scientists and engineers from varying backgrounds.

Applicants' colleges/universities need to be approved to participate in UNLP. NE will work with new schools and guide them through the approval process prior to the distribution of any award funds. More information on the approval process can be found at neup.gov.

2.1 Four-year College/University Undergraduate Scholarship Program

Eligibility Restrictions:

1. Students must have completed at least one semester of full-time undergraduate study at an Institution of Higher Education (IHE)¹ by the application deadline to apply. Full-time undergraduate study is defined as college credits obtained after receiving a high school diploma or equivalent. For clarification, Advanced Placement or dual credits received during high school would not be considered for meeting this requirement.
2. Students must be enrolled in full-time study as an undergraduate at the time of award.
3. Students must have at least a 3.0 cumulative GPA (based on a 4.0 scale). GPAs are not rounded.
4. Students holding an F1 student visa are not eligible.

2.2 Trade School and Community College Scholarship Program

Eligibility Restrictions:

1. Students must be entering their first or second year of undergraduate study at an IHE at the time of award (Fall 2026).
2. Students must have at least a 3.0 cumulative GPA (based on a 4.0 scale). GPAs are not rounded.
3. Students holding an F1 student visa are not eligible.

¹ Accredited U.S. two- and four-year colleges and universities.

3 AWARD DESCRIPTION

Undergraduate scholarships for both four-year institutions and trade schools/community colleges are for **one year only**. A student who is awarded a scholarship one year may apply in subsequent years, provided they still meet the eligibility criteria.

3.1 Four-year College/University Undergraduate Scholarship Program

NE expects to award \$10,000 undergraduate scholarships under this program. The number of awards is dependent upon application quality and total available funding. Appendix A includes allowable and unallowable expenses for this award.

3.2 Trade School and Community College Scholarship Program

NE expects to award \$5,000 undergraduate scholarships under this program. The number of awards is dependent upon application quality and total available funding. Appendix A includes allowable and unallowable expenses for this award.

4 APPLICATION SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS

4.1 Application Due Date

Applications for both scholarship programs, as well as all supporting documents, are due by July 2nd, 2026, at 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time (ET).

4.2 Application Schedule

Table 1. Tentative UNLP Scholarship Schedule.

Issue Request for Applications	May 15 th , 2026
Scholarship Application Deadline	July 2 nd , 2026
Award Announcement	Fall 2026

4.3 Late Applications

Applications and any supporting materials (transcripts, test scores, etc.) received after the designated date and time will not be accepted. Extension of the application due date shall be at the sole discretion of NE.

Note: It is the applicant’s responsibility to confirm—prior to the application deadline—that all requirements have been met and materials received. If a requirement has not been met, the application will be considered incomplete and will not be reviewed.

4.4 Application Preparation Instructions

Complete scholarship applications must be submitted electronically through neup.gov before the deadline established above. To apply, students will need to create an account at neup.gov. Students re-applying should use their existing account. Once logged in, applicants will need to click on the “Applications” tab located at the top, left hand corner of the page. To begin an application, click on the “Create New Application” link for either the FY 2025 Four-year College/University Undergraduate Scholarship Program or the FY 2025 Trade School and Community College Scholarship Program.

In addition to the information required on the scholarship RFA submittal form, the supporting documents listed in Tables 3 and 4 must also be provided.

Table 2. Supporting Document Requirements for the Four-year College/University Undergraduate Scholarship Program.

Submittal Documents	Page Limit
Essay: Personal Career Goals	3
Letters of Reference (3)	2 per reference
Unofficial or Official Academic Transcripts	None

Table 4. Supporting Document Requirements for the Trade School and Community College Scholarship Program.

Submittal Documents	Page Limit
Essay: Personal Career Goals	2
Letters of Reference (2)	2 per reference
Unofficial or Official Academic Transcripts	None

4.5 Document Descriptions

For each document uploaded, the applicant should include their last name in the file name (for example: Smith Personal Career Goals.pdf). The applicant’s name, as well as the document name, should be included in the header. Additional submittal guidance can be found in the online application form. A description of each required document is listed below.

Essay: Personal Career Goals – This essay should identify the applicant’s long-term career goals and explain how the UNLP scholarship will help the student achieve those goals. Students should ensure that their career goals are relevant to nuclear energy and the NE mission as stated in Section 1. This essay can also call out any nuclear-related outreach or advocacy efforts on the part of the applicant, as well as other leadership roles held. Applicants are encouraged to review the NE [website](#) for more information.

Letters of Reference – Scholarship applicants are required to submit **three** letters of reference for the Four-year College/University Undergraduate Scholarship Program, and **two** letters of reference for the Trade School and Community College Scholarship Program. The following information should be included in each letter:

- Name and title of the reference writer
- Department
- Institution/Organization
- Explanation of the nature of the relationship to the student
- Detail of the applicant’s prior research experiences outside of the classroom, if any
- Statements about the student’s academic potential
- Statements about the student’s proposed research or ability to work in industry
- Signature
- Any other information to enable the review panel to evaluate the application according to the guidelines described in Section 7

Applicants should notify reference writers directly through the online application form by providing the references’ email addresses and clicking the “Notify” link. This will send the writer an email with information on how to upload the recommendation electronically to the system. Students are encouraged to contact reference writers early in the application process to allow sufficient time for the reference writer to submit the letter. **Letters must be received by the application deadline.**

When selecting reference writers, applicants should choose individuals who can appropriately speak to their academic abilities and experiences (such as an advisor or core professor, preferably one who has known the applicant for a year or longer). **Students should not have family members provide recommendations regardless of their position within the industry.**

It is the applicant’s responsibility to confirm all letters have been received prior to the application deadline. Any application with fewer than the number of required letters of reference will be considered incomplete and will not be reviewed. Letters submitted by the applicant on behalf of the writer will not be accepted. If more letters are received than are required, the first letters received will be sent forward for review.

Unofficial or Official Academic Transcripts – Academic transcripts are required and must include Fall 2025 semester grades. Academic transcripts from all institutions where a degree was received by the applicant, as well as any current degrees the applicant is working toward, are required. **If selected for award, official transcripts may be requested.**

Applicants can upload their transcripts to their application at www.neup.gov. Transcripts will also be accepted by fax, electronically or via postal mail, express service, or courier to the External Innovation Integration Office (IO):

INR Integration Office

Attn: Tyler Newitt
PO Box 1625 MS 3730

Idaho Falls, Idaho 83415-3730

Unofficial/official copies of transcripts must be sent for an application to be considered complete. All transcripts must be received by the application deadline.

4.6 Document Format Requirements

Please adhere strictly to the document formatting requirements in Table 5 for all submitted documents:

Table 5. Formatting Requirements.

Document Format	.pdf
Font Size	12 pt
Font	Times New Roman
Margins	1-inch all around
Line Spacing	Single-spaced

Note: Do not send extraneous information or materials such as CDs, manuscripts, resumes, medical reports, or news clippings. These items will not be reviewed with your application. Images may be included but will be provided only in black and white to the review panel. DO NOT submit a personal photo.

5 APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

5.1 Interpretations and Exceptions

Students shall submit applications in compliance with the RFA requirements. Any interpretation of the requirements by the student may be considered an exception and treated accordingly (i.e., deem the application non-responsive). The student may obtain NE concurrence/clarification regarding its interpretation to classify the student’s application as compliant with, or an exception to, the RFA requirements by contacting neup@inl.gov. Any exception must be approved by NE and documented as part of the application.

5.2 Rights Reserved by NE

NE reserves the right to accept or reject any application with or without prior discussion with the student and to disregard minor irregularities in applications received. NE reserves the right to conduct any necessary pre-award survey and analysis to evaluate a student’s capabilities to comply with the requirements of this RFA.

5.3 Application Validity Period

An application shall remain firm for 180 days after the application due date, unless otherwise specified by the student.

5.4 Discrepancies in the RFA

Should a student find discrepancies in, or omissions from, the RFA, its attachments or related documents, or should the student be in doubt as to the meaning of any requirements, the student shall notify NE by contacting neup@inl.gov and obtain correction or clarification prior to submitting an application.

6 DELIVERABLES AND OBLIGATIONS

No reporting criteria are required for undergraduate scholarships; however, NE may contact a scholar in the future to request information on scholar's current career path.

Additionally, NE is always interested in receiving relevant information throughout the year including captioned photographs or other material providing notification and details of any noteworthy scholarship-related accomplishments that may merit public attention.

7 APPLICATION REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

Applications will be reviewed by interdisciplinary scientists, engineers, and other professional experts in education. Each application will be reviewed independently based on merit using all available information in the completed application. Reviewers will be instructed to evaluate applications against the following Merit Review criteria; therefore, applicants must address the criteria in their written statements to provide reviewers with the information necessary to fully evaluate the application.

1. How well do the student's career goals and chosen course of study align to the NE mission?
2. How well qualified is the student to complete the proposed course of study?

Reviewers will consider the following when evaluating applications against the above Merit Review criteria:

1. **Academic Strength:** Reviewers will consider the applicant's academic record, courses taken, and cumulative undergraduate GPA.
2. **References:** Reviewers will consider the writer's general impression of the student's potential for success, future contribution to the field of nuclear energy, and suitability for award.
3. **Personal Career Goals:** Reviewers will consider how well the applicant describes their long-term career goals; how the UNLP scholarship will help them achieve those goals;

how well the applicant explains how their program of study and career goals align to the NE mission; and if the applicant wrote their essay and in a clear and concise manner.

Review results will be presented to the Selection Official and considered along with additional relevant objective and subjective information related to the application process. These may include program policy, management factors, and the amount of funds available. This information will be factored into the final award selection and approval.

8 AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

8.1 Notification of Award

Notification of the scholarship award will first be made with the issuance of a press release on the NE [website](#). All selected and non-selected applicants will then be notified via email. Once all students from a university or college have accepted their awards, the institution will be provided with a list of awardees.

8.2 Award Conditions

UNLP scholarship students will be notified, via email, as soon as possible of their selection or non-selection. If selected, the student must accept or decline the scholarship within **14** days of notification. Failure to comply with the deadline may result in revocation of the scholarship offer.

APPENDIX A: ALLOWABLE COSTS FOR SCHOLARSHIPS

Undergraduate Scholarships Cost of Education Allowance

Tuition, Books, Fees, and Room and Board: All applicable tuition, room and board, books required for classes, and fees normally charged to students of similar academic standing represent allowable costs for scholarships, unless such charges are optional or are refundable. Only board expenses (including food) for on-campus facilities are allowed; however, off-campus room expenses may be reimbursed upon presentation of a valid paid rent receipt. These expenses must be submitted to the college or university for payment.

The scholarship award does not provide allowances for special student needs such as travel to employment sites, computers, and books and publications beyond those required for classes, fieldwork expenses, and special study.

Prohibition Related to Malign Foreign Talent Recruitment Programs

Prohibition

As required by law², *Covered Individuals* participating in a *Malign Foreign Talent Recruitment Program* are prohibited from participating in projects selected for Federal funding under this RFA consequences for violations of this prohibition will be determined according to applicable law, regulations, and policy.

Further, the recipient must notify DOE within five business days upon learning that an individual on the project team is or is believed to be participating in a malign foreign talent recruitment program. DOE may modify and add requirements related to this prohibition to the extent required by law.

Covered Individuals and the applicant must provide certifications regarding no participation in *Malign Foreign Talent Recruitment Programs*.

Non-Discrimination

DOE will ensure that the *Malign Foreign Talent Recruitment Program* prohibition is carried out in a manner that does not target, stigmatize, or discriminate against individuals on the basis of race, ethnicity, or national origin, consistent with title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. 2000d et seq.).

² See sections 10631-10632 of [P.L. 117-167 \(42 USC 19231-19232\)](#); [OSTP-Foreign-Talent-Recruitment-Program-Guidelines.pdf \(whitehouse.gov\)](#).

Definitions

Malign Foreign Talent Recruitment Program. as defined in P.L. 117-167, Section 10638(4):

- A) Any program, position, or activity that includes compensation in the form of cash, in-kind compensation, including research funding, promised future compensation, complimentary foreign travel, things of non de minimis value, honorific titles, career advancement opportunities, or other types of remuneration or consideration directly provided by a foreign country at any level (national, provincial, or local) or their designee, or an entity based in, funded by, or affiliated with a foreign country, whether or not directly sponsored by the foreign country, to the targeted individual, whether directly or indirectly stated in the arrangement, contract, or other documentation at issue, in exchange for the individual—
- i. engaging in the unauthorized transfer of intellectual property, materials, data products, or other nonpublic information owned by a U.S. entity or developed with a Federal research and development award to the government of a foreign country or an entity based in, funded by, or affiliated with a foreign country regardless of whether that government or entity provided support for the development of the intellectual property, materials, or data products;
 - ii. being required to recruit trainees or researchers to enroll in such program, position, or activity;
 - iii. establishing a laboratory or company, accepting a faculty position, or undertaking any other employment or appointment in a foreign country or with an entity based in, funded by, or affiliated with a foreign country if such activities are in violation of the standard terms and conditions of a Federal research and development award;
 - iv. being unable to terminate the foreign talent recruitment program contract or agreement except in extraordinary circumstances;
 - v. through funding or effort related to the foreign talent recruitment program, being limited in the capacity to carry out a research and development award or required to engage in work that would result in substantial overlap or duplication with a Federal research and development award;
 - vi. being required to apply for and successfully receive funding from the sponsoring foreign government's funding agencies with the sponsoring foreign organization as the recipient;
 - vii. being required to omit acknowledgment of the recipient institution with which the individual is affiliated, or the Federal research agency sponsoring the research and development award, contrary to the institutional policies or standard terms and conditions of the Federal research and development award;
 - viii. being required to not disclose to the Federal research agency or employing institution the participation of such individual in such program, position, or activity; or
 - ix. having a conflict of interest or conflict of commitment contrary to the standard terms and conditions of the Federal research and development award; and

B) a program that is sponsored by—

- i. a foreign country of concern or an entity based in a foreign country of concern, whether or not directly sponsored by the foreign country of concern;
- ii. an academic institution on the list developed under section 1286(c)(8) of the John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019 (10 U.S.C. 2358 note; ¹Public Law 115–232); or
- iii. a foreign talent recruitment program on the list developed under section 1286(c)(9) of the John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019 (10 U.S.C. 2358 note; ¹Public Law 115–232).

Consistent with applicable law (42 U.S.C. 19232), this provision does not prohibit, unless such activities are funded, organized, or managed by an academic institution or a foreign talent recruitment program on the lists developed under paragraphs (8) and (9) of section 1286(c) of the John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019 (10 U.S.C. 4001 note; Public Law 115–232)—

- A) making scholarly presentations and publishing written materials regarding scientific information not otherwise controlled under current law;
- B) participation in international conferences or other international exchanges, research projects or programs that involve open and reciprocal exchange of scientific information, and which are aimed at advancing international scientific understanding and not otherwise controlled under current law;
- C) advising a foreign student enrolled at an institution of higher education or writing a recommendation for such a student, at such student's request; and
- D) other international activities determined appropriate by the Federal research agency head or designee.