

Writing Recommendations for the Beinecke Scholarship

Scholarship Basics: Merit- and need-based scholarships awarded to students planning to obtain graduate degrees in the arts, humanities, or social sciences. Most recipients are students who look forward to earning a Ph.D. in an academic discipline (although some plan on the MFA).

Juniors who are U.S. citizens or U.S. nationals are eligible. Applicants must also have a history of receiving need-based financial aid at CMU. Each scholar receives \$4,000 immediately prior to entering graduate school, and an additional \$30,000 while attending graduate school.

Carnegie Mellon can nominate *one* student to go forward to the national competition.

Timeline:

- Campus deadline: **January 21, 2020** – Your signed recommendation letter must be emailed (on letterhead) to fso-general@andrew.cmu.edu by this date.
- Internal campus review and nomination decision: Late January
- Late January – early February: If your candidate is nominated, we may share any revisions suggested by the campus committee for your letter at this time.
- Final nominee deadline: **February 10, 2020** – In case you choose to make updates to your letter, we will need the final version to be emailed to us by this date.

The national Beinecke selection process utilizes these criteria:

1. Scholastic achievement - GPA, depth and breadth of coursework
2. Superior standards of intellectual ability - typically demonstrated through research or other scholarly activities
3. Personal promise – evidence that the student will thrive in graduate school and go on to an influential academic or artistic career
4. Financial need – preference is given to candidates for whom significant financial aid would increase the likelihood of completing graduate school

Guidelines: Your letter of recommendation can help a student make up for weaknesses in certain criteria, and can help to contextualize the student’s accomplishments and struggles (if any). In your letter, please assess your student’s:

- Academic strength
- Intellectual curiosity
- Character
- Potential for advanced graduate study
- (If possible) Potential to advance their academic or artistic field through their future scholarship

It is also helpful if you are able to make comparisons or informally rank the applicant (e.g., “her contributions in the seminar stood out even against those from graduate students” or “I would place him in the top 1% of undergraduate students I have encountered in my career”).