

Program Summary

[Wildlife Conservation Network](#) (WCN) firmly believes wildlife conservation is most likely to succeed in the long run when it is led and upheld by locally based conservationists committed to community engagement and empowerment. The **Rising Wildlife Leaders - Scholarship Program** (Scholarship Program) offers three different scholarships for local nationals that fund graduate education and applied training for (1) community-based conservationists dedicated to working in their home countries (Conservation Scholarship), (2) current and aspiring in-country wildlife veterinarians (Veterinary Scholarship), and (3) US-based Indigenous peoples pursuing a career in conservation (Indigenous Scholarship).

The support provided by the Scholarship Program covers tuition and living expenses for the duration of the academic program. Applicants can apply for up to \$25,000 in support. The awarded value is not given as a lump sum but rather divided and disbursed quarterly throughout the scholar's program.

Qualifying Criteria

This program focuses on conservationists meeting the following criteria:

- A local national working in their home country or home region in Central/South America, Asia, or Africa (Conservation and Veterinary Scholarships) or a member of an Indigenous tribe pursuing a program through a US-based institution (Indigenous Scholarship);
- Early career conservationists with current or previous experience as an employee or volunteer with a field-based wildlife conservation program (at least 2-3 years of field conservation experience);
- Committed to a lifelong career in wildlife conservation in their home country or home region;
- A college graduate holding a Bachelor's degree or equivalent;
- Enrolled or planning to enroll (within the next year) in a masters-level, doctorate, or post-graduate applied training program;
- Nominated by a conservation professional who can speak to their experience and potential in the field of wildlife conservation. The nominator should play a mentorship role (formal or informal) for the candidate throughout their program.
 - Conservation and Veterinary Scholarship applicants must have a nominator that is a WCN Partner, WCN Wildlife Fund Director, WCN Guest Speaker, WCS or WWF senior conservationist (current staff), Whitley Award recipient, Rufford Foundation funding (2nd Booster Grant or Completion Grant) recipient, or Tusk-supported conservationist. (Indigenous Scholarship applicants can be nominated by a wider range of conservation professionals)
 - Examples of eligible nominators include an academic advisor, supervisor, or a well-known leader in conservation who knows the applicant well.
 - We will only accept one nomination per nominator and one nomination per candidate.

Selection Criteria

The Scholarship Committee reviews and awards scholarships to candidates based on how well their application shows the following:

- Demonstrates the subject area, course work, skills, and/or degree conferred by their program will substantially empower them to make a significant contribution to field-based work in wildlife conservation.

- Anticipates a career focused on:
 - Community/field-based conservation and applied research (rather than pure academic research or technical work).
 - Protection of a threatened or endangered wildlife species (rather than a pure landscape approach).
 - Developing innovative strategies to promote better co-existence between humans and wildlife.
- Demonstrates an understanding of and commitment to the community-based model of wildlife conservation, and a commitment to working in support of and with local communities in the field.
- Are enthusiastic, hard-working, and self-motivated with good leadership and verbal and written communication.
- Will most greatly benefit from the full range of opportunities the Scholarship Program provides.
- Have high potential to become a leader in wildlife conservation.

Financial & Reporting Requirements

The awarded value is not given as a lump sum. It is divided and disbursed quarterly over the duration of the scholar's academic program. Quarterly disbursements are awarded when scholars provide proof of enrollment and a summary of the previous quarter's expenses. The support provided by the Scholarship Program is flexible in covering any approved expenses associated with the academic program, including living expenses. Allocations of funds can be adjusted to meet participant needs with prior approval. Awardees are required to submit a final report, including financial details, at the conclusion of their scholarship agreement.

Additional Opportunities

In addition to financial scholarship support, RWL Scholars will receive opportunities to connect with other peer and senior conservationists in the WCN network through virtual or in-person convenings, events, and communication platforms. WCN team members are happy to provide guidance and access to shared resources to pursue career growth. Additionally, RWL scholarship alumni are eligible for financial support to pursue internship opportunities after their studies conclude. Our goal is to enable Scholarship Program participants to complete their academic program with the resources and commitment to conservation needed to secure a long-term career. Upon completion of their studies, we hope that alumni will continue to engage so that they may continue to learn and grow within their careers alongside peers and share their experiences and expertise with future generations.

Application Requirements

Online applications and nominations are shared with eligible nominators each September and will NOT be listed publicly. Applications are **accepted each year in October** through qualified nominators. **Awards will be made by March of the following year. You must be nominated by a pre-approved/eligible nominator to qualify.** If you have secured a nominator that meets the below criteria, please have them email scholarship@wildnet.org with their contact information and the category of nominator eligibility they fall into in order for application materials to be shared with them.

- **Conservation and Veterinary Scholarship** applicants must have a nominator that is a WCN Partner, WCN Wildlife Fund Director, WCN Guest Speaker, WCS or WWF senior conservationist (current staff), Whitley Award recipient, Rufford Foundation funding (2nd Booster Grant or Completion Grant) recipient, or Tusk-supported conservationist.
- **Indigenous Scholarship** applicants can be nominated by an academic advisor, supervisor, or a well-known leader in conservation who knows the applicant well.



If you have any questions about the Rising Wildlife Leaders - Scholarship Program please email scholarship@wildnet.org.