



Bentson Scholarship Program in Marine & Aquatic Science

Applications are now open!

Applications for the **2026–2027 Bentson Scholarship Program in Marine & Aquatic Science** are being accepted through **October 2, 2026**.

The Bentson Scholarship supports high-achieving undergraduate students who are passionate about understanding and protecting aquatic environments through research, discovery, and hands-on learning. We welcome applications from students with interests spanning marine, estuarine, freshwater, and other aquatic systems.

The program is open to **1st-, 2nd-, and 3rd-year undergraduates** majoring in:

- Biology
- Aquatic Biology
- CCS Marine Science/Biology
- Geography
- Environmental Studies
- Earth Science

Scholarship Award

Selected scholars receive **\$5,000 annually**, with the opportunity for renewal throughout their undergraduate career at UCSB.

The scholarship is designed to help students pursue opportunities that advance their education and professional development. Funds may be used for:

- Tuition
- Living expenses
- Research opportunities
- Professional development

Renewal is contingent upon continued academic progress and ongoing engagement in marine and aquatic science.

Learn more about the program on our [new website!](#)

[APPLY HERE](#)

Application Checklist

To complete your application, please submit the following materials by **October 2, 2026**:

1. Completed scholarship application questionnaire (linked above 'Apply Here')
2. Resume or CV (maximum two pages)
3. Unofficial UCSB transcript
4. Contact information for one person who will provide a letter of recommendation

Our Review Process

The Bentson Scholarship uses a holistic review process designed to recognize students with strong potential, not simply those with the highest GPA.

High-achieving does not mean perfect grades.

Our review committee considers the full picture of each applicant, including academic preparation, motivation, experiences, leadership, research potential, and contributions to our diverse community.

Applications are evaluated across four broad categories:

- Academic Performance
- Motivational Attributes
- Skills & Marine/Aquatic Science Potential
- Contributions to Community & Diversity

Each application is reviewed independently by multiple committee members using a common evaluation rubric included below.

Choosing a Letter Writer: We use letters of recommendation to gain insight into your motivational attributes, academic achievement, and your skills & potential. We read the letters looking for:

- Insights into who you are
- Curiosity and initiative
- Academic or research abilities
- Leadership and teamwork
- Growth and potential as a scientist

When asking someone to write your letter, consider sharing our review criteria so they can tailor their recommendation accordingly. It's perfectly appropriate to ask: "Do you feel you can write a strong letter for me that addresses (some of) these review criteria."

How we evaluate the applicant's materials:

Academic Performance • Research or marine science experience • Publications and presentations (e.g. conference or science fair) • Writing samples (in application) • Performance in courses in discipline • Overall GPA • Evidence of improvement	Motivational Attributes • Achievement orientation • Collegiality, collaboration, teamwork • Curiosity & creativity • Independence • Breadth of perspective • Initiative • Positive self-concept • Realistic self-appraisal • Leadership and community involvement
Skills & Marine and Aquatic Science Potential • Communication skills • Technical skills • Evidence of analytical / critical thinking ability • Use or application of research findings • Organization • Past research experience • Past marine and aquatic experience • Relevant work experience • Scholarly or professional engagement • Fit: alignment of interests with marine and aquatic science research and coursework at UCSB • Promise of innovative scholarship	Diversity & Community Contributions • First-generation of family to attend college • Economically disadvantaged background • Non-traditional background (e.g., veteran, refugee, from rural community) • Evidence of overcoming adversity • Potential as exemplar for others • Potential for leadership in increasing equitable access • Awareness of and experience with inequities and challenges faced by underrepresented students • Track record of activities that reduce barriers for underrepresented groups • Vision and plans for how your work will continue to contribute to UCSB's mission to serve the needs of our diverse state and student population and create an inclusive campus