

# The Rhodes Scholarships

The Rhodes Scholarships, the oldest international fellowships, were initiated after the death of Cecil Rhodes in 1902, and bring outstanding students from many countries around the world to the University of Oxford. The first American Scholars were elected in 1904.

American Rhodes Scholars are selected through a decentralized process by which regional selection committees choose 32 Scholars each year from among those nominated by selection committees in each of the fifty states. Through December 2000, applicants from more than 300 American colleges and universities had been selected as Rhodes Scholars. In most years, a Rhodes Scholar is selected from an institution which has not formerly supplied a successful applicant.

Intellectual distinction is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for election to a Rhodes Scholarship. Selection committees are charged to seek excellence in qualities of mind and in qualities of person which, in combination, offer the promise of effective service to the world in the decades ahead. The Rhodes Scholarships, in short, are investments in individuals rather than in project proposals. Accordingly, applications are sought from talented students without restriction as to their field of academic specialization or career plans although the proposed course of study must be available at Oxford, and the applicant's undergraduate program must provide a sufficient basis for further study in the proposed field. Through the years, Rhodes Scholars have pursued studies in all of the varied fields available at the University of Oxford.

## ***Award:***

Rhodes Scholars are elected for two years of study at the University of Oxford, with the possibility of renewal for a third year. All educational costs, such as matriculation, tuition, laboratory and certain other fees, are paid on the Scholar's behalf by the Rhodes Trustees. Each Scholar receives in addition a maintenance allowance adequate to meet necessary expenses for term-time and vacations. The Rhodes Trustees cover the necessary costs of travel to and from Oxford, and upon application, may approve additional grants for research purposes or study-related travel.

## ***Criteria:***

The criteria which Mr. Rhodes set forth in his Will still guide Committees of Selection in their assessment of applicants. The Will contains four standards by which prospective Rhodes Scholars should be judged:

1. literary and scholastic attainments;
2. energy to use one's talents to the full, as exemplified by fondness for and success in sports;
3. truth, courage, devotion to duty, sympathy for and protection of the weak, kindness, unselfishness and fellowship;
4. moral force of character and instincts to lead, and to take an interest in one's fellow beings.

## ***Eligibility:***

In the United States, applicants for Rhodes Scholarships must be:

- U.S. citizens,
- aged eighteen or over but not yet twenty-four on October 1 in the year of application.
- academic standing sufficient to assure completion of a bachelor's degree before going into residence in Oxford the following October in the event of election to a Scholarship.

While only citizens of the United States are eligible for the Rhodes Scholarships awarded in this country, Rhodes Scholarships are offered in 18 other jurisdictions. Several of these constituencies regard their citizens who study in universities in the United States as eligible for their own competition. Citizens of Bermuda, Canada, the Commonwealth Caribbean (see Appendix for list of countries or consult the list of

overseas secretaries), India, Jamaica, Kenya, Singapore, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe may thus be eligible to apply in their own constituencies on the basis of degrees from American universities.

***Application:***

Applicants apply in one of the fifty states: Either in the state in which they will have received at least two years of college training and a bachelor's degree before October 1 in the year following application, or in the state where they were legally resident on April 15 in the year of application. In cases where an applicant may be uncertain about his or her legal residency, such indicia as the address on the applicant's driver's license, where the applicant votes, the address from which Federal and state income tax returns are filed, and continuous residence will be evaluated. The Committees of Selection are responsible for ascertaining legal residence of all applicants, and they are authorized to reject the application of any person who is unable to verify legal residency in the state. The specified application materials should be submitted directly to the Secretary of the appropriate State Committee. Application materials should be posted to the appropriate State Secretary as early as possible before the deadline in October.

***Additional Information:***

Persons interested in applying for the Rhodes Scholarship are advised to begin preparing their applications well in advance of the October deadline. Gaining the institutional endorsement and gathering some of the documents requested (an academic transcript, a photocopy of the birth certificate) may take some time. Most particularly, applicants should give careful thought to the preparation of a thousand-word essay in which they set out in their own words their interests and aspirations, and their detailed reasons for wishing to study the specific areas of proposed academic work at Oxford. This statement is especially helpful to Committees in their attempt to gain an understanding of an applicant's strengths, and will be used by the authorities in Oxford to determine the Rhodes Scholar-elect's suitability for placement in an academic program and a college at Oxford. In addition, applicants are asked to supply a brief description of their activities during their college years.

Applicants are required to secure the formal endorsement of their college or university and to provide the names and full addresses of at least five and no more than eight persons who have agreed to write letters of recommendation. No fewer than four of these must be persons under whom the applicant has done academic work at a college or university. Committees of Selection also welcome letters from persons competent to comment on aspects of the applicant's character and interests as revealed in non-academic activities. The applicant is personally responsible for insuring that the individuals named as referees receive reproductions of the information form for referees which is provided as part of the application package. No letter of recommendation submitted directly by the applicant will be considered. Nor are the "prepackaged" letters of recommendation filed by faculty members on behalf of students in many institutions suitable for this purpose. Referees are asked to measure the applicant against the full range of the Rhodes Scholarship criteria and not to speak solely to those attributes which would, for example, be relevant to the evaluation of a student's acceptability to a post-graduate program.

Colleges and universities have been invited to organize campus committees for the purpose of meeting with prospective applicants to assess their relative merits. These campus committees are encouraged to prepare evaluative letters for submission directly to the pertinent State Secretaries. The form of such arrangements will vary, of course, with institutional circumstances. While applications will be considered by State Committees even in the absence of separate evaluative letters, a statement of institutional endorsement is required of all applicants.

Please note that the elections in virtually all of the other participating constituencies take place before the elections in the United States, and any eligible students would be well advised to make their inquiries at once. Eligibility requirements in other countries vary, and eligibility decisions are made by the respective national Rhodes Secretaries. Contact names and addresses for further information about these competitions are available from the office of the American Secretary, or from the United States Rhodes Scholarship web site, [www.rhodesscholar.org](http://www.rhodesscholar.org) (click button titled "Non-U.S. Citizens").

In no instance may anyone apply in more than one country.

**Office of the American Secretary The Rhodes Scholarship Trust**

Elliot F. Gerson

8229 Boone Boulevard, Suite 240

Vienna, Virginia 22182

Email: amsec@rhodesscholar.org

**Secretary of the Illinois State Committee of Selection**

Robert M. Dow, Jr.

Mayer, Brown & Platt

190 South LaSalle Street, 21<sup>st</sup> Floor

Chicago, IL 60603-344