



2026-27 US Pacific Territories Fishery Capacity-Building Scholarship Announcement

DEADLINE SEPTEMBER 18, 2026, or until funds are no longer available

The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council and its Education Committee members are pleased to announce the availability of up to three scholarships for the 2026-2027 academic year. These scholarships support the aspiration of American Samoa, Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) to build their capacity to effectively manage their fisheries and related resources by employing people from the local communities.

Students with strong ties to these territories are eligible for scholarships that cover the cost of tuition and fees and some living expenses. The amount will be based on the university's estimated cost of attendance. Scholarship funds will be given directly to the university to cover tuition and fees before disbursement of the remaining amount to the student.

Funding for the 2027-2028 academic year will be provided based on proof of continued progress in the university program and maintenance of a 3.5 grade point average or above. The scholarship is for up to two years maximum (four semesters).

Important Scholarship Obligations

Applicants selected for an award must sign a scholarship contract and advising agreement before funds are released. After accepting the scholarship, recipients must maintain regular communication with the Council and promptly report any change that may affect degree completion, including stopping attendance, withdrawing, taking a leave of absence, changing enrollment status or degree program, or experiencing other circumstances that may delay or prevent graduation. Stopping attendance or leaving the university without graduating does not end the recipient's obligations. A recipient who does not complete the degree, fulfill the required post-graduation work commitment or otherwise meet the scholarship requirements may be required to repay scholarship funds used up to that point in accordance with the scholarship contract.

U.S. Pacific Territories Fishery Capacity-Building Scholarships may be used for:

1. Completion of the junior and senior years to obtain one of the following undergraduate degrees:
 - i) BA or BS in Marine Science at the University of Hawai'i at Hilo (UHH), or
 - ii) BS in Marine Biology at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UHM), or
 - iii) BS in Marine Biology or BS in Oceanography with a concentration in Fisheries Science at Hawai'i Pacific University (HPU), or
 - iv) BS in Biology in the Integrative or Applied Biology track with emphasis on Marine Biology at the University of Guam (UOG).
2. Completion of one of the following graduate degrees:
 - i) MS in Tropical Conservation Biology and Environmental Science at the UHH, or

- ii) MS or PhD in Marine Biology at UHM, or
- iii) MS or PhD in Sustainable Fisheries at UHM, or
- iv) MS in Marine Science at HPU, or
- v) MS in Biology at the UOG.

Eligibility Requirements

All Applicants

1. Be a U.S. citizen or national with strong ties to American Samoa, Guam or the CNMI;
2. Have been accepted to attend or currently attend one of the undergraduate or graduate programs listed for the 2026-2027 academic year;
3. Have demonstrated interest and/or previous work or involvement with fisheries, coral reef conservation or related fields; and
4. Commit to employment for two years (one year for each scholarship year) with the American Samoa Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources (DMWR), Guam Department of Agriculture (DoAg) or the CNMI Department of Lands and Natural Resources (DLNR), commencing within one year after completion of the degree for which the scholarship was provided. Recipients must remain in communication with the Council until the degree and service requirements are fulfilled. A recipient who discontinues the university program without completing the degree or does not fulfill the required work commitment may be required to repay scholarship funds used up to that point in accordance with the scholarship contract.

Additional Requirements for Undergraduate Students

1. Have successfully completed the freshman and sophomore years of college with a grade point average of 3.5 or above; and
2. Be available for an 8- to 10-week paid internship in Hawai'i.

Eligibility Documents

All Applicants

1. Complete the accompanying fillable PDF scholarship application and submit a two-page essay using the prompt provided in the application; and
2. Submit two letters of recommendation from individuals who can speak to the applicant's overall ability, likelihood of success in the applicable program of study and commitment to working in a local fisheries-related agency for two years after completing the degree.

Undergraduate Students

1. Provide an official college transcript of classes completed to date; and
2. Submit one recommendation letter from a college instructor and one from a community leader.

Graduate Students

1. Provide an official undergraduate college/university transcript and, if relevant, a graduate-level university transcript; and
2. Submit two recommendation letters from professors, employers and/or community leaders.

A completed fillable PDF application, essay and all other required eligibility documents must be received by **FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2026**, and may be submitted either by mail or email.

By mail: Send all application materials to Kitty M. Simonds, Executive Director, Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council, 1164 Bishop Street, Suite 1400, Honolulu, HI 96813. Recommendation letters must be included in sealed envelopes with each author's signature across the closing flap.

By email: Send all application materials to info@wpcouncil.org. Recommendation letters must be emailed separately and directly by the authors to info@wpcouncil.org.

It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that all required materials, including recommendation letters, are received by the Council by the deadline.

Preference will be given to students with an estimated two years (or less) until graduation. Final selection is contingent upon the recipient signing an advising agreement and a scholarship contract that sets out the academic progress, communication, post-graduation service and repayment requirements of the award.

Questions? Contact Amy Vandehey at info@wpcouncil.org or phone (808) 522-6040.



APPLICANT AND ACADEMIC INFORMATION

Complete this form electronically. Save a copy for your records and submit it with all required eligibility documents.

Applicant Information

Date:			
Name:			
Age:			
Date of Birth:		Phone:	
Mailing Address:			
Email:			

Academic Information

College/university attended:	
Location of college/university:	
Current cumulative GPA:	
Extracurricular activities:	
Current/previous employment and position title:	



WESTERN PACIFIC REGIONAL FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

2026-2027 U.S. Pacific Territories Fishery Capacity-Building Scholarship Application

PROGRAM, PARENT/GUARANTOR AND ESSAY INFORMATION

Program Information

University accepted/currently attending:

Degree program:

Anticipated number of years until graduation:

Connection to American Samoa, Guam or the CNMI:

Parent/Guarantor Information

Parent/Guarantor name:

Parent/Guarantor address:

Parent/Guarantor phone:

Parent/Guarantor email:

Essay Prompt

On a separate page (or pages), write a two-page essay describing your reasons for pursuing the degree chosen for this scholarship. Special emphasis should be placed on the experiences that have prepared you for the intense work required and your motivations and inspirations to undertake the professional training that will allow you to effectively contribute to sustainable resource management back home.

Applicant Certification

I certify that the information provided in this application and in all supporting documents is true and complete to the best of my knowledge. I acknowledge that, if selected, I will be required to sign and comply with a separate scholarship contract and advising agreement outlining the academic, communication, service and repayment requirements of the award. I understand that false or misleading information may result in disqualification from scholarship consideration.

Applicant signature:

Date:



WESTERN PACIFIC REGIONAL FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

2026-2027 U.S. Pacific Territories Fishery Capacity-Building Scholarship Application

ELIGIBILITY DOCUMENTS CHECKLISTS

Select the checklist that applies to your level of study. Confirm that each required item is included before submitting the application package, or note if the recommendation letters will be submitted separately before the deadline.

Undergraduate Student

- ☐ Completed scholarship application.
- ☐ Two-page essay using the essay prompt on page 2.
- ☐ Official college transcript of classes completed to date.
- ☐ Letter of recommendation from a college instructor.
- ☐ Letter of recommendation from a community leader.

Graduate Student

- ☐ Completed scholarship application.
- ☐ Two-page essay using the essay prompt on page 2.
- ☐ Official undergraduate college/university transcript.
- ☐ Graduate-level university transcript, if relevant.
- ☐ First letter of recommendation from a professor, employer and/or community leader.
- ☐ Second letter of recommendation from a professor, employer and/or community leader.

Recommendation letters: The two recommenders should be able to speak to your overall ability, likelihood of your success in an undergraduate or graduate program of study and commitment to working in a local fisheries-related agency for two years upon completion of the higher education degree.



Letter of Recommendation for 2026-2027 US Pacific Territories Fishery Capacity-Building Scholarship Applicant

The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council and its Education Committee have determined that it would significantly benefit the Territory of American Samoa, Territory of Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) if residents from their own islands were educated and employed to serve in the local fishery-related agencies. People who were raised in the islands have an intimate understanding of the traditional and unique cultures and societies and the integral part that fisheries plays in them. They have a vested ancestral interest and cultural commitment to ensure the health of the fishery resources and their use to sustain local communities. They are also more likely to remain as long-term residents and employees in the islands, unlike employees who are recruited from outside.

The Education Committee is comprised of representatives from the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Pacific Islands Regional Office, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, University of Hawai'i at Hilo, Hawai'i Pacific University, American Samoa Community College, University of Guam, Northern Marianas College, American Samoa, Guam and CNMI Departments of Education, American Samoa Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources, Guam Department of Agriculture and the CNMI Department of Lands and Natural Resources.

The aspiration of the Council and the Education Committee is to build the capacity of American Samoa, Guam and the CNMI to effectively manage their fisheries and related resources by employing people from the local communities.

Two letters of recommendation are required. For an undergraduate applicant, one letter must be from a college instructor and one from a community leader. For a graduate applicant, letters may be from professors, employers and/or community leaders. Letters should be either mailed to Kitty M. Simonds, Executive Director, Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council, 1164 Bishop Street, Suite 1400, Honolulu, HI 96813, or emailed to info@wpcouncil.org.

Deadline to receive all application materials is FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2026.

If the applicant is mailing the application package, include your recommendation letter in a sealed envelope with your signature across the closing flap.

If the applicant is emailing the application package, email your recommendation letter directly to info@wpcouncil.org. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure the letter is received at the Council office by the deadline.

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In your own words, please explain why you think this student is deserving of a U.S. Pacific Territories Fishery Capacity-Building Scholarship. Address the student's overall abilities, likelihood of success in the applicable undergraduate or graduate program, reliability and willingness to communicate with the Council if academic circumstances change, and commitment to completing the degree and working in a local fisheries-related agency for two years after graduation.