Minnesota Department of Education

Minnesota Scholars of Distinction

Scholars of Distinction: Applied Geography Program Overview

Program Criteria

Applied Geography, for purposes of the Minnesota Scholars of Distinction, is defined by the knowledge and skills that must be exhibited by the applicant. Students must demonstrate skills necessary to identify, access, analyze and present complex geographic information. They are able to define and use the vocabulary specific to geography; distinguish between factual evidence, speculation, and hypothesis; recognize the nature and importance of spatial relationships; and specify and evaluate alternatives to geographic issues based on available data.

Each applicant is expected to pursue the study of geography to develop understanding of interactions between people and their environments by applying concepts and skills of spatial analysis to real-world issues in human geography.

Assessment Elements

The assessment process will involve three reviewers that will use an established rubric to evaluate evidence of geography in action, the impact of the project and the academic foundations of geography the applicant has acquired. (See rubric at end of document.)

Project Specifics

Applicants must submit a research-based applied geography project demonstrating scholarly excellence and personal experience. View the Scholars of Distinction Important Dates document for the current award cycle timeline.

Project is to be submitted electronically in a format that is clearly organized. The content must include all of the following items (see below for more details):

- Annotated K-12 resume, with testimonials
- Personal statement
- Project development narrative
- Project content
- Annotated bibliography and reflective essay
- Documentation of public presentation of project

Personal Statements and Supporting Documents

1. Annotated K-12 Resume

- Describe the pathways and experiences that have led the scholar to qualify as a Scholar of Distinction in Applied Geography.
- List educational experiences that prepared the scholar for excellence in applied geography including specific coursework or training and independent studies.
- Identify engagement with geography and the development of skills and understanding.
- Word-process and follow a resume format.

2. Testimonials (included in resume)

- Identify two individuals familiar with the scholar's research and actions related to the project.
- Obtain permission and submit the individuals' names, positions or titles, telephone numbers and a sentence on why each person was identified.
- Contact may be made with these individuals at the discretion of the reviewers.

3. Personal Statement of one to two pages

- Include a personal description of applied geography and the importance of this area of study in terms of past experience, present studies and future goals.
- Include a clear explanation of how and why the scholar chose the project goal(s) and the research and actions taken to accomplish the goal(s).
- Word-process and double-space.

4. Project Development Narrative of two to three pages

- Describe the scholar's significant commitment, project's goal(s) and objective(s), challenges and successes.
- Include key project components, clearly organized and labeled.
- Review personal growth as well as the project's impact on others.
- Scan in supporting material and place within narrative or reference and use as addendum(s). Examples may include PowerPoint presentations, photos, press notices, event programs or web addresses that link the reviewer to student-prepared material.
- Include any project logs, journals, reports and a self-evaluation.
- Conclude narrative with recommendations for others seeking to replicate the project.
- Word-process and double-space.

Project Content

1. Project Content

The final format of this project may take the written or visual form that best represents the student's research and analysis. The format chosen must be appropriate to the student's subject matter, and must serve as a tool for binding the student's research and accumulated geographic skills together. The student's final project itself, or a portfolio of the project's components, must be provided.

Project content will demonstrate knowledge of:

- A broad range of geographic subject matter.
- Geography as the study of space and spatial relationships.
- Geography as fundamental to understanding change in physical and human environments.
- The vocabulary of geography as used in oral, written and graphic communication.
- Research-based methods for acquiring and presenting information.

Project will demonstrate that the scholar is able to:

- Apply the principles of geography to real-life situations.
- Interpret interactions between physical and human environments.
- Use the concept of global interdependence to evaluate the local area and the location of economic and cultural activities.
- Use the concept of region as a principle to organize a geographic understanding of the world.
- Relate geographic concepts to topics in other subject areas and diverse contexts.
- Exhibit well-developed geographic skills.
- Ask geographic questions and pose geographic problems.
- Acquire and organize geographic information.

- Answer geographic questions and propose solutions.
- Communicate answers and solutions to problems using a style and form appropriate to the audience, purpose and situation.

2. Annotated Bibliography and one-page essay

- Prepare an annotated bibliography with a substantial number of readings that provide depth and breadth to scholars understanding of geography. Citations and annotation formats must be consistent.
- Reflect on the readings and prepare a one-page essay on how the readings influenced the project's intent and components.
- Word-process and follow a structured format.

3. Documentation of public presentation of the project

- Document public presentation(s) to audience(s) outside classroom or school environment. Examples may include organization with an interest or stake in the project, a civic group or peer education. Documentation may include PowerPoint presentations, scripts, outlines, photos, programs and videos.
- Include evidence of feedback, review or evaluation and personal reflection.

Consultation

Applied Geography project consultants are available through the Center for Social Studies Education. Contact Jessica Ellison at csse@mnhs.org or (651) 259-3427.

The Minnesota Alliance for Geographic Education (MAGE) is a valuable resource for students conducting research related to Applied Geography. MAGE is an organization of educators and professionals who share a commitment to quality education and the expansion of geography education.

For more information, visit http://www.macalester.edu/geography/mage/

Submission process

1. Open the online survey and complete Intent to Apply.
2. View the Scholars of Distinction Important Dates document for the current award cycle timeline.
3. Submit an official transcript via U.S. Mail to Wendy Behrens, Minnesota Department of Education / 1500 Highway 36 West / Roseville, MN 55113. Transcript must be a certified copy sent directly from the applicant's school and must be received by the project deadline.

   If a transcript is not available, contact Wendy Behrens at (651) 582-8786 regarding alternative evidence that demonstrates the required knowledge base.

4. Complete the elements listed under "Project Specifics", label each document clearly and e-mail in PDF format to Wendy Behrens at wendy.behrens@state.mn.us.

Scholars of Distinction Applied Geography Scoring Rubric follows this document

Minnesota Scholars of Distinction

Rubric for Evaluation of Applicants for the Minnesota Scholars of Distinction in Geography

Criterion	Components reflect a level of DISTINCTION	Components reflect a level of HONORABLE MENTION	Components reflect a level of AVERAGE	Components do not qualify
Personal Statement **(1 to 2 pages)** **10 points**	**Clear and convincing articulation** of importance of geography in terms of past experience, present studies and future goals. Scholar **clearly and strongly demonstrates** the development of skills over time. The work is **articulate** and shows a longstanding **commitment** to research in and application of geographic knowledge and skills.	**Substantial** evidence of importance of geography in terms of past experience, present studies and future goals. Scholar **clearly demonstrates** development of skills over time. The work is well-written, and shows a longstanding commitment to research in and application of geographic knowledge and skills.	**Average and predictable** evidence of importance of geography in terms of past experience, present studies and future goals. Scholar demonstrates the development of **some skills over time**. The work shows commitment to a weak or small research project.	**Sketchy or undeveloped** overview of importance of geography in terms of past experience, present studies and future goals. Scholar has **not demonstrated** the development of some skills over time. The work does not show commitment to researching the project or the skills to do so.
Annotated K-12 **Resume** **10 points**	Resume reflects education and experiences that have led the student to **excel** in geography research and application. Academic studies and activities have contributed **to significant growth** of geographic knowledge and skills. Resume preparation demonstrates **superior** quality for a high school student.	Resume reflects education and experiences that have led the student to **succeed** in geography research and application. Academic studies and activities have contributed to **substantial growth** of geographic knowledge and skills. Resume preparation demonstrates **satisfactory** quality for a high school student.	Resume reflects education and experiences that have led the student to **engage** in geography research and application. Academic studies and activities **have contributed** to geographic knowledge and skills. Resume preparation demonstrates **average** quality for a high school student.	Resume reflects education and experiences that have led to geography research and application. Academic studies and activities have **limited** contribution to geographic knowledge and skills. Resume preparation demonstrates **poor** quality for a high school student.

Criterion	Components reflect a level of DISTINCTION	Components reflect a level of HONORABLE MENTION	Components reflect a level of AVERAGE	Components do not qualify
Annotated Bibliography and one page Essay 10 points	**Extensive** annotated bibliography of readings that support a broad and comprehensive study of project components. The **essay** shows a **superior understanding** of the impact the research has had on scholar and others. The writing reflects **superior** quality for a high school student.	**Substantial** annotated bibliography of readings showing a broad and comprehensive study of project components. The **essay** shows a **positive understanding** of the impact the research has had on scholar and others. The writing reflects **high** quality for a high school student.	**Average** annotated bibliography of readings that shows a limited study of project components. The **essay** shows **some understanding** of the impact the research has had on scholar and others. The writing reflects **average** quality for a high school student.	**Undeveloped** annotated bibliography of readings that show a cursory study of project components. The **essay** shows **a weak connection** of the impact the research has had on scholar and others. The writing reflects **poor** quality for a high school student.
Project Narrative 40 points	**Significant evidence** presented that the scholar **knows and is able to use** key concepts and apply geography methods, as identified in the Project Narrative component of the Project Specifics. **Clear and convincing evidence** the scholar conducted a valid study including a **comprehensive and concise summary** of research and activities.	**Strong evidence** presented that the scholar **knows and is able to use** concepts and apply geography as identified in the Project Narrative component of the Project Specifics. **Substantial evidence** the scholar conducted a valid study including a **comprehensive and concise summary** of research and activities.	**Evidence** presented that the scholar **knows and is able to use** key concepts and apply geography as identified in the Project Narrative component of the Project Specifics. **Some evidence** of scholarly research and activities is provided and process is unclear. .	**Lack of evidence** that the scholar **knows and is able to use** key concepts and apply geography as identified in the Project Narrative component of the Project Specifics. Evidence of research and activities provided were **not organized** to inform the reader.
Project Narrative 10 points	A **superior** approach to the project over an **appropriate** period of time. An **innovative or creative** project approach, content and methodology.	A **valid** approach to the project problem over an **appropriate** period of time. An **innovative or creative** project approach, content and methodology.	A **limited** approach to the project problem over a **short** period of time. A **narrow** project approach, content and methodology. **Limited relevant** information and materials were included but reliability may be an issue	A **sketchy** approach to the project problem over a **short** period of time. An ordinary project approach, content and methodology.

Criterion	Components reflect a level of DISTINCTION	Components reflect a level of HONORABLE MENTION	Components reflect a level of AVERAGE	Components do not qualify
Project Narrative (Continue 10 point value)	**Only relevant** information and supporting materials were included and reliability was assessed. **Thoughtful reflection** on the process, future research and **recommendations** for others seeking to replicate are included. Organization and writing reflects **superior** quality for a high school student.	**Relevant** information and materials were included and reliability was assessed. **Reflection** on the process, future research and **recommendations** for others seeking to replicate are included. Organization and writing reflects **high** quality for a high school student.	**Limited reflection** and **recommendations** for others seeking to replicate the process are included. Organization and writing reflects **average** quality for a high school student.	Relevance of information and supporting materials was **not apparent.** Reflection and recommendations for others seeking to replicate were **not included.** Organization and writing reflects **poor** quality for a high school student.
Project Presentation **15 points**	Scholar made a **public presentation**, created a **strong method** to assess feedback received, and has **reflected** on the process with maturity and objectivity.	Scholar made a **public presentation**, created a **satisfactory method** to assess feedback received, and has **reflected** on the process with maturity and objectivity.	Scholar made a **public presentation** and created a **weak** method to assess feedback received**. Little reflection** on the process was evident.	Scholar made a **presentation** with limited feedback. **Little or no reflection** on the presentation was evident.
Testimonials **5 points**	Identification and contact information provided.	Identification and contact information provided.	Identification and contact information was limited.	Identification and contact information was not provided.

Reviewer's Comments:

Level of Recommendation:

_____Project reflects a level of **DISTINCTION**

_____Project reflects a level of **HONORABLE MENTION**

_____Project reflects a level of **AVERAGE**

_____Project does not qualify for recognition