

2025-2026 APPLICATION PACKET

QUINTANA-STERKEL EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIP

CULTIVATING A DIVERSE FUTURE FOR OUR NATIONAL TREASURES

Paving the Way:

A Guide to the Ernest Quintana— Marty Sterkel Education Scholarship



Ernest "Ernie" Quintana



Marty Sterkel

The *Ernest Quintana—Marty Sterkel Education Scholarship* supports young adults pursuing careers that increase diversity in the workforce.

Scholarships are awarded to those working with the National Park Service (NPS), similar government agencies, and nonprofit heritage conservation organizations.

Ernest "Ernie" Quintana held an illustrious 41-year career with the NPS, including a wide array of positions from ranger to associate regional director of partnerships. Quintana created the scholarship with the late Marty Sterkel, whose equally distinguished 33-year career included his role as associate director of national resources, science, and partnerships in the NPS' Midwest region.

This scholarship continues Quintana and Sterkel's dedicated work bringing diverse communities to the national parks across the country.

Read the history of the scholarship

General Information

Western National Parks Association, also referred to as <u>Western National Parks</u> (WNP), invites you to explore this opportunity,

Eligibility

This scholarship is open to high school, undergraduate, and graduate students who are pursuing or planning careers with the NPS, similar government agencies, or nonprofit heritage conservation organizations. Applicants must be committed to increasing diversity and inclusion in these fields and must have demonstrated their interest through internships, volunteer work, coursework, or other relevant experience within the NPS or similar organizations.

Award Details

Two \$2,500 scholarships will be awarded. Full payment will be processed within 14 business days upon electronic acceptance of the award.

Funds must be used for educational expenses directly related to park management or conservation, including internships, college tuition, training programs, certifications, research, educational materials, books, and equipment. All activities must have a defined start and end date, with the end date occurring after the application submission deadline of December 31, 2025.

WNP may contact recipients in the future for updates on educational progress and the impact of the scholarship.

Submissions

Complete your application at <u>WNP | Scholarships</u>. You must submit a completed online application form and a letter of recommendation from a professional reference. Applications submitted in any other format will not be accepted. If you do not have access to a computer, please contact the Program Administrator listed below.

Selection Process and Timeline

Program criteria have been established by WNP. Submissions are reviewed and scored by a committee of WNP board members and executive leadership. WNP ensures fair consideration and equal opportunity for all applicants.

Applications Open: October 1, 2025 Application Deadline: December 31, 2025 (end of day) Recipients Notified: Week of February 16, 2026

Program Administrator

Please direct any questions regarding this program to Julie Tainter, senior business services manager, at julie.tainter@wnp.org.

Applicant Toolkit

Before Starting Your Application

- Sample Application Form: Review all questions and requirements (page 4).
- <u>Evaluation Criteria</u>: See how applications are scored.
- Sample Award Letter: View what recipients sign upon selection.
- About WNP: Learn about our mission and partner parks.
- Past Recipients: Meet scholarship alumni and read their stories.

What You'll Need:

- Information about your educational background and park affiliation or internship.
- Prior experience as a volunteer, intern, or seasonal employee with the NPS or similar organization.
- Contact details for a professional reference who can speak to your qualifications.
- Thoughtful responses to application questions (see word limits in sample application, next page).
- Letter of recommendation (see format and naming convention in sample application, next page).

Tips for a Strong Application

- **Prepare Thoughtfully:** Review all application questions in advance and prepare responses that clearly demonstrate your commitment to increasing diversity.
- **Be Specific:** Use concrete examples from your experience as a volunteer, intern, or seasonal employee to illustrate your points.
- **Connect to the Mission:** Clearly explain how your background and goals align with creating positive experiences for diverse audiences in national parks and heritage conservation.
- **Professional Reference:** Choose someone who knows your work or academic performance well and can speak to your qualifications and potential impact.

Learn more about WNP's Awards, Grants, and Scholarship program.



Sample Application

The information below serves as a guideline for preparing applications. All applications must be submitted electronically via <u>WNP | Quintana-Sterkel Scholarship</u>. Responses are limited to the space provided on the form; applications submitted in any other format will not be accepted. If you do not have access to a computer and would like to submit an application, please contact the Program Administrator (see page 2).

PART ONE: Tell Us about Yourself, Applicant Information

- Name, address, city, state, zip, phone, email
- University or college name, major or area of study
 Note: High school students may list intended college/major or TBD if undecided.
- Park affiliation or park adjacent affiliation, job title, or role (e.g., intern, seasonal employee, etc.)
- Internship or program name, start date, end date
 Note: Completion date **must be after** the application submission date.
- Supervisor name, phone, email

PART TWO: Complete the Application

- If selected for this scholarship, specify how you plan to use the funds. Response up to 150 words.
- Describe your prior experience as a volunteer, intern, or seasonal employee for the National Park Service or a similar organization. Response up to 150 words.
- Explain how this scholarship will help you create positive experiences for diverse audiences to appreciate and support natural and cultural resources in the park, your local neighborhood, and beyond. Response up to 250 words.
- Outline how natural and cultural heritage relates to you personally. Response up to 250 words.
- Summarize how this scholarship supports your future career goals in park management or conservation. Response up to 200 words.
- If you are a member of an underrepresented group, explain how your work might impact your home community. For example, Black, African American, Asian American, Mexican American, Chicanx, Latinx, Hispanic, American Indian, Puerto Rican, or other. Response up to 250 words.
- If selected for this scholarship, share what that would mean to you. Response up to 150 words.

PART THREE: Required Upload

- Letter of recommendation
 - One-page letter of recommendation from a professional reference.
 - File must be a PDF.
 - Before uploading, name the file as follows: applicant firstname.lastname.qs.
 Example: john.smith.qs

Sample Application

PART FOUR: Terms and Conditions

- By submitting your application, you give Western National Parks Association consent to use the name and information you provided for public relations and fundraising in any media now or hereafter known, including, but not limited to, digital and print. If you provide photos and/or videos, all applicants grant an irrevocable perpetual, worldwide, nonexclusive license to Western National Parks Association, to reproduce, distribute, display, and create derivative works of the image in connection with Western National Parks Association, in any media now or hereafter known, including but not limited to digital and print.
- If selected, recipients receive full payment upon electronic acceptance of the grant award. Recipients may be contacted for updates on educational progress and scholarship impact.

Check to confirm the statement: ___I, the applicant, have read and accept the stated terms and conditions.

HOW DID YOU HEAR ABOUT THIS AWARD?

Select all that apply: WNP website, National Park Service, WNP staff, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, WNP email, Coworker, State/National print or digital article, Other.

Submit an application