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wnp.org



2026-2027 APPLICATION PACKET

QUINTANA-STERKEL

EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIP

CULTIVATING FUTURE STEWARDS OF OUR NATIONAL TREASURES

October 6, 2026

Paving the Way: A Guide to the Ernest Quintana— Marty Sterkel Education Scholarship



Ernest "Ernie" Quintana

Western National Parks Association, known as [Western National Parks](#) (WNP), invites you to explore the Quintana—Sterkel Education Scholarship opportunity.

This scholarship supports young adults pursuing careers that increase diversity in the public lands workforce, including the National Park Service (NPS), similar government agencies, and nonprofit heritage conservation organizations.



Marty Sterkel

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 broad communities to the national parks across the country.

[Read the history of the scholarship](#)

General Information

Eligibility

This scholarship is intended for high school seniors and current undergraduate and graduate students who are pursuing or planning careers in the NPS, similar government agencies, or nonprofit heritage conservation organizations. Applicants must be committed to increasing diversity in the public lands workforce and expanding access to national parks.

Applicants are expected to have completed, or be currently in, an internship, structured volunteer program, or seasonal position with the NPS, a park-adjacent organization, or a similar organization. Each should have a defined role, set dates, and a supervisor or coordinator. Applicants without this experience are welcome to apply, but may be less competitive in the selection process.

Award Details

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

Use of Funds: Funds must be used for educational expenses directly related to park management or conservation, including internships, college or university tuition, training or certification programs, and other educational opportunities such as workshops or field courses. Funds support upcoming opportunities and do not reimburse past expenses or activities that have already been completed. Conferences, organization memberships, books, materials, and equipment are not eligible. All funded activities must have a defined start date and an estimated completion date, and the estimated completion date cannot be on or prior to February 21, 2027. An opportunity you are currently in may be funded if it continues beyond that date.

Follow-Up: WNP may contact recipients for updates on educational progress and scholarship impact.

Submissions

Complete your application at [WNP | Scholarships](#). You must submit a completed online application form and a signed letter of recommendation from a professional reference, on organization letterhead if available. The letter must be a PDF, and a scanned or electronic signature is acceptable. Applications submitted in any other format will not be accepted. If you do not have access to a computer, please contact the Program Administrator on page 3.

Selection Process and Timeline

Program criteria have been established by WNP. Submissions are reviewed and scored by a WNP Selection Committee. The selection process ensures fair consideration and equal opportunity for all applicants.

Applications Open: October 6, 2026

Application Deadline: December 11, 2026 (end of day)

Recipients Notified: Week of February 15, 2027

Program Administrator

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

Applicant Toolkit

Before Starting Your Application

- [Sample Application Form](#): Review all questions and requirements
- [Evaluation Criteria](#): See how applications are scored
- [Navigating the Online Application](#): Pointers for using the online application
- [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 school or program, and your internship, structured volunteer program, or seasonal position.
- Details about the opportunity this scholarship will support, including the name, dates, and a contact person.
- If you are currently in an opportunity that continues after February 21, 2027, it can serve as both your experience and the opportunity this scholarship will support.
- A signed letter of recommendation from a professional reference, saved as a PDF (see format and naming convention in sample application).

Tips for a Strong Application

- **Prepare Thoughtfully:** Review all application questions in advance and prepare responses that clearly demonstrate your commitment to increasing diversity in the public lands workforce and expanding access to national parks.
- **Be Specific:** Use concrete examples from your internship, volunteer program, or seasonal position 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.

*For more information about this program and past recipients,
visit [WNP | Awards, Grants, and Scholarships](#).*

Learn more about Western National Parks at wnp.org.

[Submit your Quintana—Sterkel Education Scholarship Application Now!](#)