



Public Interest/Public Service (PIPS) Scholarship Application Overview and Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

The Scholarship Deadline

The application deadline for the PIPS Scholarship Program is January 15 at 11:59 PM EST. NOTE: This deadline for the scholarship is earlier than the deadline for general admission. Both the scholarship application and the full general admissions application must be received by the January 15th deadline in order to be considered for the scholarship. The general admissions application and PIPS Scholarship Application must be submitted electronically.

Overview of the PIPS Scholarship Selection Process

First, American University Washington College of Law's Committee on Admissions reviews PIPS Scholarship Applicants for general admission. Then, if the applicant is accepted into the full-time JD program, that person's admissions and PIPS applications will be forwarded to the PIPS Scholarship Selection Committee. PIPS applications are reviewed on a rolling basis after the January deadline, but scholarship offers may not be finalized until early to mid-April.

Tips for Completing Essay/Short Answer Questions

- Q. Is the 1-2 page limit the amount of space allowed for both questions, or per question?**
- A. Essay responses are limited to two pages total. It is recommended to spend about one full page (single-spaced, 12 point font) on each.
- Q. What if I am still unsure what I want to do after law school?**
- A. There is no requirement that you know *exactly* what you plan to do with your career when you finish law school in order to apply for the PIPS scholarship. Indeed, many scholars arrive with one public service oriented goal and change their focus over time to a different public service field. If you are unable to pinpoint a particular field at the time of application, you should discuss the various fields and issues that you are interested in exploring during law school.
- Q. What kinds of contributions to the scholarship program are you seeking?**
- A. Each class of PIPS scholars has a unique group dynamic fostered by the various backgrounds and interests of the individual members. This question is another opportunity to provide the selection committee with information about who you are and what you are interested in. For example, you might talk about more about your background and skills or about how you want to use the scholarship to take your education and professional experience in a new direction during law school. Ask yourself, what can I contribute to meeting the legal needs of underserved groups?

Tips for the Video Question

Q. Why are you asking me to do a video?

A. We would like to give you the opportunity to express yourself, and demonstrate your commitment both to public interest/service and to becoming a PIPS scholar at AUWCL.

Q. What if I am unable or unwilling to do a video?

A. Submission of a video is strongly recommended. However, any applicant who is unable or unwilling to appear on video may instead answer the question “What does public interest leadership mean to you, and how have you pursued such leadership?” *in writing*, and include the written answer along with the other two required written essays. In that case, the answers to all essay questions should not exceed three pages total (see above).

Q. Where should I record my online video interview?

A. We recommend finding a place with a good internet connection that is free from distractions. We anticipate many of you will use a webcam or your smart phone. Again, this is not intended to be a high quality production. Rather, think of it more like answering an interview question.

Q. I am experiencing technical difficulties with the video upload, who should I contact?

A. If you have technical questions related to the video portion of the application, email pipsvideos@wcl.american.edu.

Tips for Your Letter of Recommendation

Q. What should be included in the optional letter of recommendation?

A. Law school applicants often submit letters from academic references for their general admission application. For this reason, the PIPS Scholarship allows one additional letter to be submitted addressing the candidate’s public service experience and intention to utilize their law degree to further pursue public interest/service work. Ideally, someone who has supervised you in a professional setting and is familiar with your dedication to public service will write the letter. The letter should highlight your professional skills, public service dedication and fitness for law school and legal practice.

Q. How should the optional letter of recommendation be submitted?

A. Recommenders should send their letter directly to the law school either by mail or email.

Office of Admissions
Attn: PIPS Selection Committee
American University Washington College of Law
4300 Nebraska Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20016

Email Address: wclresponse@wcl.american.edu. Email submissions must be received directly from the recommender’s email address.

Other Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Who is on the PIPS Scholarship Selection Committee?

A. The PIPS Scholarship Selection Committee is comprised of AUWCL faculty and staff members and one or more third-year PIPS Scholars.

Q. What Does the PIPS Scholarship Selection Committee Look for?

A. The Committee looks for academically strong applicants whose backgrounds demonstrate a substantial commitment to public service and who have experience, characteristics, and credentials to become effective public interest and public service lawyers. Public service work may take the form of volunteer or paid work in high school, during undergraduate or graduate study or through full-time employment. Applicants should highlight any direct-service (client-centered) public service work in which they have participated. Most scholars have spent some time working in the public interest/public service sector after receiving their undergraduate degree. This is not necessary, but it helps to highlight in your application any sustained hands-on public service work you have done over time.

Q. What counts as public service? Does government work count?

A. The selection committee embraces a broad definition of public service, which includes, but is not limited to, work with nonprofits or non-governmental organizations; local, state or Federal government employment; and private public interest enterprise.

Q. Will the scholarship selection committee receive my general admissions application? Will they receive my general admissions essay?

A. Yes, the PIPS Scholarship Selection Committee will receive your scholarship application materials, LSAC report (letters of recommendation, LSAT scores, and transcripts), and your regular admissions application and essay. The PIPS selection committee reviews your other letters of recommendation as well. However, because the PIPS application asks you to answer specific questions about your public interest commitment, career goals and leadership potential—the PIPS Scholarship Selection Committee is unlikely to read your general admissions essay.

Q. How does the scholarship affect other financial aid?

A. Scholarship recipients may apply for other restricted scholarships as well as federal and private loans to cover cost of living while in law school. Recipients are not eligible for need based grants offered by the law school.

Q. What do PIPS Scholars do after graduation?

A. PIPS Scholars arrive at WCL with a variety of backgrounds and interests including environmental activism, women's rights, civil rights, international human rights, labor and employment law, criminal justice reform and juvenile justice. As graduates, they continue to work on social justice issues as nonprofit staff attorneys, policy advocates, government attorneys and litigators in public interest law firms. Many PIPS graduates receive prestigious postgraduate fellowships, government honors program positions and federal or state clerkships.