



UNIVERSITY of
SOUTH FLORIDA

NATIONAL MERIT GUIDE



DISCOVER USF'S
NATIONAL MERIT
SCHOLARSHIP
PROGRAM



Priceless Benefits for NMS Finalists

A mountain of student debt? Couldn't be you!

USF's National Merit Scholars receive a combination of scholarships that covers the entire cost of attendance, including tuition, room and board.

Florida Residents

Scholarship covering the full cost of attendance during fall and spring semesters. Includes:

- Benacquisto Scholarship
- National Merit Award
- USF National Merit Tradition of Excellence Award (\$20,000/\$5,000 per year)
- Study abroad scholarship (USF Passport Scholarship - \$2,000)

Non-Florida Residents

Scholarship covering your full cost of undergraduate attendance during fall and spring semesters for four years toward a bachelor's degree. Includes:

- USF Golden Achievement Scholarship
- National Merit Award
- Study abroad scholarship (USF Passport Scholarship - \$2,000)

We're Invested in Your Success

All finalists who designate USF as their first-choice college also exclusively receive:

- Automatic admission to the Judy Genshaft Honors College
- On-campus housing in our Judy Genshaft Honors College Living-Learning Community (LLC application required)
- Designated National Merit Scholars contact to support you throughout your USF journey
- Research opportunities early in your USF journey
- Help finding and securing internships
- Expert advisors setting you up for prestigious national and international awards
- Leadership development and mentoring by faculty and community leaders

Where the Brightest Minds Shape the Future

National Merit Scholars thrive at USF! Our top-ranked, preeminent, AAU-member university is a nucleus of discovery, providing a forward-thinking, well-rounded education that prepares scholars to create an impact. Pursue your unique passions while surrounded by an attentive support team, and do it without worrying about the cost, because **National Merit Scholars enjoy a fully funded college experience at USF.**

A World of Possibilities Awaits

You already know that USF has world-class beaches, a vibrant art scene, professional sports and outdoor adventures in our backyard, but Tampa Bay has even more to offer:

- Booming artificial intelligence and technology hub
- #4 Best City to Start a Career (WalletHub, 2026)
- National leader in cybersecurity
- #4 College City in the U.S. (WalletHub, 2026)

And if you want to explore the world? USF has that covered, too.

- 80+ study abroad programs
- 130+ countries represented in our student body

A Prestigious Honors College

Do more and go further than you ever dreamed with automatic admission to the Judy Genshaft Honors College, where you can

- Experience college in a community of high achievers like you
- Go beyond the classroom with experiential learning opportunities
- Study abroad with honors-specific cohorts

Change the world faster with our accelerated programs.

- 7-Year B.S./M.D.
- 7-Year B.S./Pharm.D.
- 3+3 Bachelor's/J.D. Program

TOP 25 AMONG U.S. PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

— *Niche Top Public Universities in America, 2027*

TOP 50 AMONG U.S. PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

— *U.S. News and World Report National University Rankings, 2027 and Forbes America's Top Colleges, 2027*

TOP 16 MEDICAL SCHOOL IN THE U.S.

AND NAMED HIGHEST TIER OF MEDICAL SCHOOLS IN THE NATION.

— *U.S. News and World Report, 2026*

USF RECORD \$750M
IN RESEARCH FUNDING IN 2025



National Merit Semifinalists Next Steps

Now that you're a Semifinalist, follow these steps for the best chance of success.*

1 Apply to USF

Go to admissions.usf.edu/scholars and submit your application.

2 Submit Required Materials to USF

Your USF application is not complete until you submit required supporting materials (STARS, \$30 application fee, etc.). See our submission deadlines at admissions.usf.edu/dates

3 Maintain an Excellent Academic Record

Continue to demonstrate academic excellence in all courses, including dual enrollment.

4 Complete the NMSC Finalist Application

Before the **October** deadline, go to osa.nationalmerit.org and create an account with the NMSC to submit your finalist application and all required materials.

5 Send SAT or ACT Scores to NMSC

NMSC will accept your best composite score on either the SAT or ACT through the **December** test date. Update or send new scores through the College Board at sat.collegeboard.org or through ACT at act.org.

6 Learn You Have Been Selected as a National Merit Finalist

NMSC will notify all Finalists of their status in **February**.

7 Name USF as Your First-Choice College

NMSC requires you to name your first-choice college; ensure you've named USF. You can change your first-choice college before the **May** deadline by logging in to your NMSC application.



8 Accept College Award Offer

In **May**, NMSC will begin mailing College Sponsored award letters from partnering institutions to Finalist recipients. If USF is named your first choice, you'll receive a letter from us. Accept it by the deadline — usually **June**.

**Information is subject to change based on updates from the National Merit Corporation.*

Don't Take Our Word for It

Hear what Natalie, a USF National Merit Scholar, has to say about her experience.

“USF is helping me reach my college and future career goals by setting me up for success with a variety of different experiences.”



admissions.usf.edu/nms-natalie

Let's Continue This Conversation

Questions? We've Got Answers

If you still have questions about becoming a National Merit® Finalist, we have experts ready to help. Contact Winsome Nisbett, Associate Director of Scholarships and Financial Aid, at nationalmerit@usf.edu.

Stay in Touch With USF

Fill out our online form to stay up to date about USF's National Merit Scholars Program: admissions.usf.edu/nms-form

