

Public Interest/Public Service (PIPS) Scholarship

Application Suggestions and Frequently Asked Questions

1. Overview of the PIPS Scholarship Selection Process

Applications for the PIPS Scholarship are typically due by **January 15 each year**.

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 deadline in order to be considered for the scholarship. The general admissions application must be submitted electronically.

Applications are first reviewed by the general Admissions Committee. If an applicant is accepted into the full-time JD program, the application will then be forwarded to the PIPS Scholarship Selection Committee.

The Committee is made up of the Public Interest Coordinator, faculty members, a representative from the Office of Admissions, and one or more third-year PIPS Scholars. 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.

Although applications are reviewed on a rolling basis after the January deadline, scholarship offers may not be finalized until early to mid-April.

2. Tips on Completing Essay/Short Answer Questions

Q. Is the 1-2 page limit the amount of space allowed for all three questions, or per question?

A. It is recommended to spend about one full page (single-spaced, 12 point font) on the first essay and about ½ page each for the second and third essays. Applicants will not be penalized for going slightly over the recommended length.

Q. Question 1 - What if I am not sure what I want to do when I finish 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. Question 2 –What do you mean by “public interest leadership”?

A. Leadership should go beyond general volunteering and should include taking a substantial or lead role in a variety of paid, volunteer or academic activities. Discuss how you have utilized your talents and skills to marshal resources to aid underserved or marginalized groups.

Q. Question 3 – 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. Here is another opportunity to provide additional information about who you are and what you are interested in. You might talk about your background and skills or about taking your education and professional experience in a new direction during law school. Ask yourself, what can I contribute to the dialogue of meeting the legal needs of underserved groups?

3. Frequently Asked Questions

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

A. Many law school applicants submit letters from academic references for their general admissions application. For this reason, the PIPS Scholarship allows an additional letter to be submitted addressing the candidate's public service experience and intention to utilize their law degree to further develop and pursue public service work. Ideally, the letter will be written by someone who has supervised the candidate in a professional setting and is familiar with his or her dedication to public service work. The letter should address the candidate's professional skills, public service dedication and fitness for law school and legal practice.

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

A. Please have the recommender mail the letter of recommendation directly to the law school.

Office of Admissions
Washington College of Law
4801 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20016

Q. I downloaded my application and can't find my attachments.

A. Once you submit your application your attachments can be viewed by downloading the application and [clicking on the attachments tab on the left hand side of the PDF.](#)

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

A. The selection committee utilizes 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 enterprises.

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

A. No. The PIPS scholarship selection committee will receive your scholarship application materials and your LSAC report (letters of recommendation, LSAT scores, and transcripts). They do not receive your regular admissions application or essay. Relevant information from

your general essay should therefore be included in your responses to the PIPS Scholarship application essays.

Q. What does the selection committee look for?

A. The PIPS selection committee seeks to select candidates with both strong academic backgrounds and demonstrated public service work. 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.

Q. Can you give me some idea of my chances of getting a scholarship?

A. In any given year, an individual's chances of getting the scholarship depends greatly on the number and quality of applications we receive. However, there are some general guidelines that might be helpful:

Number of applications received: On average, about 400 applicants apply to the PIPS Scholarship each year. Of these, around 200 are admitted to the full-time day program at WCL, which makes them eligible for scholarship consideration. Up to ten PIPS scholarships are given out to the entering class each year.

Academic Information: In the spring of 2009, the average LSAT score of selected Scholars was 165, with an average undergraduate grade point average of 3.7. The LSAT range of enrolled Scholars in 2009 was 163 – 169.

Factors that strengthen an application: 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.

The PIPS selection committee reviews not only the PIPS application, but the LSDAS report and letters of recommendation as well.

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. Does the scholarship affect eligibility for the joint JD/MA, JD/MPP, JD/MBA, JD/MPA or JD/MS programs?

A. No.

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, criminal justice, juvenile justice, land use, and war crimes tribunals. Upon graduating from WCL, 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

receive prestigious postgraduate fellowships, government honors program positions and federal or state clerkships.