



The University of Texas at Austin

College of Natural Sciences

2026 STENGL-WYER SCHOLARS COMPETITION

REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

Application Deadline: December 8, 2025 at 5:00 PM CT

DESCRIPTION

Recent Ph.D.s are cordially invited to apply for distinguished postdoctoral positions in the biodiversity sciences at The University of Texas at Austin (UT), one of the top campuses in the country for this research.

Funded by the Stengl-Wyer Endowment, the [Stengl-Wyer Scholars Program](#) provides up to three years of support for talented postdoctoral researchers in the broad area of the diversity of life and/or organisms in their natural environments. Scholars may study any group of organisms at levels from genes to populations to communities to ecosystems and may use any combination of approaches. Applications that advance research within the [Texas Field Station Network](#) or [UT Biodiversity Collections](#) are highly encouraged given the Stengl-Wyer Endowment's mission to support biological field stations and collections. Scholars will:

- conduct cutting-edge research over three years
- have access to outstanding [core research facilities](#) at UT, including field stations, natural history collections, computational, imaging, and biomolecular facilities
- reside locally and have a regular workspace and presence on the main UT campus
- primarily focus on research; but in at least one of the three years, scholars should also develop educational or community engagement activities (examples include, but are not limited to, teaching undergraduate/graduate workshops or modules, leading summer internship programs, creating K-12 engagement activities, and leading outreach efforts at UT field stations.)
- participate in biweekly meetings (luncheons) with other Stengl-Wyer Scholars, Fellows, or guests
- receive career mentorship

Scholars are expected to be independent and propose their own research project. The project start date at UT should be between August 1, 2026 and September 30, 2026. Applicants should identify one or more faculty members from UT's [College of Natural Sciences](#) (CNS) who will serve as a mentor as well as provide laboratory space to the Scholar. Applicants should also discuss their proposed educational and/or community engagement activities with their proposed mentor. Scholars will be encouraged to interact broadly and collaborate with other faculty, postdocs, and graduate students at UT. 2026 Scholar awardees will receive the following:

- \$70,000 annual salary plus UT benefits
- \$10,000 annual allowance for research and travel expenses
- Up to \$3,000 relocation expenses

ELIGIBILITY

Eligible applicants must have completed a Ph.D. or equivalent degree by the projected start date and must not have exceeded 24 months in a full-time postdoctoral or research position at the time of application deadline. Preference will be given to applicants not already in residence at UT. Applicants who are non-US citizens or permanent residents must be eligible for J-1 Scholar visa status; the Stengl-Wyer Scholars program cannot support H-1B visa applications. CNS encourages applications from individuals from all backgrounds with diverse viewpoints.

APPLICATION COMPONENTS

All application documents should be formatted using 1-inch margins and no smaller than 11-point font. Recommended fonts are Arial, Georgia, Helvetica, and Times New Roman. The following documents are required and must be submitted through Competition Space by the application deadline:

1. **Lay Summary:** In 200 words or less describe for a general audience the proposed project and its potential impact on the understanding of the diversity of life and/or organisms in their natural environments.
2. **Curriculum Vitae (CV):** Provide a current CV including academic background and research experience.
3. **Research Plan** (4 pages maximum; including figures and excluding citations): Describe the independent project that the applicant wishes to develop or implement at UT. The Research Plan should be innovative but feasible and should be developed independently by the applicant. The applicant is encouraged to consult with the proposed mentor(s), Field Station or Biodiversity Collection leads about the research and relevant UT facilities and infrastructure. Preliminary data are not required.
4. **Bibliography/References** (no page limit): List sources in a document separate from the Research Plan.
5. **Scientific Impact Statement** (1-page maximum): Describe the novel aspects and significance of the proposed project with respect to applicant's prior work and the ongoing work in the potential faculty mentor's lab. Describe how this work will make a substantial contribution to the field or will address a major unresolved scientific question.
6. **Statement of Educational or Community Engagement Interests** (2-page maximum): Describe educational and/or community engagement efforts related to the applicant's interests and career goals. Discuss previous educational and/or community engagement experience as well as activities you plan to execute while at UT.
7. **Letter(s) of Support:** Submit letter(s) of support from one or more potential faculty mentor(s) within CNS (Integrative Biology, Marine Science, Molecular Biosciences,

Neuroscience, Statistics and Data Science, Computer Science, Physics, Astronomy and other departments with programs relevant to the study of the diversity of life and/or organisms in their natural environments). Letters of support are not confidential and should be uploaded with the other required application components. Interdisciplinary projects linking to several research groups are encouraged, and UT faculty members from outside CNS may be included as co-mentors. UT faculty serving as co-mentors may submit a single, co-signed letter of support. Applicants must have contacted the proposed faculty mentor(s) by the time of submission to discuss the research proposal and educational and/or community engagement activities. The applicant is responsible for communicating minimum letter content requirements and deadlines to potential faculty mentor(s). Mentor letters can be brief and should simply state the following:

- statement of willingness to mentor the mentee
- statement of agreement to provide laboratory, office space, and or other facilities as needed
- statement that available resources (including the Scholar research allowance, but could include others) is sufficient for the scope of the proposed project
- statement of how the proposed research is distinct from ongoing work in the lab/research program and/or previous SW Scholars in the lab
- statement of how the research will advance the field and will leverage UT facilities or capacities (e.g., including the Field Station Network or Biodiversity Collections)

8. **Letter(s) of Commitment:** In the case of proposals for which resources from another institution (such as a non-UT laboratory, field station, or collaborator) are required for the project, a brief letter of commitment from the outside institution should be included. This component is required only if applicable to the project.
9. **List of References:** Provide the names and contact information of three individuals who are familiar with the applicant's qualifications, training, and interests and have agreed to submit reference letters. Applicant's proposed faculty mentor(s) cannot be counted toward the three required references. Letters of reference must be submitted confidentially per the Instructions for Reference Letters section below.

APPLICATION SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

All required application documents listed in the Application Components section above should be combined and uploaded as a single pdf and submitted by the application deadline.

Applications must be submitted through Competition Space, UT's online submission interface. To apply:

1. Visit <https://utexas.infoready4.com/CompetitionSpace/#competitionDetail/1984429>
2. Click the "Apply" button on the Competition Space page.

3. This will take you to a login screen. External applicants should create an interface account by clicking the “Register” button toward the bottom of the page. Follow the instructions to create an account. Applicants with an existing UT EID and password should login using the “University of Texas Web Login” button.
4. You will be taken to an online application form. Complete the form and upload the required application components. Click “Submit Application” at the bottom of the page. You also have the option to save a draft and return later to submit your application.

Note: *If this is your first time submitting a proposal through the proposal submission website, you will first need to affiliate yourself with the College before you can submit. To do this, login with your EID and password, then click on the “Hello, [Name]” link at the top right of the website. This will take you to your user profile. In your user profile, under “Primary School or Department,” select “Natural Sciences, College of” and then scroll to the bottom of the page and click on the Save Changes button. You will now be able to apply.*

INSTRUCTIONS FOR REFERENCE LETTERS

Reference letters are required from three individuals who have agreed to submit letters on the applicant's behalf. Referees should address an applicant's:

- progress toward completing dissertation or ongoing post-doctoral work
- qualifications, training, and interests
- independence, ability of applicant to anticipate and mitigate challenges
- creativity, and/or novelty of the proposed project

Referees should submit reference letters directly to the Stengl-Wyer Endowment Program via email to Referen.f1chs4vmu51ttyfe@u.box.com which will automatically upload the letter to a confidential folder. For this reason, reference letters should be submitted as a PDF file using the following file naming convention:

ApplicantLastName_ApplicantFirstName_RefereeLastName_ReferenceLetter

Reference letters must be received by the application deadline of **5:00 PM CT on December 8, 2025**. Reference letters should remain confidential, and the applicant must not be copied on this email. The applicant is responsible for communicating submission instructions and deadlines to referees.

REVIEW CRITERIA

Applications will be reviewed by a faculty panel using the following criteria:

- **Proposed Research Project:** Consider independence, innovativeness, and scope of the proposed research project, including evidence that the project is distinct from the proposed mentor's existing projects and long-term research program.
- **Scope of Research:** Proposed research should align with the program's mission of exploring research in the diversity of life and/or organisms in their natural

environments. Consider how the application contributes to the overall scope of research supported by the Stengl-Wyer Endowment, given that a strong community of scholars will include individuals who are working on a variety of research themes and are supervised by different faculty advisors. Applications that advance research within the Texas Field Station Network or UT Biodiversity Collections are highly encouraged.

- **Proposed Educational and Community Engagement Activities:** Consider proposed activities and the potential impact on UT and the broader community, feasibility, and likelihood of execution.
- **Record of Intellectual Merit:** Consider honors, awards, scholarships, leadership and service activities, teaching and educational activities, community engagement activities (past or current, not proposed), and other non-traditional recognition or distinction.
- **Evidence of Research Accomplishments and Independence:** Consider publications, talks and presentations at scientific meetings, reports, and other achievements and contributions to research. Place particular value on creativity and impact of research.
- **Reference Letters:** Consider accomplishments, especially in the context of obstacles, and potential for development as an independent scholar.

KEY DATES

Submission window opens: August 4, 2025

Submission deadline: December 8, 2025

Announcement of awardees: February 2026

Award start date: After August 1, 2026 and before September 30, 2026

Award end date: Up to three (3) years from award start date

CONTACT INFORMATION

Program website: <https://cns.utexas.edu/research/research-initiatives/stengl-wyer-scholars>

Program questions should be directed to the Stengl-Wyer Endowment program manager:
swe@austin.utexas.edu

Application submission interface questions should be directed to CNS Strategic Research Initiatives: CNS_SRI@austin.utexas.edu

The form and timing of Stengl-Wyer Scholars awards is subject to change in subsequent years. The content of this announcement is relevant only for the 2026 Stengl-Wyer Scholars competition and awards.