

2021 Breakthrough Graduate Scholars Awards **Guidelines and Criteria**

Rationale

Each spring, the Office of the Vice President for Research names selected graduate students as Breakthrough Graduate Scholars. These graduate students have excellent academic records, have made significant contributions to research and scholarship in their field of study, and have clearly demonstrated the potential to make exceptional professional contributions to research and scholarly activity. The Breakthrough Graduate Scholar Award recognizes these graduate students for their achievements at USC and celebrates their potential for further success.

Award Description

The recipients of this non-cash award are featured in a supplement to *Breakthrough* magazine, and may be featured on USC websites and other publications. Additionally, they are invited to attend the annual Breakthrough Awards Dinner, held each spring. The award raises awareness of the importance of commitment to research and scholarship both during and beyond graduate study. *Breakthrough* magazine and its supplement are widely distributed to all faculty and administration, peer institutions, program managers, legislative representatives, and selected alumni and donors.

*** New for 2021 ***

- **Breakthrough Graduate Scholar nominations may only be submitted by the graduate director for the nominee's department or program.** Graduate Scholar nominations submitted by anyone other than the nominee's graduate director will not be accepted or reviewed.
- **Each department or program may submit only one Graduate Scholar nomination.** Departments or programs that submit more than one nomination will be asked to select only one nominee.
- **Refer to the [Breakthrough Awards Nomination Submission Guide \(pdf\)](#) for details on how to submit a 2021 Breakthrough Scholars nomination.**

Award Review Criteria

The Breakthrough Awards Committee will evaluate the nomination materials based on the strength of evidence for the following criteria. All materials should draw on the nominee's time studying at USC.

- The nominee should have an excellent academic record with a minimum cumulative graduate GPA of 3.3 at the University of South Carolina.
- The nominee should have made significant contributions to research and/or scholarly activity in their field of study while studying at the University of South Carolina.
- The nominee should demonstrate the potential to make exceptional professional contributions to research and scholarly activity.

Eligibility

- Current doctoral students from any discipline in their second year or later.
- December graduates are eligible.
- Nominees who were not selected in previous years are eligible for re-nomination.

- Past recipients of the award are not eligible.
- Nominations must be submitted by the nominee's graduate program director or equivalent.

With prior approval from the Vice President for Research, certain eligibility criteria may be waived in unusual circumstances.

Nomination Procedures

Nominations for the Breakthrough Graduate Scholars award are submitted online through a nomination system based on USC's sponsored awards proposal routing system USCeRA, a familiar interface for most USC faculty members. The nomination submission system is available at breakthroughandgovawards.research.sc.edu. Download the step-by-step [Nomination Submission Guide](#) (pdf) for detailed information on the submission process.

Both the nominee and the nominator have a role to play in completing nomination package components both inside and outside of the nomination system. Completed nomination packages are finalized and submitted to the Office of Research by the nominator.

Complete nomination packets are due no later than 5:00 p.m. on Friday, October 16, 2020.

For questions or difficulty submitting nomination materials, please call **Debbie Gipson** at (803) 777-5458.

Nomination Package Components

Nominees Must Provide:

- Responses of 4,000 characters or fewer (counting spaces and line breaks), for each of the Nominee Questionnaire prompts listed below. (Nominees will have 4,000 characters per response.) We recommend that nominees draft their responses outside of the system, then copy and paste the responses into the Nominee Questionnaire form inside of the nomination system.
 - Please prepare a personal statement describing your commitment to research and scholarly activity in your field of study since you joined USC.
 - List major fellowships and awards you have received during your time at USC, and the date(s).
 - List significant peer-reviewed publications from your time at USC where you are the author or a co-author.
 - List significant professional presentations, abstracts, exhibitions and/or performances associated with USC.

Nominators Must Provide:

- **A letter of recommendation, written by the nominee's direct mentor**, no longer than two pages in length (to be uploaded in PDF format).

Notes and Exceptions

- Nominators may submit only one 2021 Breakthrough Graduate Scholars Award nomination.

Selection Process and Timeline

Nominations that are complete and responsive to the requirements of this announcement will be evaluated by the Breakthrough Awards Committee. The committee will evaluate nominations using the award review criteria. The committee will provide a prioritized list of recommended recipients to the Vice President for Research (VPR). The VPR will have final determination of recipients based on the committee's recommendations. Nominees and their nominators will receive notification of their selection or declination on before **Friday, December 4, 2020**.

For questions regarding this award, contact **Debbie Gipson** in the Office of the Vice President for Research.

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