2021-2022 Elite Scholars Program

Overview
To recruit highly competitive graduate students who are positioned to advance the research mission of the University of Mississippi, the Provost’s Office in partnership with the Graduate School will provide funding for a limited number of Elite Scholars. The Elite Scholars Program is a tool to further elevate our excellent academic programs as they recruit the next generation of leading researchers and professionals to pursue terminal-degrees at UM.

The Elite Scholars Program recognizes outstanding graduate student researchers and increases the value of the stipend associated with a qualifying assistantship for a highly selective group of students. It is expected that Elite Scholars will be students who bring a record of excellence in research and innovation such that they are poised to engage in transformative work while completing their studies at UM.

To be considered, admitted students must be nominated by their department chair or graduate program coordinator.

There are two types of Elite Scholars

*Provost’s Elite Scholars*
– annual $10,000 increase in the stipend for up to 3 years
– three awards available

*Dean’s Elite Scholars*
– annual $5,000 increase in the stipend for up to 3 years
– four awards available

Recipients will hold the title of Elite Scholar with the appropriate relevant designation.
Eligibility

Prospective students eligible for nomination for the Elite Scholars Program are students with an offer of admission to matriculate into a terminal graduate program at UM during the 2021-2022 academic year. Students must be newly admitted to a terminal-degree program and must have an offer for a 0.5 time graduate research assistantship with an annual stipend of at least $20,000. Students previously enrolled in a terminal-degree program at UM are not eligible for the Elite Scholars Program.

Continuation of the enhanced stipend for the full 3 years of the award requires the student to continue to have a 0.5 time graduate research assistantship each year (with a minimum annual stipend of $20,000 prior to the award).

Continuation of the enhanced stipend and honorary title also requires the student to be enrolled full-time during Fall and Spring terms and to be making good academic progress towards completion of the degree. At the beginning of the 2nd and 3rd year, the GPC and Advisor will confirm for the Graduate School that the student remains in good academic standing and is making satisfactory progress towards the completion of the terminal degree.

Due to the competitive nature of the Elite Scholars Program, the schools/college and departments may specify additional requirements for eligibility and retention of the recognition.

Additional funding beyond the three years may be provided by the Elite Scholar’s school/college or department.

The Graduate School will transfer the funds for the stipend enhancement to the academic unit offering the graduate research assistantship for selected Elite Scholars at the start of each academic year. Academic units will be responsible to cover any additional fringe associated with the enhanced stipend. Should an Elite Scholar lose the qualifying assistantship, the until will need to return the funds to be used by other qualifying Elite Scholars.
Nomination Process

Nominations for the Elite Scholars Program are due January 31st, 2021. It is expected that the selection committee will make decisions on initial selection of Elite Scholars not later than February 20th, 2021. Programs may nominate individuals to whom they have not yet made offers, but to whom they anticipate they will likely make an offer, should the January 31st deadline occur prior to finalizing the offers they plan to make. When a nominee is selected prior to the official offer of admission, the program must first make an offer to that nominee before making offers to any other students. Only individuals with an offer of admission and the accompanying offer of a qualifying graduate research assistantship will be eligible to receive the award.

Nominations must be submitted by the Office of the Dean of the College/School. Nominations must include:

1. The nomination form.
3. A letter from the department chair documenting the commitment of a 0.5 time graduate research assistantship with an annual stipend of at least $20,000 for three years.
4. A copy of transcripts, CV, letters of recommendations, and any other application materials required by the admitting terminal degree program.
5. A statement of purpose/goals from the nominee.
6. A letter of recommendation from the GPC outlining the unique qualifications of the nominee.

The maximum number of individuals nominated for the Elite Scholars Program by a GPC shall not exceed two students per year.

Selection of Elite Scholars

A selection committee shall comprise a representative of each school/college offering a terminal degree that falls within the scope of the Graduate School. The committee will review and rank nominations prior to meeting. The committee will make recommendations for initial recipients and ranked alternates not later than February 20th, 2021.
In selecting individuals for the Elite Scholars Program, the selection committee will primarily consider the potential for the nominee to advance the research mission of the University and prospective contributions to innovative scholarship and other work. Past achievements will be heavily weighted in evaluating the prospective contributions of the nominee.