



2022-2023 VTF TORCH Scholarship Policy

15 January 2022

Subject: Vigilant Torch Foundation Eligibility, Notification, Application and Implementation of the TORCH Scholarship Program Policy, School Year 2022-2023

The following policy applies to all TORCH Scholarship applicants, recipients and all directors, officers, employees, and contractors of the VIGILANT TORCH Foundation (VTF). This policy establishes the TORCH Scholarship, a competitive scholarship for up to a maximum award per candidate as determined by the scholarship committee. The VTA/VTF Boards will establish the total amount prior to being awarded.

1. The purpose of this policy is to define who is eligible to receive the TORCH Scholarship, identify how the notification process works, how to apply, and implementation of the program.
2. The goals of the TOUCH Scholarship program are as follows:
 - a. Everyone who is eligible to apply for scholarships is informed about the types of scholarships available and how to apply.
 - b. Everyone who is both eligible and worthy of a scholarship receives support from VTF in some form, subject to available funds.
 - c. The application process is clearly communicated, efficient, and appropriately transparent to applicants.
3. VTA/VTF is now partnered with SOFund and can submit candidates for their opportunities as well. To be eligible for a SOFund opportunity, the candidate must also be eligible for a TORCH Scholarship. The candidate does not have to apply for a TORCH scholarship to be eligible for a SOFund opportunity. Any awards earned from SOFund will not count toward the maximum amount of awards limit for the Torch Scholarship program.
4. Eligibility to Receive the TORCH Scholarship.
 - a. The following people are eligible for scholarships offered by the VTF:
 - i. All Active Duty Unit Members (hereinafter, "AUM") and their immediate families and grandchildren, including the families of such personnel who die in combat, training, or line of duty; or are Prisoner of War (POW) or Missing in Action (MIA). In the event of divorce, if an AUM claims, or prior to majority claimed, a dependent on their Federal tax return or another representation of dependency, that dependent is eligible.
 - ii. All Reserve and National Guard personnel assigned to the Unit and their immediate families and grandchildren, including the families of such personnel who die in combat, training, or line of duty; or are POW or MIA. Reserve and



National Guard personnel (further referred to in this policy as AUM) must participate in drill, active duty, or deployments to be eligible and must be members of the VIGILANT TORCH ASSOCIATION (VTA). In the event of divorce, if Reserve or National Guard personnel claims, or prior to majority claimed, a dependent on their Federal tax return or another representation of dependency, that dependent is eligible.

- iii. All AUM and their immediate families and grandchildren. Eligibility is maintained despite the death of the AUM from causes other than those outlined in paragraphs 4(a)(i) and 4(a)(ii). In the event of divorce, if an AUM claims, or prior to majority claimed, a dependent on their Federal tax return or another representation of dependency, that dependent is eligible.
 - iv. All Former Unit Members (hereinafter, "FUM") and their immediate families and grandchildren. Eligibility is maintained despite the death of the FUM. To be eligible, FUM must be a current member of the VTA, or if deceased, a member of the VTA at the time of death. In the event of divorce, if a FUM claims, or prior to majority claimed, a dependent on their Federal tax return or another representation of dependency, that dependent is eligible.
- b. All AUM listed in paragraphs 4(a)(i) and 4(a)(ii) above continue to be eligible as follows:
- i. When an AUM leaves the Unit, they remain eligible to apply for a TORCH Scholarship for a 3-year period. If they do not return to the Unit after this 3-year period, this AUM is now considered a FUM and must join VTA to be eligible to apply for a TORCH Scholarship.
 - ii. Combat deaths include all deaths resulting from hostile fire or other deaths that occur in a combat/conflict zone and can be directly attributed to being deployed as a member of the Unit in a combat zone. These include but are not limited to hostile fire, explosions, aircraft crashes, parachute fatalities, drowning, vehicle accidents that occur while conducting military duties in a combat area, and deaths that occur from injuries, diseases and infections contracted in a combat zone. Other deaths that occur in a combat zone and are not listed will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
 - iii. Training deaths include all deaths resulting from duty related training that can be directly attributed to being deployed as a member of the Unit while participating in normal training, combat related training, proficiency training, and physical conditioning training. These include but are not limited to explosions, aircraft crashes, parachute fatalities, drowning, vehicle accidents that occur while traveling to or from training in a military or commercial vehicle. A military vehicle includes a commercial vehicle when it has been rented for the



purpose of official duty, and deaths that occur from injuries, diseases and infections contracted in overseas areas while deployed on official duties. Other deaths that occur in training and are not listed will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

- iv. Line of duty death, as determined by the AUM's Service. All line of duty is eligible. In the event of a Line of Duty, "No," an applicant may appeal to the VTF Board for eligibility consideration on a case-by-case evaluation. Send requests to the Scholarship Committee Chairman at scholarship@vigilant-torch.org.
 - v. POW/MIA, as determined by the Defense Prisoner of War/Missing Personnel Office.
- c. "Surviving dependents" who are eligible include:
- i. All naturally born children and grandchildren of the deceased AUM/FUM member from a current or previous marriage or marriages.
 - ii. All adopted children of the deceased AUM/FUM member. This includes children that may have been in the process of being adopted at the time of the AUM/FUM's death. The primary consideration is if the child was living with and financially dependent upon the deceased AUM/FUM.
 - iii. All stepchildren of the deceased AUM/FUM who were living with and financially dependent upon the deceased AUM/FUM.
 - iv. A surviving married spouse of the AUM/FUM.
- d. Only persons referred to in paragraphs 4(a) and 4(c) and persons in 4(b) if current members of VTA are eligible for the TORCH Scholarship. Civilian employees assigned to the Unit, regardless of which Department, Agency or contractor employs them, and their immediate families and grandchildren, are NOT eligible for the TORCH Scholarship. The only exception to this policy is if a civilian employee of the Unit is previously qualified under paragraphs 4(a) and 4(c).

1. The Communication / Notification Process.

- e. For AUM, the Unit communicates the details of the TORCH Scholarship as follows:
- i. The Commander and Command Sergeant Major (CSM) are responsible for publicizing the program within the Command and Soldiers and Family Readiness Groups.

- ii. The Unit will appoint a Liaison Officer (LNO) to coordinate with the VTF Scholarship Committee.
 - f. For FUM, the VTA communicates the details of the TORCH Scholarship as follows:
 - i. The main vehicle for communication with FUM will be through the Vigilant Torch Association (VTA) web site, www.vigilant-torch.org. If information regarding the TORCH Scholarship or VTA membership status is posted on the VTA web site, the Foundation's Scholarship Committee considers the FUM to be notified.
 - g. The VTA Board Communications Committee will maintain current information about the TORCH Scholarship on www.vigilant-torch.org, to inform all FUM and through the Unit and www.vigilant-torch.org for AUM.
 - h. The Commander, CSM, LNO and the VTF President and other officers or board members will present the TORCH Scholarships at a ceremony, if possible.
 - i. The VTA Board Scholarship Committee will generate, print, and present scholarship recipient certificates.
 - j. Additionally, the VTA Board Fundraising Committee will create a special recognition program for new donors and repeat donors.
 - k. The VTA Board Scholarship Committee, in conjunction with the VTA/VTF Treasurer, will print and distribute checks for the awarded amount to each scholarship recipient.
 - l. The VTA Board Scholarship Committee will request impact of any previous scholarship awards via the scholarship application process
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 - b. For FUM, the VTA communications with the FUM will be through the VTA website. If information regarding the TORCH Scholarship is posted on the VTA website, the Foundation's Scholarship Committee considers the FUM to be notified.
 - c. The VTA Board Communications Committee will maintain current information about the TORCH Scholarship on www.vigilant-torch.org, to inform all FUM and through the Unit and www.vigilant-torch.org for AUM.

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6. The implementation process:
- a. Establish 2021-2022 school year Scholarship Committee:
 - i. Chairman: Brian Gellman
 - ii. Members: Mike Buggs, Paul Haughton, Bruce Swatek, Jason De Leeuw
 - iii. All reviewers must be current members of VTA. The Scholarship Committee Chairman will approve all reviewers. Additional reviewers (not all inclusive and can change): Steve Houde, Tom Sullivan, John Campagna, Dawn Giles, Brad Grane, Amanda Harrington, Don Torrence.
 - b. NLT 10 January 2022: The Scholarship Committee proposes to the Board, the 2022-2023 school year TORCH Scholarship program and policy.
 - c. NLT 15 January 2022: The VTA/VTF Board approves the 2022-2023 Torch Scholarship policy and program
 - d. 15 January 2022 through 31 March 2022: the Torch scholarship window is open for submissions:
 - i. Board Communications Committee prepares www.vigilant-torch.org for the 2022-2023 TORCH Scholarship program.
 - ii. The Board Scholarship Committee provides this policy, the scholarship program information documents for distribution.
 - iii. The Unit/FRG and the VTA publicize the scholarship competition via the Vigilant Torch website and informal distribution groups.

- e. NLT 31 March 2022 at 11:59PM EST: TORCH Scholarship candidates must submit their applications to be considered for that scholarship year. Applications may be submitted any time after guidance is published on www.vigilant-torch.org.
 - i. No applications will be accepted after the last day for submitting applications unless there are extraordinary circumstances. Technology problems are not considered extraordinary.
- f. 01-21 April 2022:
 - i. The Board Scholarship Committee selects TORCH Scholarship recipients.
 - 1. The VTF Scholarship Committee chairperson will blind all applications.
 - 2. The VTF Scholarship Committee chairperson will not vote, except in the event of a tie or if a member of the Committee is conflicted.
 - ii. The VTF Scholarship Committee recommends recipients to the VTF President.
 - iii. The VTF President submits the recommendation to be approved by the VTA/VTF Board of Directors.
- g. NLT 07 April 2022: The VTA/VTF Board of directors approves the total amount of funding for the 2022-2023 Torch Scholarship.
- h. NLT 30 April 2022: The VTA/VTF Board of directors approves the recommendation or adjusted recommendation
- i. NLT 01 May 2022: VTF Scholarship Chairman notifies awardees of final award decision and notifies candidates who have not been awarded a scholarship via the VTF Scholarship email box.
- j. NLT 02 May 2022: Scholarship Committee will begin drafting, reviewing, and coordinating for signatures of Scholarship certificates
- k. 12 May 2022 (Chenega Golf Tournament) or the next major Unit/VTA event: Ceremony presenting certificates and checks to awardees able to attend in person. All other certificates and checks will be mailed to the remaining awardees in coordination with the VTA/VTF Treasurer.
- l. Separate timelines will be published for SOFund opportunities, and they are presented to the VTF Scholarship Chairman – tentative application deadlines to SOFund will be available on the VTF Scholarship webpage. All SOFund submissions will be vetted thru and submitted by the VTF scholarship Chairman.

7. VTF Scholarship criteria:

- a. Amount: the award amount for each candidate will be determined by the Scholarship Committee based on number of candidates, quality of application and amount of total funding available for award this year. The final annual award amounts are at the discretion of the Scholarship Committee and/or Board of Directors.
 - b. The Stephen Beitler Award is currently \$10,000. An applicant cannot receive multiple Stephen Beitler Awards. This is awarded to the applicant that scores highest in the application review process who has not received this award.
 - c. Estimated number of VTF Scholarships for 2022-2023 school year: Up to 40. This is a competitive process.
 - d. Application Process: Once the application window is open, as per paragraph 6.d., the VTF Scholarship webpage will provide a web link to an initial application. This initial application will gather administrative data from the applicant that will be used to determine eligibility. Immediately upon completing this initial application, the applicant will receive another web link to submit the remaining requirements for the application.
 - e. Frequency: Applicants must apply or re-apply each year.
 - f. Number: Applicants may receive up to six annual VTF Scholarships (this does not include SOFund awards or any other non-TORCH Scholarships determined by VTF).
 - i. Applicants must submit a new application for each annual VTF Scholarship and for each SOFund opportunity through the VTF Scholarship committee.
 - g. Eligible programs and post-secondary institutions:
 - i. Eligible institutions for student attendance must be appropriately accredited and approved by the U.S. Department of Education. This may be a college, university, vocational/technical or career institute. Distance learning programs are also eligible.
 - ii. Two-year community college degree programs.
 - iii. Trade school programs.
 - iv. Four-year college degree programs.
 - v. Five-year college degree programs:
 - vi. Graduate school programs:
 - vii. Full- or part-time programs.
8. Application criteria:
- a. Community service (addressed in Scholarship Application Webform):

- i. Community service will be scored on a scale from zero to four based on the quantity and quality of the applicant's community service over the year prior to the application. For the 2022-2023 application, the Scholarship committee will consider any community service. More recent service will be scored higher.
 - ii. If the applicant is an Active Duty service member (AUM or FUM) or an activated Reservist or Guardsman and was deployed or was away from home during 2021, the committee may automatically award points because the applicant's ability to serve their community is assumed to have been limited during this time frame. Points will be awarded based on the following progressive scale:
 1. More than 180 days, applicant will receive a score of at least 3.
 2. From 90-179 days, applicant will receive at least a score of 2.
 3. From 30-89 days, applicant will receive at least a score of 1.
- b. Grade Point Average (GPA) (addressed in the Scholarship Application Webform accompanied with a transcript):
- i. Minimum GPA to be eligible: 2.0 on an unweighted scale of 4.0.
 - ii. Must be verified by student transcript. Transcripts can be from secondary or post-secondary institutions.
 - iii. GPA will be scored 1 through 4, based upon a weighted GPA scale. The Scholarship Committee reserves the right to modify this score based on qualitative considerations or if extraordinary circumstances exist.
- c. Essay will be uploaded to the Scholarship Application Webform as a PDF:
- i. The essay will not exceed two pages at 1.5x line spacing (in the Word ribbon, home tab, click the arrow beside the Paragraph group name, open the Indents and Spacing dialog box, select Line Spacing, select 1.5 Line, OK). 1" margins, Calibri Font, 12 pt. Any essay that does not meet these administrative requirements will not be considered.
 - ii. The essay will pertain to one new topic every year.
 - iii. 2022-2023 school year essay topic: "Please describe a difficult challenge you have faced in your life. How did you handle it? What did you learn from that experience? Knowing what you know now, what might you do differently in a similar situation in the future?"
 - iv. Essays will be evaluated based upon a scale of zero through four.
- d. Cover letter Questions:
- i. A brief background, including extracurricular activities, and any other facts applicants might deem of interest to the Scholarship Committee.

- ii. What is your (intended) major(s) and minor(s)? State how many years of school you have had (12 for finishing high school, 13 for having one undergraduate year completed, etc.) and whether you are currently a graduating high school senior, what is your class standing in college (e.g., sophomore), or for what degree you are studying if you are a graduate student.
 - iii. Current VTF Scholarship recipients should include at least one paragraph in this section on their activities and accomplishments over the past year; and how the VTF Scholarship impacted them. First time applicants should include at least one paragraph in this section on their activities and accomplishments over the past year; and how the VTF TORCH Scholarship might impact them.
 - iv. Answer the question, “Why are you applying for the TORCH scholarship?”
 - v. Cover Letter questions will be evaluated based upon scores of zero through four.
 - e. The points from the Cover Letter questions, community service, and essay sections of the application will each be individually sub-totaled, each score will be divided by the number of evaluators for each section, and then all three sections will be totaled into a score that will be added to an applicant’s GPA score. Based upon their total scores, applicants will be rated against other applicants which will help to determine who are awarded scholarships and the size of the scholarship.
 - f. VTF scholarship applicants must provide a separate transcript and/or acceptance letter or other acceptable proof of attendance (preferably a PDF, unless it comes directly from the school) from an eligible institution or program.
 - g. All applicants must submit their application via the Scholarship Application Webform that will be provided on the VTF Scholarship webpage (available when the application window opens as per paragraph 6.d.. Persons with disabilities may contact VTA to request reasonable accommodations.
 - h. The complete application will be evaluated for following directions, grammar, syntax, and organization. While the evaluators will not nit-pick, if an entire application is fraught with errors, that will be considered. The essay will be especially evaluated for these components, as well as whether the applicant had a strong argument.
 - i. TORCH Scholarship recipients may be quoted for web site and other marketing materials pertaining to the TORCH Scholarship.
9. Conflict of interest procedure:
- a. VTF Scholarship Board Committee voting members or VTF Board of Directors members must disclose any potential conflict or association that might be perceived to cause a conflict of interest.

- b. The full VTF Board of Directors may determine whether there is a conflict of interest. VTF Board of Directors members who are the subject of the potential conflict are excluded from voting.
- c. Reviewers may not evaluate their own family members or themselves.
- d. As much as possible, all applications will be 'blinded' so no evaluator is familiar with the applicant, particularly for evaluation of the essay.

10. Appeals process:

- a. Applicants may appeal any action of the above policies and procedures. Requests for special disbursement of funds related to late filing of documents are not grounds for appeal.
- b. The appeal email must be directed to the Board Scholarship Committee chairman, and 'signed' by the applicant and/or family member.
- c. The appeal should include as much documentation as possible with stated facts upon which action and resolution can be achieved.
- d. The Board Scholarship Committee chairman will respond to the concern by email within five working days from the date of receipt of the written appeal.
- e. If the student wishes to pursue an appeal, and the appeal requires an exception to policy or a decision not within the scope of the TORCH Scholarship Board Committee chairman, the VTF President will present the appeal to the VTF Board of Directors for resolution. This may be accomplished telephonically or by email.