

UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA



# UCF SCHOLAR

## 2025

THE NEWSLETTER FOR NATIONAL MERIT SEMIFINALISTS

# CONGRATULATIONS!

## ON BEING NAMED A NATIONAL MERIT SCHOLARSHIP SEMIFINALIST

The University of Central Florida recognizes and rewards your achievement. It's part of why we're ranked among the top 25 universities in the nation for National Merit Scholar enrollment.

Orlando is a hub for in-demand industries, and with our valuable industry partnerships, you'll be in the best place to study and gain hands-on experience through internships, collaborative learning and research projects. Yes, even as an undergrad you can lead your own research project at UCF. You'll benefit from connections to faculty and peer mentors who'll guide you to greatness as you discover new possibilities through the Burnett Honors College.

Describing all that UCF and our Scholars Program has to offer is incomparable to experiencing it firsthand during a campus visit, either virtually or in person.

### IN-PERSON OPPORTUNITIES

- **Speak with faculty from the Burnett Honors College and the colleges representing your areas of interest**
- **Meet current UCF National Merit Scholars**
- **Take a private, personalized golf cart tour of the main campus**
- **Explore exclusive on-campus housing for honors students in the Towers at Knights Plaza**
- **Enjoy lunch in one of our on-campus dining halls**
- **Review the National Merit Scholarship process and UCF program details**

### VIRTUAL OPPORTUNITIES

- **Speak with faculty from the Burnett Honors College and the colleges representing your areas of interest**
- **Meet current UCF National Merit Scholars**
- **Review the National Merit Scholarship process and UCF program details**

Please contact us for availability to schedule your visit. We look forward to introducing you to campus and showing you what UCF has to offer.

#### The Scholars Program

Office of Undergraduate Admissions

407.823.6179 | [scholarsprogram@ucf.edu](mailto:scholarsprogram@ucf.edu)

## BURNETT HONORS COLLEGE

The Burnett Honors College combines the intimacy of a small liberal arts college with the benefits and academic resources of a metropolitan research university. In classes limited to 20 or fewer students, you'll study, conduct research and connect with a close-knit community of UCF student scholars and expert faculty. The college offers an academically-minded environment where you'll have access to upper-division honors classes, interdisciplinary seminars, service-learning opportunities and additional one-on-one time with faculty and advisors.

The college's state-of-the-art facility houses a computer lab, reading room, multimedia classrooms and even a meditation garden. Honors students also get priority course registration, scholarship opportunities, invitations to special events and dedicated on-campus housing.

To learn more about the college, email [honors@ucf.edu](mailto:honors@ucf.edu), call 407.823.2545 or visit [honors.ucf.edu](https://honors.ucf.edu).

## LEAD SCHOLARS ACADEMY

The LEAD (Leadership Enrichment and Academic Development) Scholars Academy offers unique opportunities for select students to learn in and out of the classroom. In this two-year program, participants pursue the academic study of leadership, learn how to use it in their careers, and develop ways to use their skills to give back to the community and their peers.

If you're interested in joining a group of motivated and driven people who are dedicated to leadership growth — people who try as hard and care as much as you do — apply to the LEAD Scholars Academy. Email [leadacademy@ucf.edu](mailto:leadacademy@ucf.edu), call 407.823.2223 or visit [lead.sdes.ucf.edu](https://lead.sdes.ucf.edu) to learn more.



### ALUM

## EMBRACING EVERY OPPORTUNITY

**Sage Kehr '24** is a political science graduate who minored in music, mathematics and international business, while also earning a certificate in teaching English as a foreign language. During his time at UCF, he served as the chief justice of UCF Student Government, participated in the Honors Congress, volunteered with English language learners at UCF Global and served on the Student Conduct Board. These diverse experiences have prepared him to excel as he pursues his law degree at Pepperdine Caruso School of Law, with plans to become an entertainment lawyer.

*"With support from the Burnett Honors College, I had the opportunity to study abroad in Seoul, South Korea, where I studied business, joined a music club, participated in many cultural activities and more."*

# NATIONAL MERIT SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

There are tons of universities to choose from, but more students each year are putting UCF at the top of their list. A major reason is the dedicated support we provide for our most ambitious students. National Merit qualifiers receive the following.

### SEMIFINALISTS

- Expedited admission decision
- Priority consideration for merit scholarships

### FINALISTS

If you are named a finalist and designate UCF as your first choice with the National Merit Scholarship Corporation by the deadline, you will receive the following scholarships.

#### Florida Residents

The following awards will be stacked to total your UCF cost of attendance and include:

- Benacquisto Scholarship
- Florida Bright Futures Scholarship
- Corporate-sponsored Award, National Merit Scholarship Corporation Award or UCF College-sponsored Award

#### Non-Florida Residents

The following awards will be stacked and include:

- UCF Merit Scholarship valued at \$80,000\*
- Waiver of non-resident fee for tuition
- Corporate-sponsored Award, National Merit Scholarship Corporation Award or UCF College-sponsored Award

#### All finalists who are first choice designees also receive:

- Expedited admission decision to UCF
- Guaranteed admission to the LEAD Scholars Academy (upon application)
- Guaranteed admission to the Burnett Honors College (upon application) with benefits that include:
  - Priority course registration
  - Special orientation program
  - Access to faculty mentoring
  - Exclusive research and internship opportunities
  - Access to honors student on-campus housing in the Towers at Knights Plaza
- Guaranteed on-campus housing for four years with available housing preference (upon application)

\*Limited to 30 students

# UNLEASH YOUR POTENTIAL. CHANGE YOUR WORLD.

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Our mission is to unleash the potential of people and ideas to positively change the world.

Founded in 1963 to provide talent for Central Florida and the growing U.S. space program, we've been making an impact on our state, our nation and outer space ever since.

Just like you, we're always looking to the future, reaching for the stars and pursuing bold ambitions.

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- UCF ranks among the nation's top 15 most innovative schools, according to *U.S. News & World Report*.
- UCF is committed to creating a culturally diverse learning community. With 30% Hispanic undergraduate enrollment, we're designated a Hispanic Serving Institution by the U.S. Department of Education.
- UCF ranks among the top 30 universities in the nation for new National Merit Scholars enrolled.
- We've earned the Carnegie Foundation's highest classification for research activity.
- Our graduates earn Fulbright, Goldwater, Mellon, Rhodes, Truman and Udall scholarships.
- *Washington Monthly* ranks UCF No. 15 Best National Public University.
- For the sixth consecutive year, UCF's Rosen College of Hospitality Management is ranked among the top five best hospitality and hotel management schools in the world, by *CEOWorld* magazine.



## LEARN MORE, ACHIEVE MORE.

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At UCF, you'll have unlimited opportunity to launch a new era of you.

You'll find inspiration and motivation in our academically excellent community. With supportive faculty guiding you at every step, you'll be empowered to think critically, tackle new challenges and explore groundbreaking research. Our expert advisors and coaches will help you choose your path to success and stay on track.

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### 240+ DEGREE PROGRAMS ACROSS 13 COLLEGES

- 104 bachelor's degree programs
- 97 master's degree programs
- 33 research doctoral degree programs
- 3 professional doctoral degree programs
- 3 research specialist degree programs

### TAKE YOUR DEGREE TO THE NEXT LEVEL

Customize your education with more than 130 minors and certificates that suit any of your interests.

Plus, explore more than 250 short-term study abroad programs, long-term exchanges and international internships from Ireland to Australia — and almost everywhere in between.

Find the degree program that's right for you: [ucf.edu/degree-search](https://ucf.edu/degree-search).





## RESEARCH WITH AN IMPACT

Every day at UCF, you can find students and researchers working together to generate real-world impact, improving the lives of our local and global community. For instance, dive into field sites with the Marine Turtle Research Group to study sea turtle nesting spots on Florida beaches and track their movements in the Gulf of Mexico. Research experiences are wide-ranging and on-going in areas like the arts, civics, conservation, cybersecurity, energy, language, health, psychology, sea-level rise, tourism and more.

## IMAGINATION IN ACTION

Turn your big ideas into reality with specialized facilities at UCF. Students across all disciplines can gather, conceptualize, test and create in collaborative labs featuring state-of-the-art technology. This ecosystem of opportunity includes the Texas Instruments Innovation Lab, which is equipped with 3D printers, laser cutters and other high-tech equipment, and a manufacturing lab to finalize prototype designs. The Lockheed Martin Cyber Innovation Lab — which serves as a learning hub, classroom and the practice center for the university's cyberdefense club, Hack@UCF — helps hone future leaders in STEM and cybersecurity. And the Games and Interactive Media Makerspace at UCF Downtown (pictured right) provides students with the resources to experiment and create games, websites and interdisciplinary projects.



# BALANCE STARTS HERE

Dive into your academics while still enjoying a vibrant student life. With more than 7,000 events and activities throughout the year, it's easy to get involved and gain some amazing friends. Explore the best of UCF spirit and traditions.

- 1 THE KNIGHTING:** UCF's official welcome ceremony for new students, marking the start of Pegasus Palooza — a week packed with social, academic and service activities to get you even more excited about being at UCF.
- 2 SPORTING EVENTS:** Rally with Knight Nation at UCF sporting events all year. You'll get free admission to every on-campus game, giving you a chance to experience the excitement of our rise to the Big 12 Conference and soak up the incredible atmosphere with fellow fans.
- 3 SPIRIT SPLASH:** See why this college tradition was voted one of the nation's best. Charge into the Reflecting Pond and catch collectible rubber ducks and commemorative T-shirts during Homecoming Week.
- 4 UCF CELEBRATES THE ARTS:** Celebrate creative works during this 10-day festival featuring musicals, living art, concert performances and more that showcase innovation and collaboration across UCF.
- 5 UNIVERSAL KNIGHTS:** Each spring, thousands of UCF students enjoy exclusive, late-night access to Universal's Islands of Adventure.
- 6 STUDENT RESEARCH WEEK:** A showcase of discovery and scholarship where students participate in workshops and events, including poster sessions where they present their work to the UCF community.





## STUDENT

### VENTURING INTO EXCELLENCE

**Cory Brynds** took a daring leap from his home state of Kansas to UCF, driven by his passion for computer engineering. At UCF, he found the perfect blend of a top-tier electrical and computer engineering department and the enriching experiences of the Burnett Honors College. As an accelerated bachelor's-to-master's student, Brynds has excelled in leadership roles with the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers and the Burnett Honors Congress. He's also advancing computing research to engineer faster processing of encrypted data through an undergraduate research fellowship. His internships with innovative companies like AMD, nScript and UCF-based nonprofit Limbitless Solutions are shaping him for a promising career in computer engineering.

*"Attending UCF [has] ... given me a first-class education [and] numerous career opportunities. Coupled with the excellent Burnett Honors College, choosing UCF was one of the easiest decisions I've ever made."*



# FREQUENTLY

## ASKED QUESTIONS

### How can I be considered for a National Merit Scholarship at UCF?

First you must qualify as a National Merit Scholar semifinalist. You should then apply for admission to UCF. National Merit semifinalists are eligible for scholarship consideration.

Students advancing to National Merit finalist standing are eligible for sponsorship as a National Merit Scholar if they **select UCF as their first-choice institution** and adhere to the deadlines specified by the National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC). Visit [nationalmerit.org](https://nationalmerit.org) for more information.

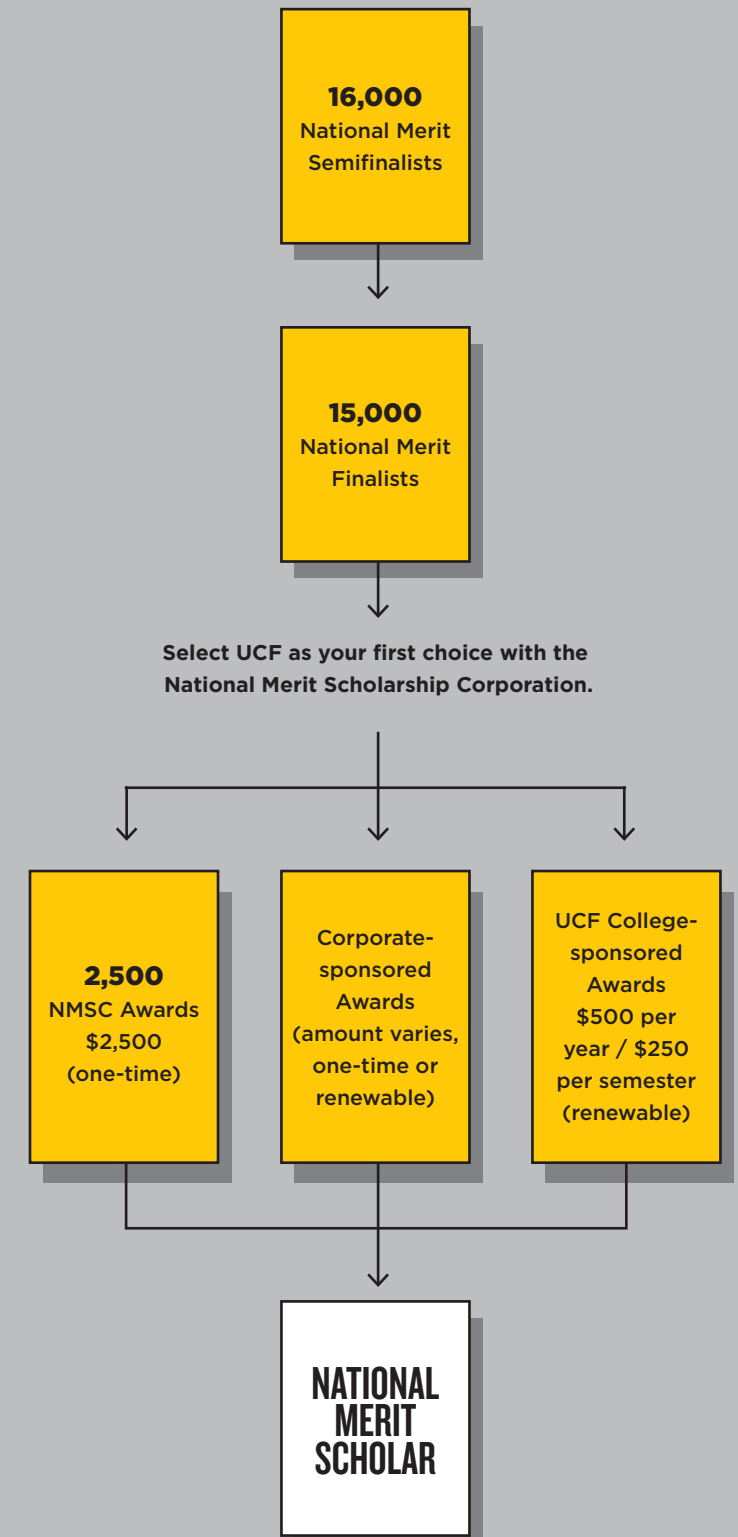
### How do I select UCF as my first choice with the NMSC?

Make your selection with the NMSC and be careful to complete all required documentation in accordance with NMSC guidelines and deadlines. If you have questions or concerns, contact NMSC officials at **847.866.5100** or visit [nationalmerit.org](https://nationalmerit.org).

### How can the National Merit Scholarship be used?

The scholarship may be used in addition to the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program, Florida Prepaid College Plans, institutional scholarships, private scholarships and, in some cases, need-based assistance. It will be applied to tuition and fees first, but can also cover part, or all, of the cost of on-campus housing when combined with other awards.

# NATIONAL MERIT SCHOLARSHIP COMPETITION





## ALUMS

### SERVING GREATER CAUSES

Orlando natives **Aliya Centner '21** and **Safia Centner '21** chose to attend UCF to stay close to their community, their family and each other, as well as take advantage of scholarship opportunities as National Merit Scholars and leadership experiences as LEAD Scholars. Their academic journeys as Knights continue as they pursue medical degrees at the UCF College of Medicine. Both hope to better the lives of others and have already started down that path by serving on the executive board for Relay for Life and helping found the UCF chapter of Be the Match.

*"We've learned more about our personalities and strengths and have applied our skills to meaningful organizations while at UCF."*

— Safia Centner



# CHECKLIST NATIONAL MERIT SCHOLARSHIP

## SEPTEMBER – DECEMBER

- Check if you are a National Merit semifinalist**  
In September, the National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC) announces the names of approximately 16,000 semifinalists.
- Submit your application early in the fall semester**  
Submit your application online at [apply.ucf.edu](https://apply.ucf.edu) early in the fall semester. Include a short essay, but **don't** include the \$30 application fee with your submission. Instead, contact [scholarsprogram@ucf.edu](mailto:scholarsprogram@ucf.edu) or **407.823.6179** to have the application fee waived. UCF also accepts the Common Application. However, the application fee cannot be waived if submitting using this method.
- Visit UCF**  
To see if UCF is right for you, come visit us. Contact us at [scholarsprogram@ucf.edu](mailto:scholarsprogram@ucf.edu) to get a personalized or virtual campus tour, where you'll have the chance to:
  - Meet with faculty in the Burnett Honors College and your academic area(s) of interest
  - Meet current UCF National Merit Scholars
  - Take a golf cart tour of the main campus
  - Explore honors student on-campus housing
  - Enjoy lunch on campus
- Complete the NMSC application**  
To be considered for finalist standing, every semifinalist must complete the NMSC application. In addition, your high school must submit an official transcript and a letter of recommendation. The NMSC also requires SAT or ACT scores for consideration.

## JANUARY – FEBRUARY

- Apply for UCF Housing**  
Determine whether to sign an academic or annual agreement housing contract. Then, submit your contract through your myUCF account along with the \$250 prepayment.
- Apply to the Burnett Honors College**  
To be eligible for the many benefits of the Burnett Honors College, you must submit a completed paper application. No portion of the college's application is waived. All sections must be completed in full (including the essay) and submitted as soon as possible.
- Apply to the LEAD Scholars Academy**  
If you wish to participate in the LEAD Scholars program, you must submit a completed application by **May 31**.

- Designate UCF as your first-choice institution**  
This is an ongoing process with the first available notification provided in early March and continuing in subsequent notification rounds. If you are "undecided" with the NMSC, the last opportunity to designate UCF as your first choice is **May 31**.
- Check if you are a National Merit finalist**  
The NMSC notifies finalists in February. More than 90% of semifinalists advance to finalist standing. All finalists who are Florida residents and designate UCF as their first choice by the NMSC deadline are guaranteed the UCF National Merit Finalist Scholarship. UCF National Merit Finalist Scholarships for non-Florida residents are limited to 30 students.

## MARCH – JUNE

- Select your National Merit Scholarship awards**  
Beginning in March, the NMSC will offer finalists one of three awards:
  - National Merit-sponsored
  - Corporate-sponsored
  - College-sponsoredThese awards are in addition to your UCF merit scholarship, and this process is handled directly through the NMSC.
- Return the UCF merit scholarship acceptance form**  
Finalists who designate UCF as their first choice with the NMSC by the May deadline will officially be awarded their UCF merit scholarship in writing. Once the form is submitted, the award will be indicated on your myUCF account under "Financial Aid."
- Complete the FAFSA**  
All National Merit Scholars receiving a UCF merit scholarship are encouraged to submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid to the UCF Office of Financial Assistance every year by **May 1**.
- Register for orientation**  
Orientation registration is available in mid-spring. Go online through your myUCF account to select the orientation session you would like to attend (these also are posted on [fye.sdes.ucf.edu/orientation](https://fye.sdes.ucf.edu/orientation)). National Merit finalists are encouraged to attend the honors orientation, however, you may select any orientation to attend.
- Submit the UCF enrollment deposit**  
Submit the \$200 enrollment deposit, which is applied toward your first semester tuition and is not waived as part of your scholarship, by **May 1**.
- Select UCF as first-choice institution by May 31**  
If you have "undecided" listed as your first choice, you must designate UCF as your first choice with the NMSC by **May 31**, to be guaranteed the UCF merit scholarship award.



## THE SCHOLARS PROGRAM

The Scholars Program  
Office of Undergraduate Admissions  
407.823.6179 [scholarsprogram@ucf.edu](mailto:scholarsprogram@ucf.edu)

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Admissions  
Burnett Honors College  
Housing and Residence Life  
LEAD Scholars Academy  
Office of Student Involvement  
Orientation  
Student Financial Assistance  
Student Health Services

[admissions.ucf.edu](http://admissions.ucf.edu)  
[honors.ucf.edu](http://honors.ucf.edu)  
[housing.ucf.edu](http://housing.ucf.edu)  
[lead.sdes.ucf.edu](http://lead.sdes.ucf.edu)  
[osi.ucf.edu](http://osi.ucf.edu)  
[orientation.ucf.edu](http://orientation.ucf.edu)  
[ucf.edu/financial-aid](http://ucf.edu/financial-aid)  
[studenthealth.ucf.edu](http://studenthealth.ucf.edu)

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 [@UCFadmission](https://www.youtube.com/UCFadmission)



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