Reminders and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) – SFS Applications

Dr. Alan T. Sherman
June 30, 2016

FAQs

1. **What application form should I use?**

   For SFS, use the new (summer 2016) form, including cover sheet. For IASP, use the (old) IASP forms – but currently no IASP scholarships are being awarded.

2. **For IASP, should I use the form for New Students or for Returning Students?**

   Use the New Students form (except if you are a current IASP student applying for a renewal).

3. **May I submit the application electronically?**

   No, we do not accept electronic submissions.

4. **Because I am a UMBC student, or I have applied to UMBC, UMBC has copies of my official documents. Do I need to resubmit additional official documents?**

   Yes, you must resubmit official documents – we do not have access to your application to UMBC.

5. **What are my chances?**

   It is a competition, so it depends in part on the quality of the applicants. In addition to the requirements set by NSF, we expect candidates to have a high GPA (at least 3.25), high test scores (over 75%), strong coursework and experience in cybersecurity, letters of reference from faculty who speak to the candidate’s potential in cybersecurity, and a passion for cybersecurity. We consider all evidence, seek SFS scholars with diverse talents, and no one factor dominates.

   Evidence of interest, experience, and potential in cybersecurity is a significant plus. Such evidence might include, for example, participation on a cyber defense team or research project.

6. **What are expectations of SFS scholars?**

   In addition to the requirements set by NSF, we expect each SFS scholar to take appropriate cybersecurity courses, join a cybersecurity research lab (e.g., UMBC Cyber Defense Lab), complete a cybersecurity research project, and engage in cohort activities with other SFS scholars (including biweekly meetings).
7. **Must I be a current UMBC student to apply?**

   No, but before a scholarship is awarded, you must have been accepted to a full-time UMBC degree program.

8. **I have not taken the SAT or GRE. Should I take one of these tests?**

   Yes, we expect SAT and/or GRE scores. Applicants may still apply without test scores, but applications without test scores risk being viewed as less competitive.

9. **Whom should I ask to write letters of recommendation?**

   You should ask people who know you well and can speak to your accomplishments and potential in cybersecurity. You must include at least two letters, and you may include more. If possible, at least one letter should be from a tenure-track professor (preferably at UMBC), preferably from an upper-level course. Be sure the letters are detailed and describe specific accomplishments.

10. **My GPA is below 3.0. Should I still apply?**

    No, we will not make an award to anyone with GPA below 3.0, and we expect at least 3.25.

11. **I am not majoring in computer science. May I still apply?**

    Yes, we accept applications from any field related to cybersecurity, including computer science, computer engineering, electrical engineering, information systems, mathematics, physics, policy science, education. While in the program, you must take appropriate cybersecurity courses and carry out research in cybersecurity.

12. **Are there any required cybersecurity courses?**

    Currently there are no courses specifically required for SFS students. SFS students are expected to take appropriate cybersecurity courses. MS and PhD students are expected to complete theses with significant cyber content. A course requirement (e.g., cybersecurity research seminar seminar) might be added in the future.

13. **While an SFS scholar, am I permitted to work or intern during the fall or spring semester?**

    No. SFS Scholars are not permitted any significant engagement of time outside of your studies. SFS scholars are being paid to be full-time students. Any employment (including any part-time work) must be approved in writing in advance by Dr. Sherman.
No exception will be granted for non-cybersecurity related work. For students receiving an SFS stipend, as per SFS rules, no exception will be granted for over ten hours per week. Exceptions for greater than ten hours per week might be considered, if the student declines the SFS stipend.

14. Does the scholarship apply to the UMCP or UMUC campus of the University of Maryland System?

No. UMBC, UMCP, and UMUC are separate schools. The UMBC SFS scholarship applies only at UMBC.

15. What new changes have happened?

Beginning for fall 2015, SFS is now open to lawful permanent residents. Beginning fall 2016, students at Montgomery College and Prince George’s Community College may apply for SFS scholarships through their schools, provided they commit to finishing a four-year degree at UMBC.

16. How can I improve my chances of being selected?

Participate on a cyber defense team, take upper-level technical cybersecurity courses, and engage in challenging cybersecurity projects. Seek letters of reference from people who can describe your technical accomplishments in detail.

Reminders

1. Clearly state for which scholarships (IASP, SFS) you are applying.
2. Clearly state when you expect to complete your current degree program.
3. Clearly state what degree program you intend to pursue at UMBC under an SFS scholarship. (e.g., PhD in CS, MS in CE, BS in EE, MPS in Cyber).
4. Submit your application on paper, printed one-sided. A separate application package is needed for each scholarship application (IASP, SFS).
5. Letters of reference must be original, signed, and on letterhead; do not send by email.
6. Transcripts must be official, original.
7. Do not round up your GPA.
8. Include your resume.
9. Include test scores (SAT and/or GRE).
10. Do not include any staples, paper clips, binder clips, or folders.