

# **LaSPACE 2026**

## **Guided Pathways in STEM (GPS) Scholars Opportunity**

Offered by the Louisiana Space Grant Consortium



Under the authority of the  
NASA Space Grant College and Fellowship Program

**Louisiana Space Grant Consortium (LaSPACE)**  
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# GPS Scholars Program Details

LaSPACE **Guided Pathways in STEM (GPS)** is a competitive program developed to accomplish two core goals: 1) provide competitively awarded financial support that helps recruit and retain students in a NASA-relevant discipline, and 2) create requirements for funded students that will also be professional development opportunities.

Professional Development activities will include opportunities to further explore NASA career paths as well as personal portfolio development like writing a professional bio. This program is meant to open pathways for participation. Traditionally limiting requirements will not be included: e.g. faculty letters of recommendation, minimum GPAs, etc. will not be considered.

Applicants must complete an online application. Before completing this application, students must also complete our LaSPACE / NASA Media Release Form and Student Participant form. Award recipients will be selected entirely based on the quality of their responses to a series of short essay questions. Point values are listed with each question and the total possible highest score is 100. Top scoring student applications from each institution will be selected for participation with an anticipated cohort size between 10 and 20 students.

## Student Eligibility Requirements

- Student Applicants must be a U.S. national. Permanent residents (i.e., green card holders) are not eligible to receive this NASA award. This is a NASA rule, and we have no authority to override it.
- Applicants must be undergraduate students enrolled at a LaSPACE affiliate institution of higher education during the Spring 2026 semester. Affiliated campuses listed on page 5 of this document.
- Applicants must be pursuing a degree or certificate program relevant to NASA. It is up to the student to write a convincing argument in their application as to how/why their program is relevant to NASA.
- Students who participated in the GPS Cohorts 1 & 2 (2023 & 2024) may apply to participate in this year's competition. However, in instances where applications are equally ranked, new students will receive priority placement.
- Participate in Wednesday sessions from 3:30 to 5:00 pm during March, April, & May and participate in an exit interview in May. First session is planned for Wednesday, March 11, 2026, 3:30-5:00 pm. Sessions will be conducted via a virtual platform, so students must have access to a computer with stable internet, video, and audio capability.
- **DO NOT APPLY if you have a scheduling conflict.** There will be no exceptions to participating live and no special arrangements can be made to accommodate schedules.

## GPS Scholar Details

- Award Period: February 2026 (Awards Announced/Initiated) – May 2026 (Exit Interviews)
- Applications due: Friday, January 16, 2026
- \$3000 award per student, distributed in installments via the National Space Grant Foundation (NSGF). Details for setting that up will be provided. All students will need to promptly respond to the NSGF to set up the payment protocol. The second and third installments are contingent upon GPS scholars participating in Tuesday afternoon professional development activities. Planned disbursement schedule, subject to change:
  - 1<sup>st</sup> Installment (upon selection): \$1000, late February/early March
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> Installment (participation in sessions): \$1000, April
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> Installment (complete deliverables): \$1000, late May/early June
- For this competition, we anticipate awarding up to 20 students around the state. Awards are contingent upon receipt of NASA funding and quality of submitted applications.

## GPS Scholars Objectives

- Provide financial support to help recruit and retain undergraduate students in demanding academic programs relevant to NASA, while reducing some of the need to work off campus.
- Offer collegial professional development activities that will improve students' access to future career opportunities and to help expand students' understanding of NASA's mission and the commercial space & aviation industries. Potential Activities may include, but are not limited to:
  - Feature Speaker / Discussion session with LaSPACE Alumni and/or other members of the space science / aeronautics community.
  - Presentations on various technical modes of professional communication (lab notebooks, presentations, etc).
  - Workshops to develop professional collateral like Professional Bios, LinkedIn Profiles, etc.
  - Opportunities for students to investigate NASA projects, present and provide feedback to peers.
  - Develop a statewide network of peer scholars with like-minded academic and career goals.
- Encourage students to compete for participation in other funding programs focused on research and design projects.
  - Offer presentations on various LaSPACE program funding opportunities and ways to get involved.

## GPS Program Management

- The GPS program was developed and is managed by the LaSPACE Director, Colleen H. Fava.
- The GPS program is presently funded by the NASA Space Grant award issued by NASA OSTEM to La Space Grant at LSU under the NASA Internship & Fellowship funding category, which restricts participation to U.S. Nationals.
- Stipends will be issued to GPS scholars via the National Space Grant Foundation.

## GPS Application Process

- **Complete an online application & associated forms on or before Friday, January 16, 2026.**
  1. [LaSPACE Student Participant Form](#). You must complete every question in the form. For questions related to the Project's Principal Investigator & Program enter the following:
    - Project's Principal Investigator / Project Lead: Colleen H. Fava
    - Principal Investigator / Project Lead Email: [colleenf@lsu.edu](mailto:colleenf@lsu.edu)
    - Principal Investigator / Project Lead Phone Number: 225-578-8680
    - LaSPACE Program: GPS Scholar
    - Project Start Date: 01/16/2026
    - Participating Semesters: Spring 2026
    - Save the submission confirmation via screenshot or as a pdf to upload into your application. We do not want to see the content submitted, just the confirmation that you completed this requirement.
  2. [LaSPACE / NASA Media Release](#). You must complete this form to participate in our programming.
    - Save the submission confirmation via screenshot or as a pdf to upload into your application.
  3. [GPS Scholars Online Application](#). All the questions in the application form have been duplicated on the following page, so you can prepare your responses in advance.

# GPS Scholars Application Questions & Evaluation Criteria

Fill in the general information fields and answer all essay questions.

**NOTE Save and Resume Later:** The Formstack application platform allows you to “Save and Resume Later.” Click this button at any point and you will be prompted to create a password to save your progress and access your application draft later via a unique link generated by Formstack. We recommend you 1) immediately write down your password and 2) provide your email address and click “Send save and resume link” so that the link is sent to your email account. It will come from Colleen Fava (LaSPACE/LSU) via Formstack. **We cannot retrieve an in-progress application, nor can we reset or modify the password you set.** If you cannot log back into your application for any reason, you will need to restart the application. If you do save and resume, make sure all previously submitted information is still there, including uploads proving you completed the Student Participant Form and Media Release Form.

## **General Applicant Info:**

- Full Name
- Institution
- Personal AND School Email addresses
- Confirm enrollment for Spring 2026
- Confirm past GPS Scholar Awards
- Current Classification
- Current Degree Program
- Field of Study (e.g. Major, Certificate Program, Research Area)
- Minor(s) or Concentration(s)
- LaSPACE Participant Form Confirmation (upload pdf or image screenshot)
- LaSPACE / NASA Media Release Form Confirmation (upload pdf or image screenshot)
- Confirmation of Availability: Tuesdays 4:30 – 6:00 pm

## **GPS Essay Questions:**

The following essay questions are to be answered as part of the online application. Responses should be between 250 and 500 words (the form is limited to 3500 characters per question). Please be concise, but specific. Use the space provided to paint as full a picture as possible. These questions are multilayered, and responses will be judged for depth, thoughtfulness, writing style, grammar, and overall content. This program is highly competitive and students submitting short, hastily written responses that do not address the whole question will receive low scores. **Read each question in its entirety AND answer the whole question.**

1. Tell us about your program of study (Major, Minor, Concentrations, Certificate Program, etc). Why did you choose this area of study? What interests you within these areas? Have you had any second thoughts? Interest in another field? (10 points)
2. What are your academic and career plans? Be as specific as you can be, but also honest. If you aren't sure beyond a broad field (i.e. you want to be a chemical engineer), tell us what attracted you to that career. Some questions you might address: What kinds of things are important to you

professionally? What skills do you want to learn and use? What impact do you imagine such a career might have? If you don't know what career you even want, tell us what kinds of tasks you imagine yourself doing. For example, do you want to build things with your hands or serve your community? Teach? Write? Speak? Work in a lab? (15 points)

3. Tell us about a class, club, student organization, job experience, or extracurricular activity in or related to your field that you consider important to your education/career plan. Provide general information about the class/club/activity. Describe how/why you participated. Describe tasks you completed and/or skills you developed. Then tell us how this experience relates to your academic and professional goals. Did it reinforce your choice of major and/or profession? How will it relate to your future classes and career plans? (20 points)
4. What interests you about NASA and how is your current program of study relevant to NASA? Go to NASA's website: <https://www.nasa.gov/>. Look at content under the different mission directorates; read through some press releases or watch some NASA TV; google search your field and NASA (for example: "NASA Computer Science" or "NASA Medicine"). Tell us what you find after completing these searches. Share information NEWLY obtained. How is your program of study relevant to NASA? Do you see some potential career paths? You must make specific references to the sources you read/watched/listened to in response to this question. Some research is required to receive credit for this question, and proof must be shown. Describing how going to the moon is cool is not going to cut it. (35 points)
5. How will this award help you? While we are not awarding these based on financial need, we are interested in financial worthiness. If you are struggling to pay college costs, taking out loans, having to work many hours off campus.... Those are all worthy financial justifications. Other worthy justifications might include wanting to study abroad for a year or planning to attend a professional conference, workshop, or meeting in your field. Be specific and honest about how this money will help you. (15 points)
6. What kinds of professional development activities would you most like to participate in? The kinds of activities we have in mind include technical communications, building a LinkedIn Profile, featured speaker sessions with LaSPACE alum, etc. What general skills are you looking to develop? Are there any topics you would like us to cover? (5 points)
7. Bonus Space: This section is not worth any points but is available if you want to tell us something else about yourself that you think we should know but did not fit into any of the questions above. Enter n/a if you do not wish to share any additional information.

## LaSPACE Higher Ed Affiliates

Baton Rouge Community College (BRCC)
Delgado Community College (DCC)
Dillard University (Dillard)
Grambling State University (GSU)
Louisiana State University and A&M College (LSU)
Louisiana State University at Alexandria
Louisiana State University Agricultural Center (LSU-Ag)
Louisiana State University Health Sciences (LSUHSC)
Louisiana State University of Shreveport (LSUS)
Louisiana Tech University (LaTech)
Loyola University (Loyola)
McNeese State University (McNeese)
Nicholls State University (Nicholls)
Northshore Technical Community College (NTTC)
Northwestern State University of Louisiana (NSULA)
Nunez Community College (NCC)
River Parishes Community College (RPCC)
Southeastern Louisiana University (SELU)
Southern University and A & M College (SUBR)
Southern University of New Orleans (SUNO)
Tulane University (Tulane)
University of Louisiana at Lafayette (ULL)
University of Louisiana at Monroe (ULM)
University of New Orleans (UNO)
Xavier University of Louisiana (Xavier)

## LaSPACE Program Administration

General administration and management is the responsibility of the LaSPACE Staff headquartered at LSU. Questions about applications to any LaSPACE programs should be directed to the program management team via the general [laspace@lsu.edu](mailto:laspace@lsu.edu) email address. Unless otherwise directed, all proposals, invoices, reports, and queries should also be submitted via email to the program email address ([laspace@lsu.edu](mailto:laspace@lsu.edu)). Please refer to the LaSPACE FAQs before contacting LaSPACE management and/or coordinators.

**LaSPACE Program Office, [laspace@lsu.edu](mailto:laspace@lsu.edu), 225-578-8697**

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