



2020-2021 VTF TORCH Scholarship Policy

01 March 2020

Subject: Vigilant Torch Foundation Eligibility, Notification, Application and Implementation of the TORCH Scholarship Program Policy, School Year 2020-2021

1. 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 \$4,000.00 per recipient, not to exceed a total of \$50,000.00 annually for all recipients, for a single school year.
 - a. The VTA/VTF Boards will establish the total amount to be awarded NLT the end of every January.
 - b. The total TORCH Scholarship amount allocated in a single year shall never exceed 1/3 of the total assets of the VTF Foundation.
 - c. Also, every January, the Scholarship Committee, based upon the total amount allocated that particular year, will estimate the approximate numbers and amounts of scholarships to be awarded.
2. 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.
3. Eligibility to Receive the TORCH Scholarship.
 - a. The following persons 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 3(a)(i) and 3(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 3(a)(i) and 3(a)(ii) above continue to be eligible as follows:
- i. While attending formal academies, fellowships, or advanced schools such as Command and General Staff College, War College, or the Sergeants Major Academy, a Noncommissioned Officer Education System course, etc.
 - ii. When assigned to a staff tour that takes them out of the Unit, e.g., other SOF service, joint billet, USSOCOM or other Joint Command support, DOD staff, or an agency in the Pentagon or embassy duty. If the member does not return to the Unit after a three-year assignment, then they are no longer eligible, unless they join the VTA.
 - iii. When assigned to instructor duty that takes them out of the Unit, e.g., the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School, the Military Freefall Parachute Course or the Special Forces Underwater Operations School. If the member does not return to the Unit after a three-year assignment, then they are no longer eligible, unless they join the VTA.
 - iv. Members that are assigned out of the Unit into a conventional unit in a non-SOF billet are not eligible while serving in the conventional unit. For example: If a service member is assigned to the Unit and then assigned to an 82nd Airborne Division unit, the member would no longer be eligible while assigned to the 82nd Airborne Division unit, unless they join the VTA.
 - v. 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.

- vi. 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.
 - vii. Line of duty death, as determined by the AUM's Service. All line of duty is eligible.
 - viii. 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 step-children 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 3(a) and 3(c) and persons in 3(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 3(a) and 3(c).

4. The Communication / Notification Process.

- a. 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.
 - ii. The Unit will appoint a Liaison Officer (LNO) to coordinate with the VTF Scholarship Committee.
- b. 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.
- 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.
- d. The Commander, CSM, LNO and the VTF President and other officers or board members will present the TORCH Scholarships at a ceremony.
- e. The VTA Board Communications Committee will create, print and present scholarship recipient certificates.
- f. Additionally, the VTA Board Fundraising Committee will create a special recognition program for new donors and repeat donors.
- g. The VTA Board Communications Committee, in conjunction with the VTA/VTF Treasurer, will print and distribute checks for the awarded amount to each scholarship recipient.
- h. The VTA Board Communications Committee will attempt to communicate, via www.vigilant-torch.org, with all students attending schools/colleges throughout their college years until they have graduated with their degree or certification.
- i. The VTA Board Communications Committee will maintain an alumni list of TORCH Scholarship recipients and will attempt to occasionally communicate to TORCH Scholarship recipients via www.vigilant-torch.org or newsletters and information emails.

5. The implementation process:

- a. Establish 2020-2021 school year Scholarship Committee:
 - i. Chairman: Steve Beitler (Chris Stevens will take over in 2021)
 - ii. Members: Mike Buggs, George Lewis, Steve Houde, Paul Haughton, Amanda Harrington, Chris Stevens, Rico Marchani, Bruce Swatek and others TBD/as required.

- b. 07 December 2019: The Scholarship Committee proposed, and the Board adopted the 2020-2021 school year TORCH Scholarship program.

- c. NLT 15 March 2020:
 - i. Board Communications Committee prepares www.vigilant-torch.org for the 2020-2021 TORCH Scholarship program.
 - ii. The Board Scholarship Committee provides this policy, the scholarship form and program information documents for distribution.
 - iii. The Unit and the VTA publicize the scholarship competition via the Vigilant Torch website and informal distribution groups.

- d. NLT 15 May 2020: 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.

- e. NLT 30 June 2020:
 - 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 Secretary.
 - iii. The VTF Secretary submits a resolution to be approved by the VTF Board of Directors.

- f. NLT 30 July 2020 or the next major Unit/VTA event: Ceremony announcing the 2020-2021 school year TORCH Scholarship recipients.

- NLT 31 August 2020: Disbursement of funds.
 - i. The VTF treasurer provides a lump sum scholarship check to each TORCH Scholarship recipient.

- ii. The VTF Treasurer and the Board Communications Committee confirm the receipt of all checks.

6. VTF Scholarship criteria:

- a. Amount: Up to \$4,000.00 per recipient, not to exceed a total of \$50,000.00 annually for all recipients, for a single school year. Award increments will be: \$4,000.00, \$3,000.00, \$2,000.00, and \$1,000.00. But amounts are at the discretion of the Scholarship Committee and/or Board of Directors.
- b. Number of VTF Scholarships for 2020-2021 school year: Up to thirty.
- c. Process: Competitive.
- d. Frequency: Applicants must apply or re-apply each year.
- e. Number: Applicants may receive up to four annual VTF Scholarships.
 - i. Applicants must submit a new application for each annual VTF Scholarship.
- f. 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:
 1. Applicants may only receive up to four total (undergraduate and graduate) TORCH Scholarships.
 - vi. Graduate school programs:
 1. Applicants may only receive up to four total (undergraduate and graduate) TORCH Scholarships.
 - vii. Full- or part-time programs.

7. Application criteria:

- a. Community service (addressed in the cover letter):
 - i. Military service counts as community service.

- ii. Community service will be scored on the basis of a scale of zero (none), one (some community service), two (significant community service), or three (outstanding community service).
 1. AUM/FUM automatically receive a score of at least two.
 2. If an AUM is deployed for six months or more, that AUM will automatically receive a three score.
- b. Grade Point Average (GPA) (addressed in the cover letter and transcript):
- i. Minimum: 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 on the basis of one through four (4.0), based upon an unweighted GPA scale.
- c. Essay (in a separate Word file) (Apple Pages and Google Docs users should export their essay document into Microsoft Word prior to submitting it):
- i. The essay should not exceed three 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).
 - ii. The essay will pertain to one or more new topic(s) every year.
 - iii. 2020-2021 school year essay topic: The lessons we take from obstacles we encounter can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a challenge, setback, or failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?
 - iv. The essay topic will be voted upon by the VTF Scholarship Committee.
 - v. Essays will be evaluated based upon a scale of one through four. One is poor, two is fair, three is good, four is excellent.
 - vi. Essays will be graded in like categories. In effect, grade high schoolers against high schoolers, undergraduates against undergraduates, graduate students against graduate students, and technical students against other technical students. Also, spouses will be graded separately.
 - vii. The points from the cover letter, community service, and essay sections of the application will each be individually sub-totaled, each 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. Based upon their final, total scores, applicants will be considered for the VTF TORCH Scholarship.
- d. VTF TORCH Scholarship applicants must complete the attached form and provide a detailed cover letter (in a separate Word file) (Apple Pages and Google Docs users should export their cover letter document into Microsoft Word prior to submitting it). The sections in the form and letter should correspond to the sections below and 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):

- 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. Why you are applying for the TORCH scholarship?
 - v. Provide your name, physical address, email address and telephone number.
 - vi. Provide the name, physical address, email address, telephone number and relationship for your AUM/FUM sponsor (who could also be an AUM/FUM).
 - vii. Certify they prepared their application (within the form, not in a separate document).
 - viii. Information in paragraph 6.a, community service.
 - ix. Information in paragraph 6.b, GPA.
 - x. Cover letters will be evaluated based upon scores of one through four. One is poor, two is fair, three is good, four is excellent.
- e. 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.
- f. All applicants must submit their application, ask questions, update information, etc., via scholarship@vigilant-torch.org. Persons with disabilities may submit an application by mail after approval (so the Scholarship Committee is expecting it).
- g. 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.
- h. TORCH Scholarship recipients may be quoted for web site and other marketing materials pertaining to the TORCH Scholarship.
8. 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. Evaluators 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.

9. 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 is 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.