



# 2026 Next Step Scholarships

## Tips for a Successful Application

Strong applications clearly reflect the applicant's experiences, values, and readiness for graduate education.

- Be specific and authentic. Use real examples from your nursing practice rather than general statements.
- Describe situations, actions you took, and outcomes whenever possible.
- Reflect on impact. Explain how your actions affected patients, families, colleagues, or your unit.
- Connect your goals to patient care. Clearly articulate how your graduate education will enhance compassionate care and strengthen nursing practice at Methodist.
- Choose recommenders thoughtfully. Select individuals who know your work well and can provide detailed, example-driven letters.
- Prepare your recommenders. Share the scholarship purpose and recommendation guidance so they can write strong, focused letters.
- Ensure your professional photo is recent, well-lit, and appropriate for professional recognition.
- Proofread carefully. Review your application for clarity, grammar, and completeness before submitting.

## Letters of Recommendation

Letters should be 1–2 pages and include specific examples rather than general praise. Letters should address the relationship between the applicant and recommender, and why the recommender believes the applicant is deserving of a scholarship. Successful letters should include:

### Supervisor

- Examples of leadership, reliability, and professional growth
- Contributions to unit culture, patient outcomes, or process improvement
- Readiness for graduate-level education

### Co-Worker

- Teamwork and collaboration
- Willingness to support peers and patients
- Examples of going above and beyond in daily practice

### Former Patient

- Description of care received
- How the applicant demonstrated compassion, trust, and professionalism
- Impact the applicant had on the patient or family experience

A letter of recommendation from a former patient is a required component of the application. We recognize that some nurses, particularly those working in short-stay settings, may have limited time to develop long-term patient relationships. Additionally, some applicants may currently be away from the bedside while pursuing education with the intention of returning to direct patient care. If you do not currently work directly with patients or are unsure how to identify a former patient, please follow these steps:

- Meet with your supervisor to discuss your situation and receive guidance on how to appropriately reach out to a former patient.
- Ask your supervisor whether patient thank-you letters, written comments, or patient satisfaction survey feedback are available and appropriate to use in support of this requirement.

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## Have Questions?

We encourage applicants to reach out to members of the Selection Committee if you have questions or would like guidance while completing your application. Committee members are happy to support you in submitting a strong and complete application.

### Selection Committee

**Mindy Barna**

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### Additional Questions:

Contact RyAnne Elsesser | 402-354-5430 | ryanne.elsesser@nmhs.org

