CHINA SCHOLARSHIP COUNCIL-YALE WORLD SCHOLARS

GUIDELINES FOR CHOOSING APPLICANTS 2019-2020

Brief history

Since the inception of the program in 2006, 162 CSC-Yale World Scholars have matriculated at Yale. Thirty-seven of these students to date have received PhDs. Graduates have gone on to further training (postdocs, medical or law school), faculty positions, or careers in biotech, finance, and management consulting. The number of incoming students in each entering class was initially limited to 8 students in the original 5-year agreement between the China Scholarship Council and Yale University, which included partner institutions Fudan University, Huazhong University of Science & Technology (HUST), Peking University (PKU), Tsinghua University, and Zhejiang University (ZJU). With the growing success of the program, Nanjing University, Shanghai Jiao-Tong University (SJTU), and Sun-Yat Sen University (SYSU) joined as partner schools in 2011; the University of Science and Technology of China (USTC) joined in 2017. We now admit up to 20 students per year.

Recommendations for identifying nominees

Each partner school may nominate up to 4 students for the CSC-Yale World Scholars Program. We strongly encourage the Program Leaders at each partner school to distribute the CSC-Yale Competition to all eligible senior undergraduate students to obtain as many eligible applicants as possible. We also encourage Program Leaders to include interviews of students by a panel of faculty to help identify students who demonstrate the qualities we seek in successful applicants.

How we assess applicants

Transcripts and the GRE and TOEFL tests

We do not have a minimum GPA requirement or minimum test scores. Our Graduate School does, however, require a minimum score of 100 on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) in order for students to serve as teaching assistants, which our program requires. In some cases a demonstrated proficiency in English during the interview can make up for a weaker TOEFL score. The Graduate Record Examination (GRE) is required of applicants to our Computational Biology and Bioinformatics Track but is not required for applicants to other BBS Tracks.

The personal statement

The personal statement is viewed by the admissions committee as one of the most important parts of the application. The purpose of the personal statement is for the applicant to express a suitability and motivation for PhD study by describing accomplishments in the laboratory or field work that are relevant to the PhD program of interest. Students should emphasize their specific role in the research and write a thoughtful summary of what was learned from the study. This is particularly important for applicants who have participated in large multi-member team projects. Applicants are also strongly encouraged to read about the BBS Program and include in their personal statement possible thesis topics and faculty members in whose labs they might wish to conduct research.

Letters of recommendation
Three letters of recommendation are required. The most useful letters are from individuals who have observed the applicant in a research setting and can comment on the following skills that are important for success in graduate school: scientific skills, critical thinking skills, knowledge of the relevant literature, communication skills, ability to work independently and as part of a team, motivation, determination, and creativity. *Note: Letters from influential leaders at the school or from classroom instructors do not provide as much impact in the admissions process unless they can comment specifically on the applicant's proficiency in these relevant skills.*

Interviews
Each nominated applicant is interviewed in person for 25 minutes by a committee of three Yale faculty. Most of the interview focuses on the students' research experiences and accomplishments. While the student leads this discussion, the interviewers will ask frequent questions which probe the student's knowledge of research background, methodology, key data, interpretations (including limitations of the study design), and alternative strategies. Time is reserved at the end for the student to describe their potential research interests at Yale (possible research areas or faculty mentors with whom the applicant would want to perform research), and also for addressing any questions the applicant may have. Successful applicants all demonstrate a comprehensive mastery of their research project/topic and have invested significant time in identifying relevant interests at Yale.

Qualities in applicants that we look for in the personal statement, recommendation letters, and interviews
PhD study emphasizes mastery of principles and applying them creatively to new situations rather than on memorization of facts. This style of learning is new to most of our trainees, including students from China. We believe the most successful candidates will have demonstrated several important characteristics as undergraduates:

1. *Scientific skills*: Students should illustrate their scientific skills in the personal statement by describing independent achievement on a project. Scientific ability can also be described in a recommendation letter by the supervisor of the project. Evidence of scientific products (software, abstracts or papers published, posters presented) should be referenced or included as appendices in the application.

2. *Scholarship of the relevant scientific literature*: The personal statement or recommendation letters should illustrate how the student critically reads and understands primary literature in a given field and integrates this information into their scientific worldview and/or research.

3. *Capacity for critical thought, problem solving, and creativity*: It can be helpful for the applicant or a research supervisor to identify specific examples in which the applicant managed to analyze a specific problem and solve it.

4. *Perseverance*: The personal statement or recommendation letters should demonstrate the student's ability to work on single problem or project, drive it forward, and recognize roadblocks and setbacks and troubleshoot or adjust strategy.