

Theme Music ([00:01](#)):

Please listen carefully.

Taylor Pardue ([00:08](#)):

Welcome to the NC State Philanthropy Podcast, telling the world how we Think and Do through the support of our friends, alumni and more. I'm your host, Taylor Pardue.

([00:18](#)):

On this episode, we're joined by Eva Feucht, director of the Park Scholarships program, to discuss its application process, as well as how supportive Pack members make the selection committee possible.

([00:32](#)):

Thanks so much for joining us again today, Eva. We're very grateful to have you back and looking forward to talking more about Park Scholarships program.

Eva Feucht ([00:50](#)):

Thanks for having me back. I'm really honored.

Taylor Pardue ([00:52](#)):

So, we've covered a lot in the first episode — talking about the history, especially, obviously, the philanthropy part of this scholarship program. Talk a little bit about how students can ... where do they start? How do they find out about this program and start the application process?

Eva Feucht ([01:08](#)):

Great. Well, anyone who is pursuing freshman admission to NC State and is a U.S. citizen or permanent resident or graduating from a high school in the United States can apply for the Park Scholarship. It doesn't matter your major. We do not look at financial need. Any major universitywide, as long as you're an incoming freshman, you can apply.

Taylor Pardue ([01:29](#)):

OK. What are you looking for out of a Park Scholar? I know this is a very prestigious program and just, really, as we demonstrated, you demonstrated so well in the previous episode. These students, when they graduate, they really do go out of here and change the world.

Eva Feucht ([01:45](#)):

Yes, we are a great reflection of the university where we live. We have four things that we're looking for. We look at character, we look at leadership, scholarship and service, and when you think about NC State and our history as a place that was created to serve the people, to create knowledge that serves the people and to lead in doing that, we model that exactly in the Park Scholarships program. So, brilliant students for whom leadership and service are not a priority are not going to be a great fit for the Park Scholarship. They might be admitted to the university and thrive in their academic field, and that is fantastic, but for us, we are looking for students who not only are brilliant but also are really committed to using that for the good of society at scale.

Taylor Pardue ([02:34](#)):

So, for students who really, that resonates with them, I mean, that's the spirit of the university that they're looking for, what's the next step? What's the actual application process look like, and who all is involved in that selection process?

Eva Feucht (02:47):

Yeah. High school seniors can apply in the fall of their senior year. The application is due Nov. 1. They need to apply to NC State for admission as well as do some accompanying pieces for the Park Scholarship. All of the information is on our website. So, if they go to [park.ncsu.edu](http://park.ncsu.edu), then they can find out all the information about how to do that. We'll be asking a couple pieces in addition to the NC State admissions application. The admissions application, as applicants will know, is where they're listing their activities in high school. They're writing an essay, they're writing about honors they may have received and a few other things for us.

(03:30):

In addition to that, we're looking for two recommendations that should come from people who know the candidate well. It is not about the title or the prestige of the recommender; it is about the specific examples the recommender can give us about the candidate's qualifications in scholarship, leadership, service and character. And then the student will write a couple of essays for us as well, and we've worked with our friends in the University Honors Program to have the same essay prompt. Many of our students who will be pursuing a spot in the University Honors Program can use that same essay they're writing for that for the Park Scholarship. We're trying to make the bar as low as possible, but we do want to learn a lot about the students to help us make a good decision. So, then you asked me, "Then what?" How do we make these hard decisions?

Taylor Pardue (04:18):

I wouldn't want to have to make them.

Eva Feucht (04:19):

It's not easy.

Taylor Pardue (04:20):

That's the tough [part] because, my understanding, you have thousands of applicants every year.

Eva Feucht (04:24):

That's exactly right. So, last year, we did have more than 2,500, which is a lot. And keep in mind, we do have a GPA minimum of 3.8 ...

Taylor Pardue (04:32):

OK

Eva Feucht (04:32):

... and that's reflective of just what it takes to get into NC State today. Right? Only the very best students academically are going to be competitive for admission to the university, let alone to be looked at for a really selective scholarship. After the student has applied for Park and for admission, then we, both admissions and Park, begin looking at their application materials. We engage a committee of about 400 people — wonderful selection committee volunteers who come from all over North Carolina and all over the country — and they read the applications. And not only that, but they read applications from candidates who come from their geographic part of the world.

(05:15):

We do that because we feel it's really valuable to have applicants being evaluated by people who understand something of the context where that applicant's coming from. Our volunteers will tell you that

the job is difficult, and they will also tell you that they always finish this work really inspired about a couple things: inspired about NC State, that we are attracting exceptional young people to pursue their education here, and just inspired about the future because, despite the narrative that is often commonly heard about how “young people these days ...,” I’m here to tell you, there are a lot of extraordinarily kind and capable young people out there.

(05:55):

So, we get to learn about them in our process, and the hardest thing about it is, there are never as many spaces as there are qualified people. We read those applications, and then we identify a small number — a few hundred — to interview on Zoom. Again, the same volunteers who read the applications, they conduct those interviews for us. Again, regionally based. That happens in January, and then we have the very hard job of identifying a small group to bring to campus — about a hundred — for a final round of interviews. That happens late February, early March.

(06:29):

Typically, for that, we bring in some of NC State’s world-class faculty to work side by side with representatives from the Regional Selection Committee, and those folks will evaluate the candidates during a really wonderful weekend. We bring everybody together, and then [they] help us make the final, very, very, very hard decisions of who we can offer the scholarship to. The only constraint there is the amount of dollars. The talent in the Scholars is extraordinary. So, as we grow our financial base, we’re able to grow the number of recipients, because there are certainly many, many qualified people there.

Taylor Pardue (07:06):

And if listeners haven’t already listened to our previous episode, we’ve talked about the Park Foundation, how they first created this scholarship program, and then, now, the Stamp Scholars Program, which has partnered with it to enable it to bring in even more students. But still, the need is always there, and we’re really appreciative of donors making it possible for us to bring these talented students on campus. To speak of the application process, I can only imagine how difficult it is, but I think the results bear it out that you’re doing a great job of who you select because, we used the word “investment” in the previous episode, you’re really finding students who have this mentality and this personality to go along with changing the world, truly, and really pouring into these students and making sure that they’re the right fit. And I think the results really bear that out.

Eva Feucht (07:51):

Yes, I would agree with you about that. In fact, that’s one of the talking points I always have in my training for our selection committee. I literally have a slide where I show them some of the examples of phenomenal outcomes that our Scholars and alumni are having, and I say, “If you’ve done this before, congratulations, you’ve been doing an excellent job.” What I always say when we finish our process is, I’m very confident that we selected people who are highly qualified for the scholarship, which is not the same thing as saying, “I’m very confident we selected everyone who was highly qualified.” You hear the difference in those two things. That’s the painful part. We work really hard to recruit every finalist to come to NC State, whether or not we’re able to extend them an offer of this scholarship.

(08:36):

In fact, the university provides those students with a partial scholarship, which certainly does help, but we really have as a goal, and we say at finalist weekend, we feel every candidate should understand that the university stands on its own. It’s not as if you would never want to be here if you weren’t in this scholarship program. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, I think that should make it even more attractive and exciting for an applicant is to know this is an exceptional place. If I have this scholarship that’s even more support and opportunity for me to grow my abilities, but I’m going to get a great education here either way.

Taylor Pardue ([09:09](#)):

Yeah, absolutely. So, a student has applied, they've interviewed, they've been selected. We've talked a little bit about in the previous episode, but really, the programmatic side of Park. Some of it's baked in, but what can an accepted Park member, what can they do to maximize their time in this program before they go out into the world?

Eva Feucht ([09:29](#)):

That's a great question, Taylor. What can they do to make the most of the opportunity provided to them? It starts, really, I would say, with faculty. I can't emphasize it strongly enough how exceptional our faculty here are. We are fortunate to work with a lot of them. In this program, we have a specific role called Park Faculty Scholar, where two of our distinguished faculty work with one specific cohort of students and walk with them through their four-year journey. Part of what happens with that is, students learn, "Hey, these are people. These are real people. They're kind, they care about me, and maybe other faculty are, too."

([10:12](#)):

Right? So, taking advantage of the fact that we have that culture here, and the faculty really want to support the student, the whole student, going up and talking to them, asking about their research, asking about ways to get involved with that professor maybe beyond just the class that you're taking with them, asking them who they know in industry, how can they help you get connected with co-ops or internships or other kinds of things like that. I mean, that's just such an extraordinary resource that sometimes students, even mine, might be intimidated at first to take advantage of because our faculty are brilliant and quite distinguished, but they match that in kindness and heart. So, I definitely always encourage students, not just Park Scholars, but all NC State students, to think really carefully about not missing out on that. And then the earlier you do it, the better.

([10:58](#)):

But also within our program, there's really the opportunity within our community, within this alumni community that we have, that our students have direct access to through an online community that we have where a student can go in and say, civil engineering or philosophy or business or whatever they might be interested in, and find others in our community who care about the same things, which, once again, might feel intimidating at first, but the folks on the other side of that are so receptive to receiving that support, which, again, I think speaks to NC State's culture. I would definitely recommend those things. There's sort of, many of the answers I might give you really aren't unique to Park Scholars, but about just making the most of all the things. Like study abroad.

Taylor Pardue ([11:37](#)):

Sure.

Eva Feucht ([11:37](#)):

Absolutely. I would recommend everyone to consider doing that, to do the things like the co-ops or the internships, undergraduate research, to go to a professional conference, to do all those kinds of things. Now, what we have here in our program is the opportunity to support students with that financially. In addition to having their education paid for, we do have a grant program where students can apply for support to do all the kinds of things that I just mentioned. So, that's exceptional. We really encourage our students to receive that support as well.

Taylor Pardue ([12:03](#)):

That's a great segue. I was actually going to ask about that next. We talked about it a little bit in the previous episode as well, talking about the learning trips and the service trips that Park has baked into the program. You're accepted into the Park program. You're obviously accepted into NC State. You're getting the world-class education right from the get-go. You have opportunities to study abroad and things like that. Talk about some of those specific programs, if you'd like to just elaborate a little bit more on what all is involved with those. I believe they're every other year. It's a sophomore, senior, freshman, junior.

Eva Feucht ([12:36](#)):

OK, so, you're talking about the specific enrichment experiences that we provide for the Park Scholars? Yes. So, we call it the Park Enrichment Academy, and they, every semester, have a seminar course that they register for. It's an official course on the books, and for one hour a week, they come together. It might be with just their own cohort, or it might be with Scholars in the other three classes, and we do all kinds of things with that time. They're using that time to plan the leadership trips that I talked about, to plan service endeavors, to meet with distinguished speakers. As I mentioned earlier, folks like the governor or the chancellor, mayor, other local or state level leaders may come in and talk to them. We do career-planning and budgeting workshops.

([13:20](#)):

We also have an embedded counselor in our program that supports the Park Scholars, the Goodnight Scholars and the Caldwell Fellows. We talk a lot about wellness, and we bring in the embedded counselor to give our students direct strategies to help them be healthy. It's a big range of things that are included in that, but it also really keeps them connected to each other as a cohort. So, they had that support in place over the four years, and some of the things that can come out of that just by proximity and being on that journey together: I think about 321 Coffee and how those students were in that seminar that I just described as freshmen, had an idea, looked at each other and said, "Can we do this together? What would that be like if we launched an organization that provided coffee and employed people with intellectual and developmental disabilities?" And because they were able to turn to each other and had that community, had that cohort in place, they got it up and running in their dorm room, as I know you know. I saw that. I mean, they were in my office saying to me, "We have an idea. What do you think about this?" I'll never forget it. And now they're a thriving business, making an impact, hiring, last I heard, it was more than 60 people in multiple locations, including here at NC State.

Taylor Pardue ([14:31](#)):

Including, yeah. I was going to say. Yeah.

Eva Feucht ([14:32](#)):

Right. But they will tell you that started by being able to turn to other service-minded leaders and say, "Can we do this together?" That's another part of the kinds of things that happen through the Park Enrichment Academy.

Taylor Pardue ([14:44](#)):

So, we've talked about applying, we've talked about becoming, talk about the interactions between alumni. There's obviously alumni who are involved with the Park Selection Committee, but there's really a lot of synergy, to use that kind of word, between current students and young alumni, older alumni. Talk about it a little bit, about how all that interaction takes place and what everyone benefits from that.

Eva Feucht ([15:07](#)):

Yeah, that's a great question, Taylor. It does begin with the selection committee because, often, about half of the selection committee these days are Park alumni, and we have so many other people involved, too, which is fantastic. The alumni who are on the selection committee then often will help us recruit the recipient; say, "I appreciate interviewing you. I'm so happy we've made you the offer. I really hope you'll come to NC State." So, it even begins as early as that. But then after the students arrive, they have the opportunity to engage with alumni in a lot of different ways. We have alumni mentoring hours throughout the year where alumni will just come back to campus. They come from all over the country and beyond, and we'll just sit in our scholar commons and have coffee and sit with students and talk about their career trajectory or all kinds of other life topics, and just really in an informal, very approachable setting.

(15:56):

And that's not just Park alumni. We've had a number of NC State alumni come and do that, too, who have either been on our selection committee or other just connections with the program. So, that's been wonderful. We also have an interview series that our students do, and if any of our students are listening, you'll hear something new here, because we're about to make some changes to this in the coming year. Our students conduct an interview with a Park alum in the first year, and we assign them to go and find someone to contact and interview. And our alumni are incredibly receptive to this, but the student can choose who to contact based on shared interests, which could be professional service or what have you. And then our juniors have been interviewing someone about leadership. We've been doing that for many years, too.

(16:40):

Beginning this year, we're going to just grow that into a four-part series where, every year, the Scholars will interview someone. So, in the first year, it'll really be framed. You remember I mentioned earlier, we have four program pillars. Four years of college, there'll be one each year. Their freshman year interview will be about character. So, again, they'll be interviewing Park alumni, but asking really big-picture questions. "How do you define success?" "What does that look like for you?" "How have you navigated difficulty?" "How do you develop resilience in yourself, and how do you stay healthy?" Those kinds of really just big-picture things. And then in the sophomore year, it'll be around service. A student can identify someone who's really making broad impact at scale and then talk to that person about what that looks like for them and, in fact, the students' own plans to go out and improve our world.

(17:31):

And then the junior year will be around leadership, as I said, and then the senior year will be scholarship as students are preparing to go out into whatever comes next, whether that's more school or work or service or something else. I anticipate that many of the interviewees will be Park alumni, but often the students, we let them choose. And so, they have the opportunity, really, to identify anyone who is inspiring them to be able to talk to. Those are a few structured examples. We also have our every-other-year symposium, sPark, which I mentioned earlier on the first episode, and that's a great way for our students and alumni to connect with each other, but the alumni love it. They really do, and, increasingly, my alumni span from the class of 2000 to the class of 2025. So, that's a big range. Alumni-to-alumni support has also been major as well.

(18:19):

And we do have a very active Park Alumni Society. They are their own independent 501(c)(3) with a wonderful, active board, and they are really engaged in supporting the program too. They plan activities like this and gatherings in cities all around the country and things like that. But they really do stay engaged.

Taylor Pardue (18:36):



I was going to say, which seems so fitting because of this application process and review process. You've selected these types of people, and it just tracks that they would continue on with that spirit of togetherness and that spirit of connectivity and giving back.

(18:51):

I would be remiss if I didn't mention again in this episode: How can people really support this world-changing mission?

Eva Feucht (18:57):

Well, I appreciate you asking, and so many people are supporting us, and we're incredibly grateful for that. Many people support us through time, through being on our selection committee, or through coming and speaking to the Scholars. Being available for mentoring, for hiring, all of those kinds of things, which is just tremendous. And then, also, of course, philanthropy, which as I always say, "No dollars, no Scholars." Really, philanthropy is at the heart of why we're able to do all of this, and as I have met our donors and listened to why they support us, I don't twist any arms, Taylor. I don't find myself needing to convince anyone, but folks who have their needs met and then have a little more available to them and are looking around thinking, "I'd like to do something good with this. What can I do?" We have an answer to that.

Taylor Pardue (19:50):

Exactly.

Eva Feucht (19:50):

We have an opportunity. We have an answer to that question for folks who are inspired by investing in young people, where the investment is not just in that person. You can ask any of our Scholars, and they'll tell you, because we make sure they know from the beginning: This is not about them. They are a channel. They are really just a way for broader impact to be made for many, many more people. But that's completely consistent with who they are and who they want to be anyway. It's a really, truly exciting thing for folks who want to make a difference to be connected with those who want to make a difference financially and have the ability to do that financially; to be connected with young people who absolutely have the potential to do that. It's a fantastic match, and we're really fortunate to be part of making that happen.

Taylor Pardue (20:36):

Sounds great. Yeah, I think, I always try to support volunteerism, especially because a lot of times people think giving means dollars — and it does, some — but there's just so many ways to support the program, and then gifts of all sizes makes such a large impact.

Eva Feucht (20:51):

Absolutely.

Taylor Pardue (20:52):

A compounding impact.

Eva Feucht (20:53):

Yes. For sure.

Taylor Pardue (20:54):

You mentioned something, with the students and the alumni meeting and just, for talking about them being a channel and kind of reiterating that thought. I just love that aspect of, you bring these students in, you train them, they have this desire to go out and really make a change, and then bringing these alumni back through volunteerism, through speaking engagements, things like that to show them it is not just theoretical, really, the Think and Do mentality runs through that, I feel like as well.

Eva Feucht ([21:22](#)):

Yes.

Taylor Pardue ([21:22](#)):

Showing them, what does success look like for you? Somebody is out there living the change that I want to be and just taking it to the next level. I just love how that comes full circle.

Eva Feucht ([21:33](#)):

That's really well said. I cannot improve on what you just said. That's exactly right. And most of our donors, I mean, to be able to see it now is incredible. Is incredible. It is a living gift. It is a living contribution. I mean, literally, right? And that the student who receives this support is a living, fellow human being; happens to be one with enormous, enormous ability, but you get to be part of helping that ability make the most impact that it can. It's incredible.

Taylor Pardue ([22:05](#)):

It really is. We'll put more links in the shownotes. Obviously, listeners, just cannot encourage you enough: Go online, read more about Park. There is just so much that this program does for the university, and then just for the greater community, the world community as well, just so much to learn about. But, Eva, thank you so much for joining us for two episodes, now, to really talk about this program and dig into it a little deeper and, just, really appreciate all that you're doing here at the university. This program is fantastic.

Eva Feucht ([22:33](#)):

Thank you, Taylor. This has been a lot of fun. Really appreciate it.

Taylor Pardue ([22:42](#)):

To learn more about the Park Scholarships program, please visit [park.ncsu.edu](http://park.ncsu.edu). If you'd like to hear even more stories of Wolfpack success, please subscribe to the NC State Philanthropy Podcast today via Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Stitcher or Podbean. Please leave a comment and rating as well to let us know how we're doing. Thanks for listening, and as always, go Pack.