



ANNOUNCEMENT FOR
THE 2026 DR. ROBERT OKEY SCHOLARSHIP
SPONSORED BY THE WATER ENVIRONMENT ASSOCIATION OF UTAH

INTRODUCTION

The Dr. Robert W. Okey Scholarship was established to honor a man who dedicated over 50 years to the wastewater industry, the Water Environment Federation (WEF), and the Water Environment Association of Utah (WEAU). Dr. Okey worked in the wastewater industry for many years before earning his Ph.D. and becoming a professor at the University of Utah. Many current professionals in Utah's industry remember taking classes from him. He authored numerous papers and books and held patents related to various aspects of wastewater treatment. He is fondly remembered for his many unique papers and presentations at annual conferences, as well as his contributions to advancing the goals of WEAU.

ELIGIBILITY

This scholarship is open to any undergraduate and graduate student currently enrolled in at least nine (9) credit hours in any Civil or Environmental Programs, whether in engineering or a related field of science or technology. Applicants must also be members of WEAU (visit www.wef.org to sign up).

Eligible students may apply for the scholarship each year it is offered. However, a candidate can only receive a maximum of \$3,000 in grant money from the Dr. Robert Okey Scholarship sponsored by WEAU over their lifetime.

DEADLINE

Completed applications for this year's scholarship must be submitted electronically by October 13, 2026. Late submissions will not be considered. The scholarship recipients will be notified by October 28, 2026. They will also be invited to receive the scholarship at the WEAU Mid-year Conference on November 4, 2026, at the Utah Cultural Celebration Center, located at 1355 West 3100 South, West Valley City, Utah.

SCHOLARSHIP AWARD

This year, two scholarship opportunities will be available. The first scholarship in the amount of \$2,500.00 will be awarded to a deserving graduate student, while the second scholarship, in the amount of \$2,000.00, will be awarded to a deserving undergraduate student. The scholarships will be given as a one-time award.

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

The following materials are required:

1. A cover page that includes the following information:
 - a. Name
 - b. Phone number
 - c. Email address
 - d. College or University you are currently attending
 - e. Degree program
 - f. Expected completion date
2. A complete resume
3. A current transcript
4. A statement of career goals and interests
5. Write a 1,000-1,500-word essay that answers each question on the given topic, following American Psychological Association (APA) style with fully justified margins.

Undergraduate Student Topic – Circular Water Economy in the Wastewater Industry

- Define the "circular water economy" and explain how it differs from the traditional linear "take-use-dispose" model of water management. Use a specific wastewater treatment example to illustrate the difference.
- What are the main barriers—technical, economic, regulatory, or social—that prevent widespread adoption of water reuse in the United States? Choose one barrier and propose a realistic solution.
- Wastewater contains water, energy, and nutrients (like nitrogen and phosphorus). Describe two technologies used to recover any of these resources from wastewater and evaluate their feasibility for a mid-sized municipal treatment plant.
- Compare potable reuse (turning treated wastewater directly back into drinking water) with non-potable reuse (irrigation, industrial use). What are the public health, technical, and public perception differences between them?

Graduate Student Topic – Circular Water Economy in the Wastewater Industry

- Define the "circular water economy" and explain how it differs from the traditional linear "take-use-dispose" model of water management. Use a specific wastewater treatment example to illustrate the difference.
- What are the main barriers—technical, economic, regulatory, or social—that prevent widespread adoption of water reuse in the United States? Choose one barrier and propose a realistic solution.
- Analyze the economic viability of resource recovery (biosolids, biogas, struvite/phosphorus, reclaimed water) at a wastewater treatment facility. Under what market or policy conditions does recovery become cost-competitive with disposal or virgin resource extraction?
- Using a life-cycle assessment (LCA) framework, compare the environmental footprint of a conventional wastewater treatment plant against one designed for resource recovery and water reuse. What trade-offs emerge (e.g., energy use vs. water savings)?

SELECTION CRITERIA

A committee appointed by the WEAU Board members will evaluate the submitted applications based on the following:

1. The completeness of the application form
2. Eligibility of the applicant
3. A review of the applicant's statement of career goals and interests
4. The quality of the applicant's essay, including:
 - a. Questions answered clearly for the selected topic
 - b. Detailed information supported by your research on the topic
 - c. A complete list of sources included in a reference section at the end of your essay (not counted in the word total)

SUBMITTAL INSTRUCTIONS

Please send completed applications to okeyscholarship@weau.org as a single PDF document with the following file name: 2026_Okey_Scholarship_LastName_FirstName.pdf. Submit completed scholarship applications electronically by **October 13, 2026**. Late submittals will not be eligible for consideration.