



Graham Downes International Scholarship



Education Level
High School



Timing
4 ½ Month Stay



Scholarships Awarded
1

Who is Eligible

The USRF is accepting applications from U.S. high school male rugby players who are in good standing with their rugby team and their school.

Applicants must have been born in 2008 or later.

Apply Now!



[www.usrugbyfoundation.org/
college-scholarships](http://www.usrugbyfoundation.org/college-scholarships)

Application Deadline

Thursday, December 5, 2025

How to Apply

To apply, submit your completed application and supporting materials, including your high school transcript and a coach's recommendation, **by the deadline above**. Finalists will be interviewed virtually by the Nelson College Scholarship Committee.

About the Scholarship



The Graham Downes International Scholarship at Nelson College offers a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for U.S. high school rugby players to live, study, and train in New Zealand—home to one of the world’s most respected rugby traditions. Established in memory of the late Graham Downes, the scholarship honors his legacy of leadership, passion, and dedication to growing the game by providing a bridge between American and international rugby.

Recipients spend four and a half months at Nelson College—from roughly mid-March to mid-August 2026—coinciding with the school’s rugby training season and competition schedule. During their stay, student-athletes will experience New Zealand’s unique rugby culture, gain advanced technical and leadership skills, and develop lifelong friendships and connections.

This Scholarship reflects the U.S. Rugby Foundation’s commitment to investing in the next generation of athletes who demonstrate both excellence on the field and character off it.

The scholarship removes financial barriers, enabling recipients to fully focus on their rugby and academic experience. It covers all major expenses, including tuition, boarding (either on campus or in a homestay), travel and medical insurance, uniforms, extracurricular activities, New Zealand government and administrative fees, and round-trip airfare.

This program is more than an athletic scholarship—it’s a transformational experience that builds confidence, cultural understanding, and a lifelong connection to the global rugby community.



Nelson College
NEW ZEALAND
Te Kura Tamaitene o Whakatū

Contact Kurt Mockenhaupt to learn more about the Graham Downes International Scholarship
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