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Vans footwear company launches four-year scholarship at Berklee College of Music

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By Matt Rocheleau, Boston.com Staff

Vans, the footwear and apparel company with deep roots in music culture, is launching a four-year scholarship at Berklee College of Music and plans to partner with the school and its students in other ways, officials announced this week.

The “Vans Berklee ‘Off The Wall’ Scholarship” will be awarded annually to a talented musician from the United States, the college and company said in a joint statement. The award will cover full tuition, room and board for four years.

Recipients will also be outfitted with a Vans-themed dorm room and laptop and will be given an opportunity to showcase their musical talents during events, like The Vans Warped Tour, and at venues like the House of Vans, officials said.

Vans also plans to offer opportunities to other Berklee students, including performances at Vans venues across the country, officials said. Vans Vinyl will also collaborate with Berklee’s student-run label Heavy Rotation Records to produce and distribute a compilation of student music. Upperclassmen will also have the chance to participate in a music-related summer internship at Vans.

Vans Berklee Scholars will be chosen through [auditions and interviews](#) Berklee’s admissions department holds each year. Scholars will be picked each May, officials said. The first scholar will be start at the college in the coming fall.

Officials described how they plan to pick recipients of the scholarship.


“At Vans, ‘Off The Wall’ is a state of mind, thinking differently and embracing people who love art, music, action sports and/or street culture,” the statement said. “The ideal candidate for the Vans Berklee Scholarship will demonstrate the ‘Off The Wall’ spirit via their personal self-expression through music. The scholarship will be awarded to a musician whose focus and talent represents Vans’ dedication to musical progression and evolution.”

US citizens and residents will be eligible for the award, officials said. College applicants who qualify, based on merit and financial need, will be nominated for the Scholarship by Berklee’s scholarship committee.

Scholarship applicants will be considered for a host of other scholarships that Berklee awards annually.

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Officials said the scholarship is the first educational initiative of its kind for Vans.

“Berklee awarded its first bachelor of music degrees in 1966, the year Vans was founded,” Vans president Kevin Bailey said in a statement. “Throughout the decades, Vans and Berklee have both celebrated the freedom and individuality that comes from creative expression, making it a perfect partnership.”

“Vans’ history has been built alongside athletes, artists, designers, and musicians – as each has made Vans part of the canvas of their lives. That is something we look for in all of our brand relationships,” he said. “We are looking forward to a long relationship together embracing and elevating students’ creativity.”

Jeffrey Dorenfeld, Berklee professor of music business/management and advisor to Heavy Rotation Records, spearheaded the partnership with Vans.

“Here you find two institutions with like-minded philosophies: freedom of self-expression through creativity,” said a statement from Dorenfeld. “For Vans it can be demonstrated on a skateboard, a bike or on stage. At Berklee, creativity is found in the classroom, on stage, in a studio or behind a computer. Together we hope to enable students to live out their dreams.”

Matt Rocheleau can be reached at matthew.rocheleau@globe.com. Looking for more coverage of area colleges and universities? Go to our [Your Campus pages](#).

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