

## SCHOLARSHIP TIPS

### Scholarship Applications

- Review Scholarship Application Forms for the criteria and information requested. Ask for help if you do not understand what is being asked.
- BE NEAT, and where possible, type your responses.
- Organize your application when presenting information. Think of appropriate categories of organization such as academic merit, leadership experience, extra-curricular commitments, personal strengths or financial need.
- Provide only data that is required for the application. Use all the space provided, but do not use more as extra pages are discarded. Do not pad your form with extraneous, unrelated detail. Answer questions completely and honestly. Accuracy is your priority.
- Use dynamic and appropriate language that is clear, assertive and succinct.
- Check for spelling and grammatical errors. Errors can result in an instant loss of credibility.
- Arrange for final marks to be included if they are required.
- Be sure you know when and to whom the completed Application Form should be returned.
- Sign your application.
- Remember to send a thank you letter if you are a recipient. Many scholarships have been discontinued because recipients do not acknowledge donors.

### Letters of Recommendation

1. Give the referee all the pertinent information IN WRITING regarding the scholarship for which you are applying.
2. Give the referee a written list of your accomplishments from which s/he may choose to improve the reference. Organize this list according to the criteria required for the scholarship application.
3. Indicate whether the referee should address the letter "To Whom It May Concern" or to a specific person. Indicate the exact address and include a stamped and addressed envelope if the referee is to mail the letter directly.
4. DO NOT ASK FOR A REFERENCE TO BE READY THE SAME DAY. Give the referee time to do the job well - 2 weeks if possible!

### Scholarship Essay or Statement

The purpose of your essay is to present a solid case for why **your** background, activities, leadership or other skills (including research on a particular topic) are deserving of scholarship funding. Follow the instructions specifically on the topic you are to write about. Essays and statements should demonstrate evidence of solid writing skills and knowledge of the subject or theme.

Scholarship essays vary dramatically in subject. However, most of them require a recounting of personal experience. The most important aspect of your scholarship essay is the subject matter. To begin brainstorming subject ideas consider the following points: What are your major accomplishments, and why do you consider them accomplishments? Do not limit yourself to accomplishments you have been formally recognized, since the most interesting essays often are based on accomplishments that may have been trite at the time but become crucial when placed in the context of your life. This is especially true if the scholarship committee receives a list of your credentials anyway.

- Does any attribute, quality, or skill distinguish you from everyone else? How did you develop this attribute?
- Consider your favorite books, movies, works of art, etc. Have these influenced your life in a meaningful way? Why are they your favorites?
- What was the most difficult time in your life, and why? How did your perspective on life change as a result of the difficulty?
- Have you ever struggled mightily for something and succeeded? What made you successful?
- Have you ever struggled mightily for something and failed? How did you respond?
- Of anything in the world, what would you most like to be doing right now? Where would you most like to be? Who, of everyone living and dead, would you most like to be with? These questions should help you realize what you love most.
- Have you experienced a moment of epiphany, as if your eyes were opened to something you were previously blind to?
- What is your strongest, most unwavering personality trait? Do you maintain strong beliefs or adhere to a philosophy? How would your friends characterize you?
- What have you done outside of the classroom that demonstrates qualities sought after by universities? Of these, which means the most to you?
- What are your most important extracurricular or community activities? What made you join these activities? What made you continue to contribute to them?
- What are your dreams of the future? When you look back on your life in thirty years, what would it take for you to consider your life successful? What people, things, and accomplishments do you need? How does this particular scholarship fit into your plans for the future?

Adapted from AWARD APPLICANT'S HANDBOOK - Scholarship Office, Education Matters

### **Final Tip**

Don't forget to continue to apply for scholarships during your post secondary studies. Numerous scholarships are available at colleges and universities beyond first year entrance awards. Visit the Financial Aid office early in the year to find out what is available on an ongoing basis. Good Luck!