

Scholarship Research and Applications

Organization

Create and organize your scholarship portfolio to track tasks, timelines, documents, and materials. This could be a three-ring binder, an expandable file with separators, a box with file folders, etc.

- Put all of your scholarship application-related materials in your portfolio (information, resources, websites, computer disks, applications, calendars, transcripts, recommendation letters, essay drafts, resumes, notes, lists, etc.). Don't put off organizing the documents and materials in your portfolio – it will save you lots of time and headaches.
- Get a monthly calendar that has room for writing in tasks and due dates.
- Write down due dates for all scholarship applications on your calendar. Note whether the due date is a postmark, or the date the application must be received.
- Use a form or checklist to keep track of each scholarship application and all the related tasks (see sample on page 7).
- Read ALL application instructions, follow the directions precisely, skip no steps, and leave no blanks. Otherwise, your application will likely be rejected.
- NEATNESS is important. Keep your materials clean, dry, and neat. Your application materials will make a first impression, so make sure it is a good one. Word process or type your application if possible. If you must hand-write an application, make sure it is neat and legible.
- Give yourself enough time so that you can check things over and ensure that the application is complete. Remember, all steps in the application process are likely to take longer than you think they will.
- Keep copies of all application materials. Things can get lost. If you have copies, you can easily resubmit applications if you have proof of mailing.
- Have a supply of 8 ½ x 11 envelopes, legal size envelopes, postcards, and stamps on hand.
- Go to the post office to mail applications. Ask for a Return Receipt and something that shows the date of mailing and the destination.

Transcripts

Order enough copies of your transcripts to submit with applications.

- Most scholarship applications will request current college or high school transcripts.
- Some applications will require official transcripts. Official transcripts are in a sealed envelope that states that the transcript is official unless the seal is broken. To keep a transcript official, do not break the seal.
- If you are recently out of high school, or have attended other colleges, you may want to have a number of those official transcripts on hand.
- Be sure to follow your school's guidelines for ordering transcripts. Do you need to send a self-addressed, stamped envelope? Have you enclosed the correct payment for official transcripts? Have you included your student identification number?
- There may be quicker, more efficient ways to order transcripts. Can you order them via e-mail, fax, or by phone, rather than regular mail? Can you print unofficial transcripts from your school's website?
- Always keep one unofficial transcript from each school in your portfolio. Then, if you need unofficial transcripts, you can always make copies.
- High School Students: When available, add SAT/ACT scores to your portfolio.

References

Contact potential references now to see if they are willing to write letters, or be contacted by phone when needed. Think of teachers, counselors/advisors, coaches, employers/supervisors, community leaders, etc. who know you well.

- There are two types of recommendation letters: confidential and open. A confidential recommendation is often sent by the reference directly to the scholarship committee, or may be in a sealed envelope with the reference's signature across the seal. Be sure to submit the type of recommendation letter that is requested in the application.
- Make copies of all open recommendation letters for your portfolio.
- A good recommendation letter appears professional (typed, grammatically correct, correct spelling).

- Ask your reference to comment on – and provide specific examples of – characteristics most relevant to the scholarship; for example, motivation, leadership, integrity, judgment, responsibility, honesty, diligence, common sense, potential in career field, academic ability, and other qualities that make you a successful student, future contributor to society, and a good investment as a scholarship recipient.
- Provide your reference with information on your activities, accomplishments, life experiences, goals, and, of course, relevant information about the scholarship criteria. This could be in the form of a resume, personal statement/essay, or activities chart.
- Tell references what you hope they might include in the letter. Be specific.
- It is beneficial (often required) to have recommendations from instructors, especially teachers who have known you over time.
- Sometimes the application specifies exactly who should write a recommendation letter.
- Make the request at least 2 weeks in advance of when you need the letter, and collect letters by the required deadlines.
- Avoid using general recommendation letters, or letters written for another scholarship opportunity. Request that your reference write a specific letter to the organization.
- If references must mail letters, supply them with an addressed, stamped envelope.
- Send your reference a thank you note and let them know the outcome of your application.

Activities, Honors, Work Experience

Create an activities chart and/or a resume listing your school activities, community activities, volunteer work, paid employment, accomplishments, honors, awards, etc.

- Some applications will require a resume and/or activities chart (see sample chart on page 8). Even for those that don't, this document will help you begin to identify and describe significant experiences and accomplishments for essays and other personal statements.
- Begin immediately to list all work and volunteer experiences, extracurricular activities, hobbies, clubs, organizations, and special recognition you have received.
- Think of involvements, experiences, and accomplishments throughout your whole life – even elementary school-age experiences may be important, if they're relevant to your goals and interests.

- Talk to your family and friends. Do they remember any activities you have been involved in that you are not thinking of?
- Do you have certificates, awards, job descriptions, resumes, etc. stuck away somewhere? Find them and put them in your portfolio.
- If you have not done any volunteer or extracurricular work in the past, this may be a good time to start.
- Keep records of all activities/experiences in your portfolio.
- Use brief but descriptive phrases to describe your experiences, focusing on your skills and accomplishments.
- Include awards, certificates, letters of acceptance from colleges, your job descriptions, thank you notes, etc. in your portfolio.

Scholarship Essays

Begin writing drafts of scholarship essays. The topics will vary depending on the scholarship, but typically include short- and long-term goals (personal, educational, career); significant accomplishments and challenges; important values in your life; your major skills, strengths, and personal qualities; influential experiences and people; etc.

- Do not wait. Start now. Write.
- The essays should give readers the best glimpse of you as an honest, genuine, goal-directed, passionate, unique person. It is your opportunity to stand out and be considered for the next step in the scholarship selection process.
- Review the directions for each scholarship for which you are applying. What are the essay requirements? Write *specifically* what the essay directions tell you to write. If it is supposed to be an essay about your goals and aspirations, do not write about your accomplishments.
- Ask teachers, advisors, mentors, tutors, family members, etc. to review your essays and provide constructive feedback.
- Keep copies of every essay you write (electronically as well as on paper).

- Do not submit an essay you wrote for one application for a different application unless the topic or essay question is identical.
- More essay writing tips are detailed on pages 11-12.

Research

Research scholarships and other funding sources. The more scholarship applications you complete, the better you will become at it, and you will have more opportunities to be awarded a scholarship.

- Use a tracking chart to organize the process.
- Contact all colleges that you are applying to for the next academic year and request a list of their scholarship opportunities. Access each college's website for scholarship listings and financial aid resources.
- Budget lots of time to research scholarship opportunities through books in libraries (Lane, U of O, Career and Employment Services) and computer databases (Oregon Career Information System and internet sites). A research "questionnaire" and resources are listed on pages 9-10.
- Track all scholarship possibilities, including information about where to write or call for applications. Request the information immediately – you may want to have a supply of postcards with you for this purpose.
- List the helpful resources you come across. It is likely you will want to look at them again.
- Use a variety of internet search engines to help you find scholarship websites and resources. By typing in keywords (example: Oregon, scholarships, biology) that apply to you, you'll uncover additional potential resources.
- You may want to register with one or more of the internet scholarship sites that will then notify you of appropriate scholarship opportunities.
- Be wary of "scholarship scams" and organizations that will do your search for you for a fee. You can find out more information about "scams" at the following website:
<www.college.ucla.edu/up/src/scam.htm>

Persistence

Be persistent – scholarship research and applications take time.

- Plan a regular time to research and review scholarship opportunities.
- Do not get discouraged if you are not selected for an interview, or not awarded a scholarship on your initial applications. Keep applying! Many people have been successful on their second or even third attempt at the same scholarship!
- Ask others for help, feedback, and support, especially when you are feeling overwhelmed.

Research: A Questionnaire to Help You Get Started

On a separate sheet of paper, answer the following questions. Provide descriptions and details, not just “yes” or “no” answers. This questionnaire will help you focus your scholarship search and help you uncover resources, contacts, and opportunities to explore.

- List any and all colleges that you are interested in and may be applying to (list the college even if there is only the slightest possibility that you might attend). Is there a certain region of the country or specific state(s) that you want to attend college in?
- If you are employed, what organization do you work for?
- For what organizations do/did your parents work?
- Are you a child or close relative of a veteran? From which branch of the service and in what war(s)?
- Do you belong to a church, synagogue, or other religious organization?
- Are you a student with a disability?
- Are you a student of color?
- Are you or your parents a member of a trade group, club, union, or association?
- What subject(s) are you most interested in studying in college?
- What are your hobbies or extracurricular activities?
- Are you or your parents a member of a fraternity or sorority?

- Are your parents alumni of a college or university?
- What are some of the big companies or organizations where you live?
- Do you or your parents belong to any service organizations such as Jaycees, Chamber of Commerce, Lions, Elks, etc?
- Where do you live?

(Excerpts from Winning Scholarships for College by Marianne Ragins, 1999)

Scholarship Research and Resources: Some Starting Points

LCC's Career and Employment Services (CES)

<http://lanecc.edu/ces>

The website (currently being updated) lists resources and information about researching and applying for scholarships. The CES office also contains a variety of materials and scholarship books, as well as postings of available scholarships. Staff are available to assist you. (Main Campus, Bldg 1, Rm. 102)

LCC's Foundation

<http://lanecc.edu/foundatn/scholopps.htm>

The Lane Foundation coordinates scholarships for new and continuing Lane students. Come to Career & Employment Services to pick up an application packet, which lists all the Foundation scholarships and eligibility criteria. Applications are due March 1.

Oregon Student Assistance Commission (OSAC)

www.getcollegefunds.org

OSAC is the state student financial aid agency for Oregon, administering a variety of state, federal, and privately funded student aid programs. The website provides access to a wealth of resources and funding information, including applying for OSAC scholarships. Applications are due March 1.

Oregon Career Information System (CIS)

<http://oregoncis.uoregon.edu>

User Name: lcc Password: gotitans

Use the Financial Aid Sort program in CIS to search their scholarship database for listings that meet your criteria. Create your Portfolio when you first logon, so you can save results of scholarship searches to your account. *High schools that license CIS have specific usernames and passwords for their students.*

FastWeb

<http://fastweb.com>

There are many internet sites for performing scholarship searches that match your criteria. Students seem to like FastWeb the best, but we encourage you to use others as well. In addition to doing an initial scholarship search, FastWeb will email you as more scholarships are added that match your criteria.

Your favorite Internet Search Engine

For example: www.google.com

Type in keywords to search for additional websites and resources. Sometimes the results can be overwhelmingly long, so try to focus your search as much as possible.

Federal Financial Aid

<http://www.pin.ed.gov>

Register to get your PIN (Personal Identification Number) at this site.

<http://www.fafsa.ed.gov>

This is the online site for completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Apply *immediately* after January 1 of each year.

<http://www.studentaid.ed.gov>

This site contains additional information about financial aid programs and procedures.

General “How To” Books (you might purchase one as a resource/reference guide)

How to Go to College (Almost) for Free by Ben Kaplan

He also has a website with tips and advice: <http://scholarshipcoach.com>

Winning Scholarships for College by Marianne Ragins

Scholarship Essay Writing Tips

While there is no cookbook recipe for writing the perfect application essay, the following suggestions may prove helpful.

Be Original

Even seemingly boring essay topics can sound interesting if approached creatively, passionately, and genuinely. The readers want to learn about “who you are”—your past, present, and future.

Be Yourself

It is important to show the real you in your essay. You want to show why you think or act the way you do, what drives you, or what has moved you, and stay close to the topics that are truly meaningful to you.

Use Imagery and a Clear, Vivid Style

The application essay lends itself to imagery, since the entire essay requires your experiences as supporting details.

Spend Time on Your Introduction

Expect scholarship committees to spend 1-2 minutes (initially) reading your essay. You must use your introduction to grab their interest from the beginning. You need to draw the reader into your essay with a catchy and creative introduction. You might even consider completely changing your introduction after writing your body paragraphs.

Body Paragraphs Must Relate to Introduction

Your introduction can be original, but it cannot be silly. The paragraphs that follow must relate to and support your introduction.

Use Transition

Applicants continue to ignore transition, to their own detriment. You must use transition within paragraphs, and especially between paragraphs, to preserve the logical flow of your essay.

Conclusions are Critical

The conclusion is your last chance to persuade the reader or impress upon them your qualities and goals. For example:

- Expand upon the broader implications of your discussion.
- Consider linking your conclusion to your introduction to establish a sense of balance by reiterating introductory phrases.
- Frame your discussion within a larger context or show a link to your future and potential.

Do Something Else

Spend a day or two away from your draft to decide if you still consider your approach effective.

Give Your Draft to Others

Ask others you trust to edit and read with these questions in mind:

- What is the essay about?
- Have I used active voice verbs wherever possible?
- Is my sentence structure varied or do I use all long or short sentences?
- Do I detect any clichés?
- Do I use transition appropriately?
- Do I use imagery often, and does this make the essay clearer and more vivid?
- What is the best part of the essay?
- What about the essay is memorable?
- What is the worst part of the essay?
- What parts of the essay need elaboration, are unclear, or do not support my main topic, or are not relevant?
- Is every single sentence crucial to the essay?
- What does the essay reveal about my personal qualities?

Revise, Revise, Revise

If you are allowed only so many words, use them wisely. Delete anything in the essay that does not relate to your main topic. How you write is just as important as what you write. You should constantly ask yourself if you would be interested in your essay if you were the reader. As you read the first few paragraphs, ask yourself what makes you want to finish it? Consider reordering your supporting details, delete irrelevant sections, and make clear the broader implications of your experiences. Allow for the evolution of your essay – editing takes time.

Some Final Notes

Writing an essay is one of the most important parts of your scholarship application, and unless you have an interview with the awarding committee, this will be your only chance to persuade the committee to award you the scholarship. Your essay will give you the opportunity to share your thoughts and dreams, articulate your accomplishments, and describe the qualities that make you unique and deserving. Being passionate and genuine is crucial.

Since the essay is so vital, it is worthy of your best effort and time, and while no one but you should write your essay, this doesn't mean that you can't get help. Ask friends, family, and/or instructors to help you brainstorm your volunteer work, interests, and achievements. After you have written a solid draft of the essay, ask your English instructor, someone in the tutoring center, or a skillful friend to help you edit and critique your draft. Finally, when you have composed the best draft you can, ask the same people to proofread for grammar and spelling errors.

And remember, your essay should be typed. Grammar, punctuation, and spelling must be flawless, with no typos.

Activities Chart

OREGON STUDENT ASSISTANCE COMMISSION SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION

Name: _____ Last 4 digits of _____ App # (5 digits) _____
 SSN: _____ (eAPP users only): _____

	Dates From-To	Time Spent		Responsibility / Accomplishments
		Hours per Week / Month	Total Hours	
A. School/ Family / Community Activities				
<i>B. Volunteer Service</i>				
<i>C. Work for Pay</i>				

Sample Scholarship Tracking Chart

Scholarship Name and Contact Info.	Deadline	Award Amount	How to Apply?	Required Materials	Date Results Expected	Additional Notes/Comments
			<input type="checkbox"/> On-line <input type="checkbox"/> Paper	<input type="checkbox"/> Application <input type="checkbox"/> Transcripts <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Official</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Unofficial</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Essays 1.____ 2.____ 3.____ <input type="checkbox"/> Letters of Reference <input type="checkbox"/> Activities Chart <input type="checkbox"/> Resume <input type="checkbox"/> Other <hr/>		
			<input type="checkbox"/> On-line <input type="checkbox"/> Paper	<input type="checkbox"/> Application <input type="checkbox"/> Transcripts <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Official</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Unofficial</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Essays 1.____ 2.____ 3.____ <input type="checkbox"/> Letters of Reference <input type="checkbox"/> Activities Chart <input type="checkbox"/> Resume <input type="checkbox"/> Other <hr/>		

- On-line
 - Application
 - Transcripts
 - Paper
 - ☐ *Official* ☐
 - Unofficial*
 - Essays 1.____ 2.____ 3.____
 - Letters of Reference
 - Activities Chart
 - Resume
 - Other
-

- On-line
 - Transcripts
 - ☐ *Official* ☐
 - Paper *Unofficial*
 - Essays 1.____ 2.____ 3.____
 - Letters of Reference
 - Activities Chart
 - Resume
 - Other
-