

## Making the Most of your Scholarship Application



The scholarship committee has compared notes and distilled them down to some pithy helpful points to aid our applicants in obtaining this scholarship and hopefully others in your quest for an affordable education. There are no magical solutions. These points may seem simple and obvious, but we would not have compiled them if they did not need to be stated. They are overlooked so often that we felt it was important to provide a succinct series of principles to aid our applicants with a competitive edge. It is our aim to award scholarships, and we want it to be challenging to pick the best applicants and/or force the Association to raise more money. However, so many packets are poorly compiled that many self-eliminate. The points below are meant to be taken on face value and we are always happy to take direct questions before the application deadline.

### 1. Follow directions.

- Package neatness and completeness appeal to a sense of order. Typing looks best. Some handwriting can be hard to read and typing will avoid any noticeable corrections. The applicant's name should be on every page.
- Labelling the attachments correctly saves time and presents neatness.
- Recommendations should be signed and include the author's contact information. Ensure that your letters of recommendation have some kind of "official" letterhead on them; and that the relationship with you is understood.
- Narratives should address the question or topic and be compelling. How does it relate to you and your endeavors?

### 2. Be contemporarily relevant.

- Your essay or other written work should be updated. The content and the date on the document should be recent. In an essay, explain how the last year went and how it is shaping your future endeavors.
- Request that your letters of recommendation address reasons why you are deserving of the scholarship – not just a list of accomplishments or fount of platitudes.
- Providing a high school transcript for a college freshman helps maintain a narrative of achievement and credibility, but can be eliminated once the college transcript has more than one semester of record.

3. Be professionally individualistic. Have an individual style without flamboyance. There are boundaries to professional writing that are used to understand your ability to communicate in writing. Regardless of your future professional and scholastic endeavor, too much panache connotes familiarity and flippancy.

- Be clear about what you are trying to learn and for what purpose. If it is still unclear to you, then explain what your path and plan for discovery is. No degree, university, or life status gets special favor from the scholarship committee.
- Compile achievements like a resume. Resumes take on many forms but they are consistently coherent, concise and recently updated. A list of high school

achievements from a college sophomore is outdated. A series of scanned certificates and emails is clutter and portrays laziness.

- Be well rounded, tell us who you are and what you do to demonstrate your diverse passions. When listing your accomplishments, be sure to list all types—academic, sports, extracurricular, volunteer. Demonstrate a broader approach to investing time and effort.
- The best narratives keep one main point per paragraph. A rambling single long paragraph that interweaves between statements on multiple topics is distracting and hard to follow.
- Use pictures sparingly and with a purpose.

#### 4. Take charge.

- Manage all of your own correspondence. Mail your packet. Follow up to see if it has been received. Ask questions.
- Read over what you write and have others read it for content and clarity - don't rely on electronic spell checkers.
- A best practice, whether or not you receive the scholarship, is a polite thank you and even follow up email or letter explaining how it has helped you reach your goal. These often get shared and the few applicants who take this extra effort have instant name recognition the next year.

Just a few quick answers to frequently asked questions.

- Your packet does not all have to arrive in one mailing. I understand letters of recommendation, transcripts, and other portions may come in separate modes. I will consider a packet received by the deadline if I have any portion postmarked by April 1<sup>st</sup>.
- Your packet can be completely emailed, but check how well it scanned and prints. A great packet can be marred by a poor scanner.
- The scholarship is only for children of 11<sup>th</sup> Armored Cavalry veterans. Some Association members would like to expand eligibility to spouses and grandchildren, but that is not a financially viable option at the moment.
- The scholarship is for undergraduate studies. We are not able to expand to graduate students at this time.
- The Association grading practices does favor children of veterans who were wounded or killed while assigned to the 11<sup>th</sup> Armored Cavalry. It also favors previous awardees. But these attributes alone do not guarantee the scholarship, the packet as a whole still gets graded by a committee of five.
- I will provide applicants individual feedback if you are interested. Just schedule a call by contacting me at [Robert.lee.hatcher@gmail.com](mailto:Robert.lee.hatcher@gmail.com) or 804.621.3651.