

# Positioning Yourself to be a Winner (Scholarships, Jobs, and College Acceptances)

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## Show Up

- \* For scholarship applications
- \* For Class
- \* For Campus Activities
- \* In Class
- \* For College/Community Service

## Where to look for Scholarships

- ✓ Research your transfer colleges. Ask about financial aid and scholarship opportunities. Start early--many have very early deadlines.
- ✓ CollegeFish.org

## Phi Theta Kappa Scholarships

- **Jack Kent Cooke Undergraduate Transfer Scholarships** – 30 up to \$30,000 per year. Deadline is Jan/Feb.
- **All-USA Academic Team** – 20 \$2,500 for 1<sup>st</sup> team members, \$2,000 for top applicant in each state (New Century Scholar). PLUS....Deadline is early in December. All State Academic Team.
- **Guistwhite Scholarship** - 20 \$5,000 awards – graduating Phi Theta Kappa member. Deadline is early in December.
- **Leaders of Promise** – 30 \$1,000 awards – 1<sup>st</sup> year students. Deadline April
- **Nota Bene** – Literary publication. Deadline early in December.

## Window of Opportunity:

- ❖ Apply for many, many scholarships--from many different colleges and resources. However, if you don't fit qualifications, criteria, and deadlines of a scholarship – don't bother applying.
- ❖ Start working on application **five to seven weeks** before the deadline date. You will need:
  - A. readers
  - B. letters of recommendations to support your application
  - C. sufficient time for these supporters to help you succeed
- ❖ Pay close attention to the criteria listed in the application—the list of achievements, activities, specifications for recommendations, and the essay.
- ❖ Research Scholarship or University—use same words or phrases they use in literature. (Companies for Jobs—same thing.)
- ❖ When listing awards, activities, etc. start with the latest things first and work backward. Many applications have the period of within your community college years.
- ❖ Always Type—never leave any areas blank.

- ❖ Proof, proof, have someone else proof, and proof again.
- ❖ Due to large numbers of people applying, selection committees are looking for way to eliminate you.

## **Positioning Yourself to be a Winner:**

This means developing the qualities and supporting credentials that winners of scholarships usually possess.

**Mentors**--People who help you with career questions, write recommendations, or assist you in completing scholarship or college applications. They may be teachers, coaches, advisors, supervisors, and ministers--those people who know you and are interested in helping you succeed. Students should cultivate relationships with people who are able to assist them in seeking and applying for scholarships. It is the responsibility of colleges and faculty to facilitate mentoring of students. Both the mentor and the one seeking a mentor generate the stimulus for this mutual relationship.

Finding a Mentor--usually the mentor emerges from your experience both in and outside the classroom. The mentor is that teacher who noticed you were an exceptionally diligent or interested student; the teacher who takes a personal interest in you because you have performed well or asked intelligent questions. This teacher may help you research careers, or knows someone or some college that can help you further your career goals.

Mentors emerge from your service and volunteer work to college, church and community. They form a network for you as you prepare to complete your education and they can assist as you pursue financial support of scholarships. Mentoring is friendly guiding. The relationship is not social; it usually does not include calling each other and gossiping, as one might with a classmate or colleague. Genial advice and assistance are given in an appropriate period and setting. Many faculty do not care to give the personal time it takes to advise and assist students with the scholarship or transfer school application process, but students should encourage faculty to mentor by being intellectually curious, earnest and honest. **When students are successful, faculty members also feel successful.**

**Community/College Service** -- Too often students say they are too busy to perform community or college service. However, service and leadership activities are exactly what judges of scholarship applications seek in applicants. Realize that you must give of yourself to others if you expect to ask and receive benefits for yourself. Through volunteer work and community service, you will meet those who will write the letters of recommendations you need. Service learning provides you opportunities and supporters who can assist you when applying for scholarships.

**Portfolio of Achievements** -- All the activities, awards, achievements, which you have worked on or developed through extra-curricular service and curricular abilities. Keep these listed in a portfolio along with a resume. The portfolio allows you to have materials available to include on the application. Provide your resume to any person you ask for a recommendation.

**The Essay** - Most merit scholarships require an essay that addresses a specific question. The evaluators expect candidates to demonstrate clear, precise writing in a well-supported, audience-directed essay that addresses the topic within the word count (As close as possible--NEVER OVER). Usually you have to do **at least six rewrites**--ask for help every step of the way. First draft--just talk about subject--usually wordy. Refine and check for content (addressing the topic). Most important part of the essay is first few lines of opening and last paragraph. Do not have an egocentric essay (i.e. from your own point of view, from your needs). Such an essay is writer-based, not reader-based. Revise it by imagining you are talking directly to the evaluators.

### **Example of Writer-Based Essay**

*Your scholarship is very beneficial for any individual interested in continuing his education in an engineering degree program. The field of engineering related to all aspects of today's world, especially in the area of research and development. This philosophy helped me develop a growing interest in the field of engineering. I am currently pursuing an Associate of Science Degree at Whatsit Community College. I have complete over 50 credits in my curriculum with a demonstrated academic success of better than 3.0 cumulative GPA.*

*My ultimate goal is to transfer to a university to obtain a Bachelor of Science Degree in engineering. Upon graduation from college, I want to seek employment with a growing organization in the field of electromechanical technology, specializing in the area of robotic design and development.*

*I have always been a good representative on any organization I joined. I served honorably in the U.S. Army for over 10 years. I have many awards to attest to my fine performance while in the military. While in the military, I completed college credits towards a degree. I am currently involved in the Minority Peer Mentoring Program at Whatsit. I am actively involved in many of my church's organized events, responsible for such duties as welcoming visitors and counting money at the end of service. My final goal would be to develop youth and make them understand the advantages of pursuing a sound education and capitalizing on the principle of "leading by example".*

As you can see by the essay, the writer has not taken into consideration what the audience's needs are. He has written a writer-based essay that has: 1) Lack of specific detail, dates, events--in his mind, but not expressed, (such as *many awards* and *currently involved*). 2) Many sentences begin with I. 3) Failing to recognize the traits and qualities the evaluators expect of the candidate.

### **Final draft, a reader-based essay.**

*My primary goal, earning a BS in Electrical Engineering, grew out of my serving in the US Army for ten years. After completing my AS in Engineering at Whatsit Community College, I plan to complete my degree at Another State University. My second goal, mentoring black youth in my community, is being realized through my work with the Community Youth Fellowship.*

*The military taught me, a potentially errant inner-city teen, self-discipline and personal pride. After training as an aircraft mechanic, I discovered that learning could be a pleasure, not a chore. Top ratings in job performance made me proud of doing a job well. The military also showed me that others would follow a man who never stints on his team, a man who reaches out and helps another, so that the whole team succeeds. While stationed in Austin, Texas, I became a basketball coach for disadvantaged youth, boys not unlike me seven years earlier. Their attitudes showed me how many young black men require positive male role models. After my discharge, joining a church and working with boys became an avocation as important as going to college.*

*The military became an opportunity for character development and Whatsit has become an opportunity for academic growth. In working with Whatsit's Minority Peer Mentoring Program, I am leaning skills that combine social and educational strategies that allow me to serve youth better in my community. As a married man with a wife and three young children, I am not able to transfer to college beyond the area. However, I do not regard my situation a limitation because in the military I learned a person can serve wherever he is; he has only to look around him and find a means.*

Give yourself plenty of time to write, set aside, revise, set aside, and revise. Don't leave writing the essay to the end. Find outside readers to assess your essay--especially people who don't know you well. Always run spellchecker, proof, have another person proofread, just before it's ready to go--

proof again. **Absolutely no Typo or Grammar Errors!** Use regular size font and margins--don't make it hard to read.

**Letters of Recommendation** - Review the application as to specifics of letters. When asking for a letter - give the writer the requirements and a copy of your Portfolio of Achievements resume--include activities you might want them to consider in their letter. Ask them to be specific. You provide personal and particular information so the recommender can speak to your abilities or achievements in a personal way. Make sure the letters speak about YOU personally, with specifics about your accomplishments, activities, and potential for success.

Give plenty of time--set a deadline of getting it back to you at least two weeks before you need to send in the application. If the letter is not very good, go back to the writer and ask for more specific examples--or ask someone else for a letter. You can ask for more letters of recommendation than what you need. Choose the best to send--but never send more than required. Ask each of your writers to keep a copy of the letter on their computer or disk. You may need another letter and they can just revise it.

**Finally...** Review the application again, make sure everything required is included (e.g. a college transcript, President's signature); organize your documents in the order listed in the application. Never send an incomplete scholarship application, usually it will be eliminated. **Keep a photocopy** - FedEx, Express Mail, or UPS the application **well before the due date**.

**CELEBRATE!** Thank the people who helped you—the letter writers, the proof-readers, the supporters. Also let them know how you did. Your success is their success!

**I was going to write GOOD LUCK but with scholarship applications, it's not really luck that makes you a winner. It's hard work, giving of yourself and academic excellence.**

**"I'm a great believer in luck, and I find the harder I work, the more I have of it."  
Thomas Jefferson**