



OFA Online Workshop Series

Midas-izing Your Scholarship Application

Creating Solid-Gold Scholarship Applications

Ready to begin?
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How Things Work


The online courses offered by the Office of Financial Assistance provide students with opportunities to gain knowledge on a variety of topics related to financial aid and money management.


Each course takes about 15 – 20 minutes to complete; but the courses aren't timed and you aren't limited in the number of times you can access these materials.


To navigate through the courses, use the buttons at the bottom of each slide.

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Midas-izing Your Scholarship Application

In this course, you'll:

- Learn to identify key components of the scholarship application process
- Mine your abilities and achievements
- Sift through your experiences and pinpoint "golden nuggets"
- Refine your personal essay

Your goal is:

- To develop a solid-gold scholarship application and personal essay.

Ready to begin? Use your mouse and click on the arrow below.





Key Components in the Application Process

Once upon a time, in a land far away, a King named Midas was blessed by Dionysus. Midas was given the ability to turn everything he touched into gold. Unfortunately, Midas wasn't too careful about the things that he touched; and soon, *everything* in his kingdom was solid gold. He was very sad.

The King realized his mistake; and called upon Dionysus to take away this gift. Dionysus took pity upon him and removed the blessing. King Midas was happy. He had lost his gold; but had regained his kingdom. Now he was a truly rich man.

The Story of King Midas





Key Components in the Application Process

Now, why on earth would we share the story of King Midas with you in a workshop focused on building award-winning scholarship applications?

The answer to this question is in the moral of the story. Acting without planning may, on occasion, bring you gold. But, thinking about something, planning for it, and acting on it after good consideration results in real riches.

What? Making sure you have a good, solid plan of action (good information about yourself and a solid essay) in place *before* filling out a scholarship application is more likely to win you the scholarship monies you want.

Ohhh.....





Key Components in the Application Process

So, what are the most important parts of the scholarship application process?

Good question! The most important components are:

- Your initial letter requesting information
- Personal knowledge of the scholarship guidelines and requirements
- Developing completed applications
- Writing personal, personal essays and
- Meeting deadlines.

Short list, right? But these are things many students fail to focus on.





Key Components of the Application Process

What is a letter of inquiry (LOI) and why do you need one? An LOI is a personal request for information. You need to develop one because it is *the* method you will use to request information from a scholarship sponsor.

What is included in an LOI? The easiest way to answer this question is to start out with what *not* to include. When you write a scholarship sponsor and ask them for information on their scholarship, leave out:

- Sensitive information (social security numbers)
- Direct appeals for money ("please send me \$5,000")
- Names of important people you know ("I'm the second cousin of the great-aunt of the Governor") and
- Your entire life history from birth to the present.





Key Components of the Application Process

Do include:

- Your contact information (name, address, telephone, e-mail)
- A professional greeting
- Some general information about who you are
- A very brief statement regarding your reason for contacting them
- A very brief statement about why you think you might be a match for their scholarship
- A nice closing statement and
- A signature.

You may be able to send an LOI by e-mail; but, if you can't, include a self-addressed, stamped envelope with your letter when you mail it. Why? You're more likely to receive the information you want if you do.





Key Components of the Application Process

Once you receive the application and information from the scholarship sponsor, *read it!* Your mission: to know everything there is to know about this particular scholarship.

Here's what to look for while you're reading:

- What are the specific eligibility requirements?
- How do you actually apply?
- Do you need to submit additional documents with the application?
- When is the application due?
- When will the sponsor make decisions on awards?

If you don't find the answers to these questions in the materials you received, you'll need to contact the sponsor immediately for this additional information.





Key Components of the Application Process

Now let's talk a bit about the application. Scholarship sponsors routinely report that *the* top reasons they didn't award a scholarship to an applicant is that the application they received was either (1) incomplete, (2) impossible to read, and/or (3) lacked supporting documentation.

Your goal is to put together an application that contains all of the information required, is legible, and has all of the accompanying documents requested by the sponsor.

How do you guarantee the application you submit will meet this goal? You need action plan!





Key Components of the Application Process

Here's how the scholarship application action plan works: You and a partner (parent, guardian, trusted friend) work *together* to insure that your application is complete. Your steps are to,

1. Make a copy of the application.
2. Read through the application from beginning to end *before* doing anything.
3. On the *copy*, hi-light anything you think (a) is really important or (b) you'll have to take action on later (requests for transcripts or letters of recommendation).
4. Start filling in the application from the top down, first page to last.
5. If you can type the application or complete it online, great; if not, *print*.





Key Components of the Application Process

6. Fill in *every* blank on the form. If a blank doesn't apply to you—and think very carefully about this issue before deciding it doesn't apply—write "n/a" (not applicable).

7. Once you (not your parent, guardian, or trusted friend) have completed the application, hand it off to your partner to read.

Now, let's stop here for a minute. We need to make a very important point. This is *your* scholarship application. Mom and Dad aren't applying for this scholarship. Neither is your Grandpa, Grandma, Uncle Joe, Aunt Hester, Cousin Leo, Third Cousin Amelia, or your BFF Julia.

You want the funds? *You* do the work and *you* complete the application. Your family and friends are your partners for support and review purposes only.





Key Components of the Application Process

Once your partner deems your application is as complete and error free as possible, you're ready to move on to the next step – writing your personal essay.

How do you know if you need to write an essay? The sponsor will note this somewhere in the "requirements" section of the information they provided.

Should you include one if it is not a requirement? **NO!** Don't include any information that the sponsor does not specifically ask for (this includes letters of recommendation, resumes, transcripts, etc). If they don't want it, don't send it.





Key Components of the Application Process

The most important things to remember when writing a personal essay are (1) this is *your* essay and (2) this is a *personal* essay.

You and you alone should author this essay. That doesn't mean you can't have your partner read, review, and comment on your writing—you definitely should! But, you need to pull together the content and put it all together.

Also, unless the sponsor requests otherwise (and they're not likely to do this as they're looking for deeper information on you, not a writing sample) your essay should be based on your own experiences. If the sponsor wants an essay on what motivates you to succeed, don't write an essay about Martin Luther King's good works. They want to know about your personal motivations.





Key Components of the Application Process

The final key component in the application process is the application deadline. *Every* sponsor has a deadline. This date is *extremely* important as it is the cutoff point for the application.

Essentially, there are three kinds of deadlines:

1. Post-mark deadlines: the date you actually have to have your application mailed—and post-marked--by the post-office.
2. Priority deadlines: the target date set by the sponsor but, the sponsor will accept applications after this date as long as they still have funds to give away.
3. Absolute deadlines: the date your application *must* be in the sponsor's office if you want them to accept it.





Mining Your Abilities & Achievements

Now let's talk about how sponsors get to know you. One of the things sponsors really like to ask applicants to do is to provide information on their abilities and achievements. The reason they do this is they want to know what it is that makes you unique, makes you stand out from the crowd and makes you worthy of their scholarship.

Don't think you have any skills or abilities? You've lived a long life already. It would be surprising if you had *nothing* at all to share with the sponsors.





Mining Your Abilities & Achievements

How do you identify abilities and achievements? You mine them-- the same way you mine gold. Here's how:

Take a sheet of paper. Fold it in half lengthwise. Label the left side "skills/abilities" and the right side "achievements."

Now, think about everything you've done in your life since Preschool/Kindergarten. What skills or abilities do you have? Are you good with people? Can you write well? Are you patient? Are you creative? Are you athletic? Are you good at schoolwork/academics? Can you cook? Can you act? Can you... the list goes on and on.





Mining Your Abilities and Achievements

Now focus on your achievements. Again, start out with your Preschool/Kindergarten years and work forward. Have you ever won a ribbon or award for anything? Did you ever receive a certificate or special recognition for anything? Have you had perfect attendance? Have you ever made the honor roll or Dean's List? Have you ever participated in a school or community event (science fair, art show, track and field, etc.)? Has an adult or teacher ever commented on how good you are at a particular activity? Again, the list of things that could be called an "achievement" is endless.





Sifting for Golden Nuggets

Once you've identified your abilities and achievements, its time to reduce your very long lists down to the most important/most outstanding top three to five items. You want to weed through all of the ore that you've mined to find the golden nuggets.

How do you do this? Create a rating or ranking system based on assigning a value of 1 - 5: 1 = not so important/outstanding, 5 = very important/outstanding, and the rest of the numbers are somewhere in between.

Start another sheet of paper, again labeling the left "skills/abilities" and the right "achievements." On this page, list *only* those items that you've ranked with a 5. If you have more than five items, work through the ranking process again until you've whittled your list down to 5.





Refining Your Essay

Now that you know everything there is to know about the scholarship you are applying for, you know exactly what it is the sponsor is looking for, you've pulled together all of the information you need, and you have a good grasp of your own abilities and achievements, its time to sit down and write your personal essay.

Are you ready? Let's get to it!





Refining Your Essay

How do you frame your essay? The same way you would frame an essay for a writing class: start out telling the reader what you're writing about, then write about it, then tell the reader what you wrote about. The key here, as we mentioned before, is to make your essay *personal*.

After you write your essay, make certain: you've kept on topic from start to finish, your writing flows well, there are no errors in spelling or grammar, and you've kept within the paragraph/page/word length requirements set by the sponsor.

Once you've done this, hand your essay off to your partner for review. If everyone is satisfied with the essay, attach it to your application, add in whatever additional documents the sponsor has indicated must accompany the application and send it off!





Wrap up and review

The objective of this course was to provide you with the information you need to develop a solid-gold scholarship application and personal essay.

We've provided you with information on the key components of the scholarship application process and important things to watch out for as you begin completing the application.

We've also given you suggestions for mining your personal abilities and achievements; and, sifting through these items to find the "golden-nuggets" you can use in your personal essay.

Finally, we've provided you with some tips and hints on refining your personal essay.





Wrap up and review

If you would like additional information on scholarship opportunities available to UIW students or if you would like some guidance or assistance in locating outside scholarship opportunities, visit the Resource Center inside the UIW Office of Financial Assistance.

We're located in the Watson Enrollment Center on Broadway, across the street from the main campus (between Bill Miller's and Denny's). Counselors are available Monday through Friday, 8:00 – 5:00; and our resource computers are available for student use until 6:00 p.m. Monday through Thursday. Appointments are not required to visit with a counselor.





Thank you!

We hope you found this online workshop helpful! If you'd like to see other topics covered, send us an e-mail. Your thoughts and comments are always appreciated.

Sincerely,

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