



UCLA Scholarship Resource Center STRATEGIES

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How to Get a Strong Letter of Recommendation

By Hannah Nahm, SRC Staff

Let's face it—if you're applying for scholarships, chances are you will need a letter (or letters) of recommendation. This is especially true if you're applying for highly competitive scholarships. Scholarship reviewers give significant consideration to the letter of recommendation, and the quality and the content of the letter can be a deciding factor between an applicant and a winner.

So how can you be sure to obtain a strong letter of recommendation? Whom should you approach to write you the glowing letter of recommendation for your scholarship application? Are there things that are within your control to assure that the recommender will be able to write you a successful and compelling letter of recommendation? The answers to these questions are a resounding yes! Follow the guidelines below, and you will be able to help your designated recommender whip up a first-class letter of support on your behalf!

Start Early: While this is a standard rule of thumb as you tackle the scholarship application process as a whole, it's absolutely critical to get a head start on

the letter of recommendation process. This is precisely because you are not writing the letter; somebody else—your professor, your employer, your supervisor—is writing the letter for you, and you need to be sure to give him/her enough time to get to know you, your interests, abilities, achievements, and your character before writing you that thoughtful letter of recommendation that



will give the scholarship committee pause and prompt them to consider your application seriously.

Get to Know Your Recommender: Again, planning ahead is key. In the first two weeks of the quarter, settle on those professors and TAs that you would like to have as your prospective letter writers. Develop a professional working relationship with them by actively participating in class or discussion sections and visiting them during office hours. Take genuine interest in the instructor's field of expertise or the academic course taught. Ask about his or her research interests; ask questions about how they came to choose their fields of study; share your thoughts and ideas about the topics covered that week; share with them something about your-

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Have you won a scholarship with the help of the SRC? We'd love to hear from you!
src@college.ucla.edu
(310) 206-2875

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self, your background, and your interests. Whatever conversations you have with the prospective letter writer, keep in mind that you want to make a positive impression on this all-important person, so that later in the quarter, or during subsequent quarters when you ask for the letter of recommendation, the professor or TA will not only remember you, but be happy to write you that letter of support.

Choose the Right Person: Read through the scholarship application carefully and be sure who the scholarship committee expects your recommender should be. For instance, for a scholarship that emphasizes academic achievements, the committee will require a letter from a professor or instructor who can attest to your intellectual or academic aptitude. On the other hand, for a scholarship that focuses on community service or leadership qualities, the committee would welcome a recommendation letter from the supervisor of your volunteer work or your supervisor at your current or previous place of employment. The key here is to choose someone who can amply comment on those qualities or skills that the scholarship organization is looking for in the ideal applicant. When choosing your recommender, think carefully about whether that person is the *best*—i.e., the most authoritative and credible—person to evaluate your work, achievements, or character. The person who is usually in the best position to assess your intellectual abilities would be a professor or TA from UCLA, though if you are a freshman or a transfer student in your first quarter, it would be understandable to ask an instructor from your previous institution to write on your behalf.

Ask for the Letter of Recommendation: After you have developed a working relationship with the professor or TA, you should approach the person directly to see if he or she would be willing to write you a *strong* letter of recommendation. If you sense any hesitations or reservations, thank them kindly and move on; do not belabor the issue. You want to choose someone who would be able and willing to write you a strong letter, not just any letter. While a compelling letter bolsters your shot at winning the scholarship, a careless or lackluster letter

can hamper your chances and raise questions about your viability as a scholarship candidate. Do not be shy to say, “Can you write me a *strong* letter of recommendation?” Your professor or TA will get it.

Make It Easy for the Recommender: Give the recommender plenty of time to write the letter (no less than one month). Provide a packet of helpful materials: the scholarship announcement, the application, your resume, any good course work or essays you have done for the instructor’s class, the mailing instructions for the letter of recommendation, and the scholarship deadline. Ask the recommender if there are any other supporting materials he or she needs from you. (Some instructors may want to see your transcripts, the scholarship essay, or a brief autobiographical sketch.) Make the submission process doubly clear. If it’s an online submission, be sure to provide your recommender with step-by-step guidelines for uploading the letter. Make sure to find out if the professor has any issues uploading the letter. If so, find out what the problem is and address the issue. If it requires that you contact the organization, it is your responsibility to do so. Do not assume that the professor will do this for you. Provide your recommender with all the tools and supplies you can (postage stamp, pre-addressed envelope, etc.). Remind the recommender as the deadline approaches. Send her an email thanking her and reminding her about the approaching deadline at least two weeks before the scholarship due date.

Be Earnestly Thankful: Once the deadline is past and the letter is in, write a thank-you note to your recommender. Be generous and gracious in your message, acknowledging the time and care the recommender has devoted to your letter. No matter what you do, do not skimp on this last step of being earnestly and expressively thankful (and consider hand-writing a note rather than simply sending an email), for chances are, you will be knocking on the same recommender’s door for future letters of recommendation, whether for a letter for other scholarships, graduate or professional school, or for an employment application. You want the recommender to be happy to step up to the plate for you again.

Join our fan page on Facebook/uclasrc to get alerts
on upcoming scholarships!
Also, follow us on Twitter @UCLASRC

Scholarship Q & A

By Mac Harris, SRC Staff

Q: When should I apply for scholarships?

A: Right now! The season to apply for 2015-16 scholarships began in early fall 2014 and will run all the way through late spring 2015 before resetting for the 2016-17 application cycle. There will be scholarship deadlines happening every week between now and the end of the 2015-16 season, so the sooner you get started applying for scholarships, the more chances you'll have to win.

Q: I'm in financial crisis and I need money fast! What scholarships can I apply for?

A: Scholarship money is not fast money, so applying for scholarships is probably not the realistic solution to an emergency situation. If you are facing a financial emergency, you should contact the **UCLA Economic Crisis Response Team (ECR)** at ECR@saonet.ucla.edu. You may also visit www.studentincrisis.ucla.edu/resources.html for more information.

Q: Are there scholarships available for international and undocumented students?

A: Yes, and the SRC has numerous resources, such as scholarship books and handouts, to help those students to find

scholarships that do not require U.S. citizenship or a demonstration of financial need. In general, international and undocumented students find many scholarship opportunities outside of UCLA, since a large percentage of UCLA scholarships require evidence of financial need and will only accept the FAFSA or Dream Application (for AB540 students) as a qualifying document to determine that. As a

rule, it is best for international and undocumented students to concentrate on private scholarships, which typically rely far less on financial need as a factor than do institutional scholarships. The Scholarship Resource Center has many resources both online

(www.scholarshipcenter.ucla.edu) and in the office (233 Covell Commons) that can help students understand how best to find and apply for private money.

Q: Is it ok for me to hand-write my scholarship applications?

A: No! Appearances count in the scholarship application process. If you have no way of accessing an editable online version of the scholarship application, make an appointment to use the SRC's typewriter. Call the SRC during our regular business hours at (310) 206-2875 to get started on your applications today!



Winning an Extramural Scholarship: Where to Start?

By Kim Mack, SRC Staff

So you attended the SRC's *Secrets for Winning College Cash* workshop—good for you! You then, dutifully, made *and kept* your follow-up appointment at the Scholarship Resource Center to discuss possible scholarships with a Student Affairs Advisor—double good for you! You walked away from that meeting feeling inspired and ready to take on the challenge of applying for college cash, but then the plan got a little hazy. What do you do next?

Here's a quick and easy three-step plan for moving from paralysis to ACTION!

1) First, it is important to designate a time and a place to work each week on your scholarship applications. You should devote a minimum of one hour (preferably more) to this. It is best to commit to the same day and time each week—that way you will get into a routine, and you will be less likely to procrastinate. You might also consider finding a quiet place away from your apartment or dorm room, so you can concentrate fully. An hour speeds by. You don't want to waste it!

2) The next time you sit down to work on scholarship applications, try a little brainstorming. Pull out a piece of paper and a

pen. Make a list of your academic goals and interests, your hobbies, your (and your relatives') organizational affiliations, your work experience and future career goals, your religious or cultural affiliations, and your military experience. You should also make a second list containing your strengths. Are you a hard worker? Are you disciplined, or flexible, or

trustworthy? Are you a terrific problem solver? Run both of these lists by your parents or a trusted friend. Did you forget anything? You can use the first list to update your profiles in your scholarship databases, and both lists will help you to write your personal statement or statement of purpose.



3) Print out the guidelines for a new scholarship. Ask yourself the following questions:

What type of scholarship is this?

Who is offering this scholarship? What kinds of people are likely to be on the committee?

Does this application require a personal statement or a statement of purpose?

What else is required?

What is the committee looking for in a successful candidate?

What can you learn by looking at previous recipients?

You should get in the habit of asking yourself these questions for each scholarship you find. (It might help to keep this list on your

desk!) Eventually, you will find yourself automatically asking these questions each time you look at a new scholarship application.

The extramural scholarship application process can be intimidating at first, but these three steps can help make the process easier. If you still have questions, or if you're ready to start your own scholarship search, please feel free to call us at (310) 206-2875 or visit us in person at the Scholarship Resource Center in 233 Covell Commons.

INTERESTED IN A CAREER IN SPORTS JOURNALISM?

Are you looking for **\$5,000** to help pay your way through school?
Are you a sophomore or junior in good standing (with a GPA of 3.0 or above)?
Then what are you waiting for? You are eligible for



THE JIM MURRAY FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIP

For more information or an application, drop by the UCLA Scholarship Resource Center, 11 a.m. – 6 p.m., M-F, or call us at (310) 206-2875.



Don't forget to file your FAFSA (or Dream Application) by March 2nd! Go to <https://www.fafsa.ed.gov/> or <https://dream.csac.ca.gov/>.

Spotlight Scholarship: Learn to Become A Leader While Travelling Abroad

By Rocio Garcia, SRC Staff

Do you have an interest in public policy, economics, or international studies? Do you consider yourself a leader? Are you interested in learning about China's role in global trends while in Beijing? If so, you could be on your way to becoming a Schwarzman Scholar! **The Schwarzman Scholars Program** is a new initiative intended to nurture the next generation of global leaders and introduce them to the role of China in the shifting global geopolitical landscape.

This generous scholarship covers the following expenses: tuition, fees, room & board, travel costs to and from Beijing, an in-country study tour, required course books & supplies, a Lenovo laptop & smartphone, health insurance, and a personal stipend.

Creating the Scholarship Packet:

A complete application includes the online application, transcripts, three letters of recommendation, an assessment from the Dean's Office at UCLA, your resume or CV, and a 750-word personal statement along with two supplemental 500-word essays.

Your first supplemental essay should address an international policy or social issue, while the second supplemental essay should describe a specific example of your leadership experience.

What the Committee Wants:

Tip #1: Leadership, leadership, leadership! The Schwarzman Scholars Program was created specifically to find the next generation of leaders and problem solvers. Winning applications will successfully

showcase how the program will help develop students' leadership skills within their respective fields and in the global arena. Keep in mind that this program defines leadership broadly: examples may encompass leadership titles in student organizations, off-campus organizations, and employment, but examples do not have to include service as an officer. Any situation in which you saw the need for change and made it happen through successful leadership is

a great starting point. The program is centered on collaboration; therefore, your application should demonstrate how your leadership emerges in group settings. What traits do you possess that are necessary for successful teamwork? How do you manage groups and individuals? How do you motivate others to come together under a single vision and common goal? These are essential guiding questions that will help you write quality essays.



Tip #2: It is important to do your research on the program and its ultimate goals before submitting your application. The program will teach you about China's contribution to global political issues, but winning applications will come from students who go above and beyond to investigate current social issues and China's political, economic, and social influences prior to entering the program. Know your audience and show the committee that you are ready to embark on this ambitious project.

Tip #3: Be creative! Innovation is vital to bringing about social change. An effective strategy for tackling this application is giving the committee a sense of how your mind approaches social issues and problem solving. Avoid simply telling the committee that

you are innovative; instead, show them how your creativity develops. You can do this by discussing past experiences in which you brought about change or by discussing ideas you have for addressing pressing global issues in the future.

Eligibility Requirements:

This scholarship is open to undergraduates in all fields who will have graduated prior to the orientation in July 2016 and to graduate students. There is no required minimum GPA, but students must demonstrate academic excellence. Applicants must be between 18 and 28 years of age as of June 30, 2016. The scholarship does not have any citizenship requirements.

Important Dates:

The application cycle begins in April 2015, and applications are due on October 1, 2015. Semi-finalists will be selected in October 2015 and interviewed during mid-November 2015. Winners will be notified by late November 2015. Visit <http://schawarzmanscholars.org> for more information, and make sure to start early on your application. Finally, remember to schedule a writing appointment with an SRC staff member for help! You can make a 30-minute writing appointment with the SRC (233 Covell Commons) by calling (310) 825-2875 any time during our regular office hours, Monday through Friday, 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

HOW'S *THIS* FOR A
SCHOLARSHIP?

The Donald A. Strauss
Scholarship Foundation For Public Service

will pay you **\$10,000**
(yes, \$10,000) to make your
Public Service Project A Reality

Campus deadline: January 28, 2015

Visit the SRC or Honors Programs (A-311
Murphy Hall) for more information.

Scholarship Resource Center Winter 2015 Workshop Schedule

*All workshops are held in Covell 229 and include a personalized follow-up counseling session.
Sign up for a workshop through MY.UCLA.EDU.*

Take advantage of these FREE resources and more!

Wide-Ranging Library

Workshops Every Quarter

Extensive Scholarship Website

One-on-one Counseling

Writing Assistance

Even a Typewriter!

It's all waiting for you at the

UCLASRC

Scholarship Resource Center

*guiding UCLA students through
the scholarship process*

233 Covell Commons

(310) 206-2875

Open Monday to Friday

11 am—6 pm

src@college.ucla.edu

www.scholarshipcenter.ucla.edu

Secrets to Winning College Cash

TUES Jan 6 5-5:30 PM

THUR Jan 15 5-5:30 PM

MON Jan 26 5:30-6 PM

WED Feb 11 5-5:30 PM

THUR Feb 19 5:30-6 PM

TUES Feb 24 5-5:30 PM

How to Win Scholarships

WED Jan 7 5-5:30 PM

FRI Feb 6 5-5:30 PM

How to Find Scholarships

WED Jan 14 5-5:30 PM

THUR Feb 5 5:30-6 PM

How to Write Personal Statements

WED Jan 21 5-6 PM

TUES Feb 3 5-6 PM

How to Get Letters of Recommendation

THUR Jan 29 4:30-5 PM

WED Feb 18 5-5:30 PM

**Join our fanpage
on Facebook to get
alerts on upcoming
scholarships!**

SCHOLARSHIP EVENT WITH ORL

WHEN: Tuesday, January 13, 7:00 pm

WHERE: Grand Horizon Room in Covell

WHAT: Secrets to Winning College Cash
& How to Win Scholarships

** bring a friend and your laptop!*