



UCLA

Scholarship Resource Center

STRATEGIES

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What Are They *REALLY* Asking? The Secret Logic of Scholarship Essay Prompts

By Kat Webster, SRC Staff

“Tell us how your background has shaped your future goals.”

Does this question look familiar? This is about as basic as an essay question can get, but it is also a question that you will see in one form or another on many scholarship applications. This prompt seems straightforward enough, but, in reality, many essay questions are posed with implicit expectations—expectations that may be different for each scholarship. How do you figure out what information scholarship committees are looking for? What is your prompt *REALLY* asking? There are a few things to keep in mind as you tackle this prompt in one of its many forms.

First: know your audience. No matter where you found the scholarship listing, it is a good idea to look up the organization offering the scholarship online. Pay special attention to the group’s mission statement. Are they primarily a professional organization, aiming to unite members of a certain field (engineering, nursing, chemistry, visual arts)? Are they committed to a specific cause or community project? Do they aim to work with specific populations (like under-served students, or women in the sciences)? If the organization is based around one profession or academic discipline, they probably want to hear about your work and studies in that field. When they ask about your “background,” they may actually be asking about your college coursework and job experience—not necessarily about your family’s background, or about your outside interests and hobbies.

Second, spend a little time breaking down the prompt so that you are sure to answer each part completely. The above question, for example, actually asks two things: “what is your background?” and “what are your future goals?” Many writers make the mistake of neglecting crucial key terms in the essay question

itself and fail to provide scholarship committees with information that they are interested in. If you have trouble breaking apart a prompt, look for key words, and think about how you can address each one: terms like “background,” “influences,” and “shaped” usually signal that you need to address past experiences, whereas phrases that ask about “goals” and “aspirations” ask about specific future plans.



Finally, most scholarships are offered by organizations or individuals who are trying to provide resources to a specific community—committee readers, thus, are community-minded! They want to know what type of group member you are, and how you can contribute to communities around you (to people in your family, your neighborhood, your city, etc.). Very often, when approaching questions about future goals, writers stop too short, and only address their own interests or benefits that they expect

to receive and talk about pursuing a specific major because they find it interesting, or are interested in the financial wealth they will gain because of following a certain career path. Instead, be sure to emphasize qualities that show how you can give back or help those in your world in some way. Maybe you are an independent thinker, but like to apply your knowledge to specific projects that will help disadvantaged teens; maybe you are incredibly creative, and are interested in helping an animal shelter develop advertisements to encourage pet adoptions. Many times, the real question being asked is not only “what are your talents?”, but also “how do you intend to use them to help others?”

Keeping these tips in mind will help you develop more targeted, effective essays. And, remember, if you get stuck on an essay, you can sign up for a writing appointment at the Scholarship Resource Center by calling 310-206-2875!

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Join our fanpage on
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Ca\$hing in on Labor

At the heart of unionism is the notion that there is power in numbers. In the world of scholarship applications, the inverse is true: The fewer your competitors, the better your odds of winning. Every year, numerous labor unions offer sizable scholarships, ranging from \$400 to \$10,000, some of them renewable for up to four years of the student's collegiate career. These union scholarships are open to union members and their families—usually their children (including step-children) or spouse, but also grandchildren or other dependent kin. In most cases, applicants can be from a family of active, retired, or deceased union members. Given that currently in the United States 14.4 million workers are union members (or 11.3% of the total workforce), there's a fair chance that someone in your family is a union member, making you eligible to vie for the piece of the sumptuous union scholarship pie. These scholarship opportunities are especially worth seizing, because probability works in your favor. Since these awards are exclusively set aside for union members and their families, you are competing with a significantly narrowed applicant pool.

On your next visit home, do some domestic

investigation and ask your parents (or grandparents, or other such provider figures) if they belong to a union. Is your father a healthcare employee? Then it's likely he is a member of SEIU (Service Employee International Union) or AF-SCME (American Federation of State, County, & Municipal Employees). Is your mother a K-12 teacher or a college instructor? Chances are, she's an AFT (American Federation of Teachers)

member. Or better yet, you yourself may be a working student with a union affiliation. If so, be sure to tap into any scholarship opportunities or educational aid that will likely be available to you. Even in the case where the union to which you or your family belong does not directly oversee any scholarships, it may very well be associated with larger trans-union organizations such as Union-Plus that administer and disburse scholarship prizes to affiliated union members and their families.

Following is a selective list of labor union scholarship programs. Keep in mind that while many of the deadlines for these awards are now past for the 2012-3 academic year, these are continuing scholarships that are available for the subsequent school years, including the 2013-4 school year. So you have plenty of time to plan ahead!



Union Scholarships

By Hannah Nahm, SRC Staff

American Federation of Teachers Robert G. Porter Scholars Program

This program offers four 4-year, \$8,000 post-secondary scholarships to students who are dependents of AFT members, as well as 10 one-time \$1,000 grants to AFT members to assist with their continuing education.

<http://www.aft.org/benefits/scholarships.cfm>

IAM (International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers) Scholarship

This scholarship competition is open each year to members of the IAM and their children throughout the United States and Canada. Awards to members are \$2,000 per academic year (renewable). Awards to children of members are \$1,000 per academic year. All awards are renewable up to four years.

<http://www.goiam.org/index.php/headquarters/departments/scholarship/10514-2013-iam-scholarship-competition>

SEIU (Service Employees International Union)

SEIU offers 53 scholarship opportunities to support studies in areas including the arts, social justice, labor studies, and healthcare. All scholarships are open to members and their children. The awards range from \$1,000 to \$5,000, some of them renewable for multiple years.

<http://www.seiu.org/a/members/fulfill-your-college-goals-with-an-seiu-scholarship.php>

UFCW (United Food and Commercial Workers) International Scholarship

Each year the UFCW International Union awards several scholarships of up to \$8,000 each to UFCW members or their immediate family who want to further their education and demonstrate a commitment to their communities and to UFCW values. In addition to the annual scholarships offered by the International, some UFCW Locals offer their own scholarships. Contact your local union office to find out if your local has a scholarship program and if you are eligible to apply.

<http://www.ufcw.org/about/opportunities/scholarship/>

Union Plus Scholarship Program

These scholarships are open to members, spouses, and dependent children of unions participating in any of the Union Plus programs, and the award amount ranges from \$500 - \$4,000. This is a competitive one-time cash award sent to individual winners for undergraduate or graduate study. Winners are chosen based on academic achievement and potential, character, leadership, social awareness, career goals and financial need.

<https://unionplusscholars.communityforce.com/Student/Introduction.aspx>



Getting Outstanding Letters of Recommendation

By Elena Shih, SRC Staff

The letter of recommendation is one of the only parts of the application that offers a window into the applicant's personal qualities and character traits that can't be seen through transcripts and resumes. While most letters are confidential, students often have more input into shaping letters of recommendation than they think. Follow these steps for stellar letters of recommendation to supplement your scholarship application.

For general tips on how to request letters of recommendation, please visit one of our upcoming workshops (see page 8), or stop by the SRC to get a copy of the "How to Request Letters of Recommendation" guides. These will prepare you with basic information about, who are appropriate recommenders, and the recommended timeline for requesting letters. Below, find some tips about how to make your letter of recommendation shine!

SCOPE and SELECTIVITY:

While you should include a copy of your latest resume or CV for your recommender, it is important to highlight certain achievements that you would like your letter writer to focus on. It is important to indicate the scope and selectivity of your involvement in such activities. For instance, if you are the publicity chair for your residence hall, explain how you were elected into this role. How many other candidates/applicants were there for this position? And how large is the scope of your responsibilities in this role? If you hold a role that does not demonstrate selectivity—for instance, if you are one of a hundred volunteers for a particular club or event—demonstrate the importance of this activity to you personally. What does it mean to you? What have you learned since participating in this event? What sacrifices have you made in order to participate?

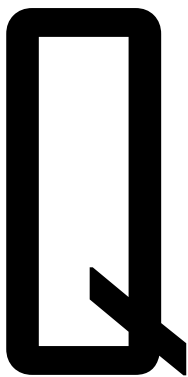
INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY:

A transcript provides the selection committee with a sense of your academic achievement, but it does not offer a sense of other important factors like your *intellectual curiosity*. You can demonstrate intellectual curiosity by mentioning extra credit projects completed for class or finding an internship or volunteer opportunity that engages skills or issues that you have learned inside the classroom. Proving this to your recommender and the selection committee will set you apart from other applicants.

COMMITMENT:

You should always provide your recommender with basic information about the scholarship that you are applying for, including the name of the funding institution, name of the scholarship, and website so that your recommender can find more information if she/he desires. In addition, be sure to provide personalized information to demonstrate that you have researched the scholarship in question. Demonstrate this commitment by researching past winners, and sharing with your recommender why you are committed to the mission and goals of the organization.





Is financial aid available for the summer?

Summer aid is available to newly admitted and continuing UCLA students enrolled in UCLA Summer Sessions, College Summer Institute, Summer Sessions at another UC (cross-campus enrollment) or UC Summer Travel Program. You can only receive assistance for ONE summer program. Financial aid is not be available for Non-UC Study Abroad programs.

What type of aid is available during the summer?

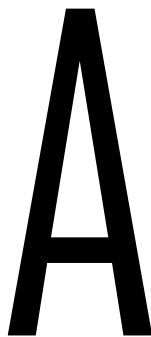
On-time applicants, those who submit their FAFSA and/or the summer application by the due date, will be considered for the same types of awards during the summer as during the academic year:

Federal, State and University Grants, Federal Perkins and Direct Loans as well as Work-Study (for some programs). Late applicants, those who submit their FAFSA and/or the summer application late, will be considered for Federal Pell Grant and Direct Loans only. Please refer to the summer guides (available under Publications on the UCLA Financial Aid Office website) for additional information about summer sessions.



How do I apply for summer financial aid?

In addition to completing the FAFSA, you must also complete the online Summer Financial Aid Application. The application and filing timeline will vary depending on the summer program for which you seek assistance. The UCLA Summer Session application is available on the UCLA Financial Aid Office website beginning April 1. The priority deadline for submitting the summer application is April 30 to be considered for all types of aid. If your summer application is filed after April 30, and/or your FAFSA is submitted after March 2, you will be considered as a late applicant and the types of aid available to you will be limited. Please check the UCLA FAO's homepage for information about applications and deadlines for other summer programs.



Remember, you must apply

separately for summer financial aid!

For more information visit the UCLA Financial Aid Office website at <http://www.fao.ucla.edu>

2013-14 UCLA College Division of Undergraduate Education Donor Scholarships

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS:

Applicants must

- Demonstrate **FINANCIAL NEED** by completing the FAFSA. Go to <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov>.
- Be UCLA undergraduate students enrolled full time within the College of Letters and Science.
- Fill out an application online, available at http://www.scholarshipcenter.ucla.edu/DUE/Cont_Students.html.
- Provide all supporting documentation, including an **official or unofficial transcript** and a copy of the **PAL (Provisional Award Letter)** or **FAN (Financial Aid Notification)** letter. **DO NOT SUBMIT A DPR.**
- Submit completed applications to UCLA Scholarship Resource Center, 330 DeNeve Drive, 233 Covell Commons, Los Angeles, CA 90024.

DUE MAY 15

Myrtle Hickey De Luce Scholarship: preference to graduates of Lincoln, Belmont, John Marshall, or other LAUSD high schools who participate in at least one extracurricular activity.

Heather L. Kase Endowed Scholarship: preference to female undergraduates of the Jewish faith who demonstrate financial need and academic potential.

Louis Levy Endowed Scholarship: students should have a minimum 2.5 cumulative GPA, demonstrate financial need, and have graduated from a CA public high school.

Los Angeles Chapter of the Links Scholarship: preference to African-American students who demonstrate financial need and demonstrate a strong record of community service.

Bess F. Raab Scholarship: preference to students with a minimum 3.0 cumulative GPA; must provide evidence of participation in at least one extracurricular activity at UCLA or in the community.

Rancho Park Rotary Club Scholarship: preference to full-time UCLA seniors of Iranian/Persian descent who actively participate in community service and demonstrate strong financial need; minimum 3.5 cumulative GPA.

John Ringlbauer UCLA Veteran's Scholarship: awarded to a full-time UCLA student who is either currently enlisted or is a veteran of the Armed Forces and who honorably served the US. Preference to those who made the greatest commitment or sacrifice during their service.

Louis and Zephyr Stuart Scholarship: preference to Armenian students who demonstrate leadership through extracurricular activities at UCLA and in the community; minimum 3.0 cumulative GPA.

Jo-Belle Wolf Undergraduate Scholarship: preference to female students born in the US; minimum 3.0 cumulative GPA.

DUE JUNE 30

Nancy Diane Orford Scholarship: preference to students with cystic fibrosis or other disabilities.

National Notary Foundation Scholarship: preference to students with a minimum 3.5 cumulative GPA and CA resident with strong leadership skills **(for incoming freshmen only)**.

Don Shepherd Scholarship: preference to students from San Diego County with a minimum 3.75 cumulative GPA **(for incoming freshmen only)**.

Gertrude Pomish Scholarship: preference to students who actively participate in and demonstrate a strong record of community service **(for incoming freshman only)**.

Leah Bettelman: available to first-year students with high merit and high financial need.

Ola Zuckerman: available to first-year students with high merit and high financial need.

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!

Scholarship Resource Center Spring 2013 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.*

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

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

Secrets to Winning College Cash

April 3	Wednesday	5:30-6:00 PM
April 9	Tuesday	4:30-5:00 PM
April 18	Thursday	4:30-5:00 PM
April 26	Friday	4:30-5:00 PM
April 29	Monday	5:30-6:00 PM
May 1	Wednesday	5:30-6:00 PM
May 6	Monday	5:00-5:30 PM
May 17	Friday	4:30-5:00 PM
May 23	Thursday	5:00-5:30 PM

How to Win Scholarships

April 10	Wednesday	5:00-6:00 PM
April 30	Tuesday	5:00-6:00 PM
May 9	Thursday	4:30-5:30 PM

How to Find Scholarships

April 16	Tuesday	5:00-5:30 PM
May 13	Monday	4:30-5:00 PM

How to Write Personal Statements for Scholarships

April 11	Thursday	5:00-5:30 PM
April 25	Thursday	5:00-5:30 PM
May 8	Wednesday	5:30-6:00 PM

How to Get Letters of Recommendation for Scholarships

April 5	Friday	4:30-5:00 PM
April 17	Wednesday	5:00-5:30 PM
May 2	Thursday	5:00-5:30 PM