

Scholarship Essays –

The Basics

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 - Can be met with 3rd floor Oviatt Library
 - Call us at (818)677 2033 to schedule appointments
 - www.csun.edu/lrc

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What are the readers looking for?

A scholarship essay is a document used by universities or scholarship foundations/donors to assess the qualifications of applicants.

Although these essays will vary in their requirements, they are looking for evidence of some or all of the following:

- Research/Scholarship
- Accomplishments/Academic Merit
- Commitment to / Love of the Profession
- Leadership
- Financial Need

Read the prompt fully and completely so that you know which aspects of yourself to focus on!

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Scholarship Essay – Genre & Purpose

- Always remember this is a **persuasive** piece of writing
- Like an interview on paper
- It's still an essay, so write it like one
 - Drafting
 - Rhetorical Strategy (Purpose, audience awareness, etc.)
- Most of all, it is an opportunity for you to distinguish yourself from other applicants

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Keys to Success - Item 1: Answer the prompt

- Let the prompt narrow your scope
- Make sure you answer their question(s) with a thesis
- Look for ways to frame your qualifications within the parameters of the essay
- Do NOT include info that wasn't asked for
- Stick to word or page count

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Keys to Success, Item 2: The narrative arc

- The essay is a story – you are the subject
 - Remember that no matter what the prompt says, this essay is a way to get to know you. So make sure you are talking about yourself
 - Use active voice: you are the “acting” subject
 - Story means vivid imagery – help your reader SEE you
- Contextualize every item you include
 - You are selling yourself as it relates to the prompt
- Writing is like sewing
 - Don't drop the connecting thread

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Keys to Success, Item 3: Evidence – it's all in the (concrete) details

- Be concrete and specific
 - Your reader wasn't there, so what do they need to know in order to understand?
- Show, don't tell
 - Anyone can claim they will be a great teacher, but those with examples will be believed
- Remember your controlling idea? It needs evidence
 - You have a thesis – now show your readers that it's true

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Keys to Success, Item 4: Want to stand out? Be yourself!

- When scholarships are for your field, you can assume the other applicants have a lot in common with you –
- So what makes you stand out?
 - ◆ Personality counts
 - ◆ Structure can set your essay apart
 - ◆ Discuss unique traits you bring to the table
 - ◆ Remember: passion goes a lot way

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Keys to Success, Item 5:

AND be what they are looking for

- Who is giving the scholarship?
 - Look for a mission statement – reflect the right values
 - What is their purpose for awarding the scholarship? Make sure you highlight that you will fulfill it. Make them proud to choose you!

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Important To Do's

- Read the instructions or writing task carefully.
- Approach this statement as an academic assignment (but don't exactly write it like one)
- Be specific *and* thorough when explaining past experiences or accomplishments. Elaborate on anything that might confuse an outside reader.
- Positivity and Energy are critical – caring is contagious!

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And some don'ts

- Don't focus on the negative.
- Don't repeat information that appears elsewhere.
- Don't lie or exaggerate.
- Don't be too casual or vague.
- Don't use inappropriate tone or language.

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Quick tips

- Read the instructions slowly and carefully to ensure you understand.
- Brainstorm. Organize, and outline before you write.
- Make sure your outline touches on every aspect required per the instructions.
- Re-read the prompt AFTER the outline is complete.
- Write your essay by elaborating on each of the points in your outline. Evidence is key.
- Don't list your accomplishments, show how they developed you.

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Tips, cont.

- Use clear, concise language throughout the essay.
- Make sure your grammar and spelling are impeccable.
- Read the question again and then read your essay to be certain that the essay addresses every point.
- Have someone with strong writing and editing skills proofread the essay before you submit it. Also read your essay out loud.
- Have your letter writers/mentors/LRC tutor/trusted friend read your essay! (Really, all of them)

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Final points: Style

- Every word counts. There is no space for filler
- Be active in your story, and in your sentences
- Don't overgeneralize specificity is key
- Avoid clichés
- Clarity over cuteness a difficult to follow essay will not be chosen
- Do not be afraid to let your voice shine through
 - (but don't be arrogant, glib, flippant, etc. – remember, you love this field and you want this scholarship!)

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Successful and Unsuccessful Samples

- The following two essays demonstrate an:
 - **Unsuccessful** essay full of grammatical and structural errors, redundancy, clichés, vagueness, and poor word choice.
 - **Successful** essay which includes a level of sophistication in tone, language, and sentence structure, as well as specificity. It also resonates with a sincere passion and compassion toward the chosen field, which affords the audience/reader a glimpse of the author's character.

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ESSAY: Personal essay (one page double spaced) stating why you have chosen to pursue a career in education, your professional goals and why you feel you are deserving of this scholarship.

I became interested in being a teacher after I finish the Americorps program City Year. In this program I was a peer mentor and tutor for inner city kids. In this program I assisted the teacher and evaluated kids on their grades and created education activities that made students who attended to learn basic skills like reading and math. This program was really stressful but also inspired me because my students went from below grade level to proficient over just one summer. This program made me hungry to help more student so I decided to become a teacher.

My professional goals in education are to create a day with activities where students can learn about careers after they are done with high school. Even though I am studying to be an elementary teacher I think it is important for kids to know as early as possible what lies beyond to help them stay focused in school and achieve all their dreams. I'd prepare for this day by working with a committee of other teachers to help me plan the activities and have students write reports on the careers they are interested in so they can present them.

I m deserving of the Lillian Raphael scholarship because I have a passion for creating students who are leaders and push for a better world. This would happen by having projects and activities geared towards real life applications such as learning to write a check or balance a budget. Second I work two jobs where I use the skills I learn from my education classes and apply them. I work hard but going to school and working two jobs has been one of the biggest challenges in my life and this scholarship would help me alot. Last I feel that all students should have a well rounded and practical education that will make them upstanding citizens in society.

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Dan and Cindy Chernow

Award Criteria: Enthusiasm for profession, leadership potential, financial need, scholarship, working towards a credential.

Prompt: write a one page essay (double spaced) describing how the following quote fits into your perception of teaching.

"We can, whenever and wherever we choose, successfully teach all children whose schooling is of interest to us. We already know more than we need in order to do this. Whether we do it more fully depends on how we feel about the fact that we haven't done it so far." Ron Edmonds

As Ron Edmonds states, "We can, whenever and wherever we choose, successfully teach all children whose schooling is of interest to us". I have had the privilege of spending sixty hours of student teaching in a special education classroom where most of the children are eligible for free-lunch and are English Language Learners. Many teachers may look at children's struggles – poverty, language acquisition, home instability, and special education as obstacles that are nearly impossible to overcome, and thus have low expectations for children's academic success. But I am not like other teachers. I am not discouraged by student's challenges; in fact it ignites a fire in me to work even harder!

Teaching has been my passion and career choice for as long as I can remember. I chose to teach special education because I believe that all children have strengths and potential to succeed – and it is up to me as their teacher to foster respect, citizenship, and success in academics. My studies in the mild/moderate Special Education Program at California State University, Northridge (CSUN) stimulate me, excite me, and inspire me to strive for excellence in my teaching – and children's learning. As I near completion of my teaching credential, I feel my life's purpose is coming to fruition.

I am eagerly looking forward to the final step of my academic journey – student teaching. In order to do my best, I would like to be able concentrate my my efforts on applying my knowledge and skills to the children I will be teaching. The generous support from the Dan and Cindy Chernow Scholarship will provide me with the financial assistance needed to devote myself to full-time student teaching. I thank you in advance for considering my application.