



**Capture
Greatness!**
Scholarship & College Coaching

The

SCHOLARSHIP

Starter Guide

www.CaptureGreatness.org



The Scholarship Starter Guide

This workbook was created to help you construct a strong scholarship essay. A strong essay will tell your story, while positioning you as a top candidate for scholarship panels. Complete the exercises in this workbook and you will have developed a powerful foundation from which you will create your essay.

In each section of this workbook you will find:

- Helpful tips to construct your best essay
- Weak and Winning examples to guide your work
- Space for you to think through and write your thoughts

The Capture Greatness approach to scholarship essays is based in authentic storytelling. In addition to meeting the demographic criteria, you should make sure that your values, experiences, and aspirations are in line with the mission of the scholarship for which you are applying. If the scholarship is a good fit, your goal is to provide a vivid, detailed essay that illustrates your core values, characteristics and relevant experience.

Are you ready to get to the good stuff? Let's proceed!

Know Your Audience

The first step to writing a winning scholarship essay is your ability to *show* the scholarship panel who you are and why you're deserving of the award.

You need to ask yourself, "Who is going to read this?" If you can't connect to your readers, you're at a huge disadvantage.

Answer these questions, first, and you'll be able to tailor your essay responses to really capture and impress the scholarship panel.

1) Why does this scholarship exist?

2) What makes me a great candidate for this scholarship award?

3) What contribution will I make if I am awarded the scholarship?

In each case, knowing what your readers are looking for and expecting of you will help you choose the best content for your essay. Remember that scholarships exist to help students who will make the most of their opportunities. In return, scholarship panels want you to give back to society in some way.

Answer The Question

You want to carefully consider the question or prompt, that is provided. Even if it's open-ended, like: "Tell us something you would like for us to know about you." You need to spend some time thinking about exactly what you would like to share with the scholarship panel.

Essay Prompt/Question – Insert the given prompt here:

Now, write your top 3 responses to the prompt. Don't over think it. They should only be 1-2 sentence responses. Answer the question honestly.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

Reread the 3 answer options you have just written. Which one is most unique to you? How many other people will answer the question/prompt similarly?

You want to choose the answer that is most uniquely you. This will help you stand out. If you don't have a response that you feel is very unique, try to be more specific, so that your response can only apply to you.

The Winning Advantage

Take a look at the difference between these *weak* and *winning* responses in the examples below. Notice how more details are provided for the winning responses.

Scholarship Prompt: Tell us about something that you have experienced that has helped to build your character and values.

Weak Response: I used to be homeless.

Winning Response: I have a special appreciation for home-cooked meals because when I was homeless most of my meals came from the dumpsters of fast food restaurants.

Scholarship Prompt: Describe how you have demonstrated leadership ability both in and out of school.

Weak Response: I'm a member of student government and I take care of my younger siblings until my father gets home from work.

Winning Response: I've successfully advocated for our school's recycling program, as a member of student government, and I'm teaching my siblings Spanish after I help them with their homework, in the evenings.

You give it a try. Go from your general response to a very specific and unique response.

Now that you have chosen a preliminary response to your scholarship prompt, it's time to focus on what qualities and positive characteristics you want to highlight in your essay.

Here's a tip – **Scholarship panels care more about who you are than what your answer is to their prompt. The prompt exists so that they can get to know you better.**

The Personal Narrative

You know your audience and what type of person they are looking for in general. You've identified an honest response that is unique to you. Now, you need to figure out which aspects of yourself would really show the panel that you are a perfect fit for the award. You will do this through storytelling.

The most boring essay to read is one written like a book report – all facts, no action. As trustworthy as you are, simply telling the panel about yourself isn't as compelling as "showing" the panel who you are. Storytelling allows you to illustrate your behaviors and characteristics, instead of asking your audience to take your word for it.

Repeat after me . . . "Show. Don't tell!" *Your turn . . . "Show. Don't tell!"*

*A scholarship essay is a personal narrative – it should read like a story unfolding –
not like a research paper.*

The goal of the scholarship essay is to share personal stories and life experiences with the scholarship panel, so that they can "see" what you're like and conclude that you are their best choice.

Your job is to collect your life experiences to find a story that illustrates your answer perfectly, while exposing some of your best qualities. Check out this example:

Scholarship Prompt: Who in your life has been your biggest influence and why?

Winning Response: My grandmother is my biggest influence. She taught me that a person only fails if they are too fearful to try, but to try and not succeed is a lesson, not a failure.

Possible Personal Stories:

- 1) Grandma's talk after I loss the election for junior class president.
- 2) Grandma reprimanding me for teasing my sister when she made zero shots in the basketball game.
- 3) Watching Grandma smile each day of chemotherapy, even though her hair had fallen out and she was physically weak.

You give it a try.

Identifying Your Narratives

Considering all of the information you have already gathered for this scholarship, jot down three possible stories that you can share with the scholarship panel.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

Now that you have identified the purpose of the scholarship, your winning response and personal narratives, you have a solid foundation for any scholarship essay. On a separate sheet of paper, you'll want to outline your essay. Outlining helps you to organize your thoughts and ensures that you won't leave out important components.

GOOD LUCK!