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# Guide to Writing Scholarship Essays & Personal Statements

A collaboration between the Career Center and Writing Center

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Writing scholarship essays and personal statements takes preparation and thought. This guide will help you research the scholarship, respond to prompts, and share your experiences in a way that connects to the organization’s values. These steps can help you clearly show your goals and why you are a strong candidate.

## **Research the Background**

* Read about the organization or individuals offering the scholarship.
  + Check out their website, and ask advisors or financial aid staff for more information.
* Look for key words related to the organization’s values and integrate them into your essay, showing how your goals connect to those values.
* Note any other required materials:
  + *Letters of recommendation*: Give your advocates as much time as possible to prepare. Share your goals and, if helpful, a draft of your personal statement. For tips on choosing and contacting references, see the *How to Write a Cover Letter & Provide References* handout.
  + *Transcripts*: Request these early, as they often take extra time to process.
* Write thank-you letters, which can often draw from the content of your personal statements.

## **Reflect on the Prompts**

Prompts are often quite specific, asking you to write about motivations, experience, or identity. What you share depends entirely on your comfort level, and you control your story. Personal statements are protected under FERPA, and foundations or committees cannot legally share your information with third parties.

Even if the prompt is specific, these questions can help you brainstorm ideas and examples to include:

* How have your experiences shaped your educational and professional goals, and what drew you to your major?
* Reflect on unique experiences or aspects of your identity that influenced your path.
* Consider whether any of your life experiences align with the vision of the benefactors. What moments in your life best embody that vision?

## **Stay on Topic**

Committees read many essays, and your audience can be highly distractible. It helps to keep this in mind as you write. Use efficient structures to showcase yourself clearly and avoid generic language.

Here are some strategies to help you do that:

* Tell a story about a relevant experience.
* Describe specific work accomplishments or activities that highlight your strengths.
* Share how you live out your values in your everyday life.
* Clearly state your need to accomplish your goals.

No matter the prompt, always keep this key question in mind: “Why should we choose you?”

## **Make Time for Revisions**

The best practice is to get feedback on your writing. You can visit the [Writing Center](https://www.metrostate.edu/academics/success/tutoring/writing) for a tutorial or stop by our [Research and Writing Help](https://libguides.metrostate.edu/research_and_writing_help_on_zoom) drop-in. You might also talk with trusted friends or family members, review your essay with a mentor or advisor, and give yourself time to complete multiple drafts if possible.

This document is available in alternative formats upon request. Please contact the

Center for Accessibility Resources at [accessibility.resources@metrostate.edu](mailto:accessibility.resources@metrostate.edu) or

(651) 793-1549.