

Writing a Cover Letter/Personal Essay for a Scholarship* **
Tips: What to Do with a Scholarship Application Essay*

1. *Answer the Question.* Review the question asked by the application. Has the student completely answered it? If not, what additional info needs to be included? How can it be effectively inserted into the text?
2. *Be Original.* Is the essay individual and creative or does it give an unexciting narrative?
3. *Be Individual.* Scholarship officers want to learn about the student and his or her writing ability. Is the essay meaningful and descriptive, about the student's feelings and not entirely about actions?
4. *Don't "Thesaurize" the Composition.* Big words used inappropriately make for clunky, unconvincing essays.
5. *Use Imagery and Clear, Vivid Prose.* A lot of students who come to us are not ease with using imagery so it's up to us to see that all of the reader's senses are engaged.
6. *Spend Most of Your Time on the Introduction.* Expect scholarship officers to spend 1-2 minutes reading the essay. The introduction should grab the reader's interest from the beginning. Some things to keep in mind:
 - Don't summarize in the introduction. If you summarize, the scholarship officer need not read the rest of your essay.
 - Create mystery or intrigue in your introduction. It is not necessary or recommended that your first sentence give away the subject matter. Raise questions in the minds of the scholarship officers to force them to read on. Appeal to their emotions to make them relate to your subject matter.
7. *Relate Body Paragraphs to the Introduction.* The introduction can be original but cannot be silly. The paragraphs that follow must relate to the introduction.
8. *Use Transitions.* Applicants continue to ignore transitioning to their own detriment. Use transitions within paragraphs and especially between paragraphs to preserve the logical flow of the essay. Transitions are not limited to phrases like "as a result, in addition, while, since, etc." but includes repeating key words and progressing the idea. Transitions provide the intellectual architecture to argument building.

9. *Conclude with a bang.* The conclusion is the last chance to persuade or impress the reader. In the conclusion, avoid summary since the essay is usually short to begin with; the reader should not need to be reminded of what was written 300 words before. Also, do not use stock phrases like “in conclusion, in summary, to conclude, etc.”

Sample Cover Letter Format*

Fran Fingers
1234 Any Street
Anywhere, Anystate 12345
(123) 867-5309

October 5, XXXX

Bonnie Blum Memorial Scholarship Selection Committee
5678 Any Street
Anyhwere, Anystate 12345

Members of the Selection Committee:

Opening: Houses the reason for the letter, the specifics of your application, umbrella statement for rest of letter.

First Paragraph: Topic Sentence, discussion of one of areas mentioned earlier (education for example) briefly or in depth depending on accompaniment of personal essay and/or resume.

Second Paragraph: Transition, topics sentence, discussion of new point.

Third Paragraph: See second.

Fourth Paragraph: See third. Eventually you will run out of new points to discuss. You will then make the transition into a closing paragraph.

Closing: Often times it's easy to transition from your goals to a summation of the letter. Do not use the same wording as the opener. Thank the committee for considering your letter.

Sincerely,

Signature

Fran Fingers

* Adapted from "Guidelines for Cover Letter." CDC, U of M - Flint
Sample Essay/Cover Letter 1

I am applying for the Ralph M. and Emmalyn E. Freeman Honors Scholar Program Scholarship. Presently, I am a junior in the nursing program. I believe my chosen profession will enable me to fulfill all of my desires to help others, to continuously expand my knowledge base and skills and to travel the world. Throughout my life I have participated in extracurricular activities including valuable volunteer experiences. I have striven for academic excellence, always wishing to make the most of my education. In addition, I have managed to work to provide for some of the basic expenses that students have. Next year this will especially important, as I will no longer be receiving the Chancellor Scholarship.

Education has always been an important aspect of my life. While in high school I managed to take challenging courses such as advanced placement English and calculus, physics, and chemistry. I enjoyed the arts and was involved in art, band, and choir. Despite the time consuming practices for concerts, parades, musicals and exhibits, I was able to maintain a 3.97 grade point average, allowing me to graduate as salutatorian. I decided to stay near home and come to the University of Michigan-Flint because of the smaller class size, scholarship monies and the University's Honor Program.

I have received many scholarships since I began my college career. In 1998 I received the Chancellor's Scholarship providing me with \$1,700 per year for four years. I also received three scholarships from my graduating high school. The first was the Goodrich Alumni Scholarship totaling \$200. The second was the Goodrich Teachers Scholarship totaling \$500. The last was from the National Honor Society and totaled \$260. All of these awards were given based on scholarship and community service. Because of my acceptance in the University's Honor Program I also receive the Honor's Scholarship. Despite the challenges of both the nursing and honors curriculum I have managed to maintain a 3.7 grade point average. My efforts did not go unnoticed and in 2001 I received two additional scholarships including the Ralph M. and Emmalyn E. Freeman Honors Scholar Program Scholarship and the Ralph M. And Emmalyn E. Freeman Long Distance Learning Scholarship. These accomplishments lead me to believe that in the future I will continue to perform at a high level in the academics.

Although education plays a significant role in my life, I am involved with many other activities. During high school I was an active member of the National Honor Society for two and a half years. My last year as a member gave me the opportunity to play a more active role as I participated as NHS treasurer. I frequently tutored individuals by offering my time before and after school for middle and high school students. I enjoy helping others with schoolwork and have continued to aid fellow students at the college level. I also enjoy the arts and participated in many performances, plays, musicals and exhibitions, often requiring traveling to other areas and interacting with new individuals. Currently I am involved with fellow nursing students on a class and university level. I belong to the National Student Nurses Association as well. I have volunteered my time to inform individuals of various ages of what nursing involves and share the need for nurses. IN addition, I have entered the community to perform blood pressure screening and offer information to those at risk for hypertension and diabetes. I have increased my knowledge base as well as my public presentation skills by presenting one of my papers, Beatrice and Katharine: Shakespeare's Unconventional Women at the Purdue University-Calumet Undergraduate Research Conference in 1999. Through all of these experiences I have learned to act as a leader, work in groups, and organize my time appropriately.

In addition to school related activities I am also involved with my local church. I teach a class of 3-6 year old kids. When other teachers are unable to teach Sunday school I do not hesitate to come to their aid. I have participated in church cleanup, nursery duty and choir as well. I

feel that by aiding in church related activities I am setting a positive example for the children within the church to follow.

Work is also a part of my life. Until recently, I would work 16-20 hours/week to provide for educational expenses. Presently I work 8 hours/week in the neonatal intensive care unit as an extern at Hurley Medical Center. I enjoy working because I am able to see newborns progress to a state where they can finally be discharged to their families. I enjoy teaching parents about their infants such as what to expect, what is normal for their infant to do and when to call the doctor. During the summer of 2001 I worked in a group of three other individuals to perform a quality improvement project on gavage fed infants and then presented the results to our peers. Through my work experiences I have learned a little more about what to expect upon completion of the nursing program and now know the reality of what to expect as a registered nurse. Seeing problems such as mandatory overtime and poor benefits despite a nursing shortage has motivated me to remain active in associations such as the Student Nursing Association because I realize that as a group we will be able to voice our concerns about the issues that nurses face today.

My goal is to become a registered nurse so that I can perform task that clients cannot do for themselves as well as be an active listener, patient advocate and educator. At some point I would enjoy going back to school to become a practitioner. I have had an extraordinary number of nursing instructors who were absolutely wonderful and would one day like to give back what they have given to me by becoming an instructor. I know that one day I will provide something meaningful to the individuals that I encounter.

Sample Essay/Cover Letter 2

I wish to apply for the _____ scholarship. I believe that my excellent academic record, and service work make me a good candidate for a scholarship. Throughout high school I maintained a high level of academic achievements while volunteering for community service and working 20 hours a week. I graduated from Owosso high school as the Salutatorian of my class in 1999. I had a 3.99 GPA. In addition to my academic classes, such as AP English and Physics, I was a member of the A capella Choir. This demanded extra time and effort especially before the concerts in December, March and May during which our director held extra practices at night and on the weekends.

Not only was I involved with academic and extra curricular activities; I also worked in a pizza restaurant approximately 20 hours a week. After two years, I was promoted to a key holding position where I am still working today. I supervise the other employees, handle customer complaints and close the building at night. This employment has taught me much about myself and others. I have learned what it means to work hard and how to motivate other to do the same thing.

At the University of Michigan-Flint, I applied and was one of twenty students from a total of seventy applicants to enter the honors program. In addition, I was awarded the Distinguished Chancellor Scholarship, Michigan Competitive Scholarship and Honors Program Scholarship. These resources have made my college experiences possible. I am working towards a degree in elementary education with concentration in mathematics and language arts.

I have continued to maintain an excellent academic record of academic achievement with a GPA of 3.93, while working thirty five to forty five hours a week to finance my education. Presently, I work at Fred Meyer Jewelers, Mancino's Pizza and Grinders, and as a Supplemental Instructor (SI) for Business Calculus. From this wide range of experiences I have gained a broad background of life. I enjoy working with and for people. I have learned from

being an SI leader how to explain things in several different ways and not to give up until the student truly understands the material.

In addition to my employment I also continue to volunteer for community service. I assist in a kindergarten class every Wednesday. I have tied shoes; put on name tags, sang songs and helped the children make apple muffins. I help the teacher with lessons, art projects, supervising during “play time,” testing and many other aspects of the career I hope to have one day. It is the most rewarding experience at this pointing in my life. I love children. Watching them grow and learn is one of my greatest joys.

I also give some of my time to the children at my church. I am the leader of the puppet team there. I organize outings, performances and competitions for about fifteen children between the ages of eleven and sixteen. I conduct practice for two hours every Saturday in which the puppeteers learn more about puppetry and practice songs and skits for upcoming performances. I chose the material and make decisions about who gets which part. Dedication and commitment are two of the traits that have been developed in me through this experience.

After graduation I hope to become an elementary school teacher. I am committed to this goal as is evident by my record of academic accomplishments and community service. I am convinced that all these factors make me a good candidate for this scholarship.

Sample Essay/Cover Letter 3

My name is _____, and I am applying for the Ralph M. and Emmalyn E. Freeman Philosophy Scholarship. Presently, I am a senior working towards a Bachelor’s degree in Philosophy and English with a specialization in writing. Despite being a full time student, balancing two majors, maintaining a 3.8 GPA, and working over 30 hours a week, I also take the initiative to enhance my education outside the classroom. I constantly strive for excellence and am committed to making my time as an undergraduate as productive and beneficial as possible.

A well-rounded student, my interests span across curriculum and culture. I’ve thirsted for knowledge since childhood, and when I finally reached high school, my craving was further whetted. I finished fifth grade in the United States before moving to Bethlehem, Palestine. There, in my parent’s homeland, I completed the next 4 years of my education. Consequently, I attended my first year of high school in an Arabic school. Although I did exceedingly well there, ranking seventh amongst my classmates, my family relocated to Grand Blanc, MI before I began tenth grade. Regardless of the radical shift in culture and educational systems, I excelled in my new setting. I graduated from Grand Blanc High School in January 2000, a semester early, with a 3.81 GPA and ranking 38th out of a class of 468.

Attending college liberated me and allowed me to not only explore a wider array of subjects, including women, gender and feminist studies, but also explore myself. I grew into a strong woman, questioning the status quo and doing all I can to change injustices I find. My development was aided by the Michigan Competitive Scholarship (since Fall 2002) and consistently acknowledged by the University of Michigan-Flint Scholar Award (for every semester at U of M – Flint except Fall 2000).

My personal achievements exceed beyond school, however. I work roughly 30 hours a week, spread liberally over two jobs. The first is as a cashier for Bernie’s Market. I’ve learned to work with others through this experience and it has shaped me into a responsible adult. As Bernie’s is a family business, I often open and close the market, work with suppliers, track purchase and sales, in addition to hands-on jobs like stocking shelves.

The second is as head tutor in the Marian E. Wright Writing Center. I am responsible not only for tutoring developmental writers enrolled in ENG 109 and students wanting one-on-one

appointments for any subject, in any stage of writing but also supervise the day-to-day operations of the center. I monitor scheduling and budget, organize and lead meetings, plan and execute workshops, and overall keep the writing center running smoothly for the benefit of fellow tutors and students. Currently, I'm also voluntarily involved in planning the 11th Annual Michigan Writing Centers Ideas Exchange with my co-workers, manager and director. I've also helped revise the syllabus for the center's tutor training course. After its revisions, I worked with the center's director and fellow staff to carry out the revisions in the actual classroom. My work in the center is extremely gratifying both on the personal and professional level. I take pleasure in watching my students discover and rediscover writing. Furthermore, their success inspires me to delve into my own work regularly.

In that avenue, I spend what little spare time I have writing and revising poetry for submission to contests and various publications. I'm also in the process of assembling a work tentatively titled "Fabulous Feminism" which I intend to be an introductory guide to feminism in all its faces. To do this, I'm drawing on my experience from Spring and Summer 2002 in which I created the "Road Guide to Working in the Writing Center," an instructional manual for all incoming tutors. Over the upcoming spring, summer and fall, I'm working with the help of Dr. Jami Anderson to begin and complete my senior thesis concerning feminist ethics. In the past, I attended two Writing Center conferences including the 9th Annual Michigan Writing Centers Ideas Exchange and the National Conference on Peer Tutoring in Writing/Midwest Writing Centers Association Conference 2002, for which I was a presenter.

Behind my achievements is a strong desire to learn. I hope to complete my Bachelor's degree over the next year and attend graduate school so I can one day return the favor many professors bestowed on me and teach at a college level. Philosophy has taught me to evaluate life and my experience. It's through that that I hope to become an instrumental member of society, using all of my energies to bring about constructive change and create a path to the "good life," not only for myself but also for others.

I would like to thank you in advance for considering my application.

Resumé Example

Bruin T. Bear

450 North Avenue | Battle Creek, MI 49017
email: bearb@kellogg.edu | cell: 269.965.3931

Bookkeeping / Payroll / Accounts Receivable / Accounts Payable / Accounts Management

3 years of progressive accounting experience including small business operations and corporate support

Summary of Qualifications

Technology / Software Application:

Excel: MOS Expert exam ready, business-formatted worksheets, data tables, advanced functions and formulas

Word: Utilize wizard functions, create edit letters and memos, and utilize labeling and mail merge functions

Outlook / Project: Email and calendaring functions; organize tasks and workflow

Peachtree: account receivable, account payable, inventory, payroll, fixed assets and general ledger

SAP: Invoice retrieval and lookup, real-time deliverables, customer communication

Management and Operational Support:

- Able to complete accounting cycle with a focus on reporting of business transactions, preparing financial statements, income taxes, liabilities, and budgeting
- Experienced with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP)
- Trained in an automated office environment, including utilizing scheduling and electronic calendar functions, continuous improvement and enhanced organization, and effective communication skills, experienced with ERPs and MRPs
- Established history of communicating effectively within team and project focused environments; highly organized with emphasis on detail and accuracy, meeting deadlines, prioritizing, and multi-tasking
- Demonstrated management support and leadership including problem solving, planning, management control systems, and organization
- Specialized in Just-In-Time principles, strategic inventory and waste controls, and maximizing profit margins

Education

Kellogg Community College, Battle Creek, MI
Associate in Applied Science | Major: **Accounting**

Expected Graduation: May 2014
GPA: 3.8 / 4.0

Academic Accomplishments:

- President: Phi Theta Kappa (Alpha Nu Eta) – International Honor Society for 2-year colleges
- Dean's List (5 consecutive semesters)
- Treasurer: Bruin Accounting Club

Related Experience

Co-Op / Purchasing Assistant | *Kellogg Company*, Battle Creek, MI September 2012 - Present

Serve under the direction of the Purchasing Specialist with specialized duties in purchasing and inventory overhaul; communicate with vendors and coordinate department needs with the Finance and Accounting departments

Accomplishments:

- Facilitate the upgrade of inventory tracking and purchasing capabilities; initiate project to identify areas of improvement and eliminate waste, with a projected department saving of \$100,000
- Train new Co-Op students with SAP database
- Received two promotions and several extensions on Co-Op assignment based upon performance

Bookkeeper Assistant | *Bruin and Associates*, Battle Creek, MI August 2010 – September 2012

Provided accounting support for a small accounting firm with emphasis on balancing account payables and account receivables

Accomplishments:

- Assisted with the accurate reporting and tracking of over \$250,000 of quarterly revenues

Top Ten Mistakes Made on Scholarship Applications

By Laura DiFiore

1. Forget to include your name and/or address! You would be surprised how many students do not include their name or address on an application!
2. Submit an incomplete application. Make sure you include all required references, photos, transcripts, and essays.
3. Be rude or abusive to the judges. Telling the judges that they will burn in Hades if they don't pick you, or that they are idiots because they don't accept applications from students in your major is a sure-fire way to guarantee you will NOT be considered for this application, and that the judges will tell all their judge friends how nasty you are.
4. Submit a dirty application. Use a plate for your lunch, not your application. Don't spill beer on your application!
5. Apply when you do not meet their minimum requirements. If they require a minimum 3.0 GPA and you have a 1.2 GPA, don't waste your time!
6. Send it "postage due." Oops!
7. Mail the envelope but forget to put the application in it. Surprisingly common!
8. Submit inappropriate supporting documentation, such as including a picture of you at age 6 months when the application asks for you to include a photo, or including a copy of your arrest record as a reference! (This really happened!)
9. No one can read your application. The use of fancy, hard to read script typefaces on your essay or handwriting that even a doctor would be ashamed of.
10. Spelling errors! Even ONE spelling error can doom your application! Remember, if you do not take the time to spell-check your application, the judges won't take the time to read it!

Action Words*

Accelerated	Decentralized	Headed	Participated	Settled
Accomplished	Decreased	Helped	Performed	Shaped
Achieved	Defined	Hired	Pinpointed	Showed
Acquired	Delegated	Identified	Pioneered	Simplified
Activated	Delivered	Implemented	Planned	Sold
Adapted	Demonstrated	Improved	Prepared	Solved
Addressed	Designed	Improvised	Presented	Sorted
Administrated	Determined	Influenced	Processed	Sponsored
Advised	Developed	Initiated	Procured	Staffed
Allocated	Devised	Inspected	Produced	Standardized
Analyzed	Directed	Installed	Projected	Stimulated
Anticipated	Discharged	Inspired	Programmed	Started
Applied	Discovered	Instigated	Promoted	Streamlined
Appointed	Documented	Instituted	Proposed	Strengthened
Appraised	Distributed	Integrated	Provided	Stretched
Approved	Doubled	Instructed	Proved	Structured
Arranged	Earned	Interpreted	Published	Studied
Assessed	Edited	Interviewed	Purchased	Suggested
Assisted	Effected	Introduced	Realized	Summarized
Assigned	Eliminated	Invented	Recommended	Supervised
Attained	Employed	Invested	Reconciled	Supported
Audited	Enforced	Investigated	Recruited	Surpassed
Augmented	Engineered	Launched	Redesigned	Surveyed
Averted	Established	Lectured	Reduced	Sustained
Avoided	Estimated	Led	Re established	Tailored
Broadened	Evaluated	Lightened	Regulated	Taught
Built	Examined	Liquidated	Reinforced	Terminated
Calculated	Exceeded	Located	Rejected	Tested
Centralized	Executed	Made	Relate	Tightened
Clarified	Exercised	Maintained	Re negotiated	Traded
Collaborated	Expanded	Managed	Reorganized	Trained
Combined	Expedited	Marketed	Reported	Transacted
Completed	Extended	Mediated	Represented	Transferred
Composed	Extracted	Minimized	Researched	Transformed
Conceived	Facilitated	Mobilized	Reshaped	Translated
Concluded	Financed	Modernized	Resolved	Trimmed
Condensed	Forecast	Modified	Restored	Tripled
Conducted	Formed	Monitored	Revamped	Uncovered
Consolidated	Formulated	Motivated	Reviewed	Undertook
Constructed	Found	Negotiated	Revised	Unified
Contributed	Founded	Obtained	Revitalized	Used
Controlled	Framed	Operated	Revived	Utilized
Converted	Fulfilled	Ordered	Saved	Verified
Corrected	Generated	Organized	Scheduled	Vitalized
Created	Guided	Originated	Secured	Widened
Cultivated	Handled	Overcame	Selected	Won
		Oversaw	Set up	Wrote

*Compiled by Cooperative Education and Career Center, U of M – Flint