

Writing an Effective Scholarship/Fellowship Application

Writing an effective application that is both memorable and engaging for the reader can have a big impact on your chances of being awarded a scholarship or fellowship.

- Read the directions on the application. Sometimes the directions can clarify the intent of the question. If you don't follow the directions, you will give the scholarship committee a negative impression, telling them that you can't or won't follow instructions.
- Do not skip questions or leave any question blank. An incomplete application will be not be evaluated.

Use the following questions to guide your personal statement:

- What is your class level (freshman-senior, graduate student) and academic plan?
- Why did you choose your major/academic discipline?
- What engineering-related experiences do you have (internships, student organizations, jobs, on-campus involvement)?
- What are your academic and career goals and aspirations?
- How will this award assist you in achieving those goals?

Write an outline for your responses. Writing an outline can help provide focus and structure to the response. Too many application responses jump from point to point and ramble without connecting one thought to another. Using an outline will allow you to present your ideas in a more organized and thoughtful way.

- Give concrete examples. When answering application questions, support your statements with concrete examples. For example, if you say that one of your best qualities is leadership, give an example where you demonstrated leadership. Then explain what skills you learned or how you grew as a person and as a leader from this experience.
- Similarly, a question about community service should not be answered with a vague "I like helping others and feel that it is important", but should also include specific examples where you have helped others and what you learned or how you benefited from the experience.
- Don't exaggerate. Selection committees are good at detecting when a student exaggerates, and dishonesty will cause you to lose a scholarship you otherwise might have been awarded.
- Proofread your application. Check your application responses for correct spelling and grammar usage. If you cut and paste from a word processing program like Microsoft Word, be wary of valid word spelling errors. A valid word spelling error substitutes one dictionary word for another, such as "their" for "there" or "they're".

Remember that you may edit your application at any time up to the posted deadline. Complete this application as if you were entering a competition for a significant financial award – because you are! Respond to the application questions in a careful and thoughtful way. A scholarship award is well worth the effort you invest!