



BRONX COMMUNITY COLLEGE

TRANSFER TALK

TRANSFER AND ARTICULATION NEWS

SUMMER 2017 | VOLUME 3, ISSUE 3

Transfer Planning and Scholarships: Essays

By Edwin Roman, Academic and Transfer Resources Coordinator

Part three of three looking at scholarships. Parts one and two may be found online.

Even when you fit the criteria, distinguishing your scholarship application is not an easy thing to accomplish. You're still likely to be one of many applicants with similar aspirations, activities, experiences and grades. This is where the essay plays a crucial role. The scholarship essay is your opportunity to provide the scholarship sponsor with greater details of your life and education while distinguishing yourself.

Placing great emphasis on the essay may make it seem overwhelming, especially if you don't consider yourself to be a strong writer. My first bit of advice for overcoming overwhelming feelings would be to get started early: I recommend you follow a 3-week timeline for writing your scholarship essay.

BUILDING YOUR ESSAY

The first of the three-week timeline should be devoted to brainstorming, a key process in writing an essay. Try drawing a map of your ideas. Seeing a visual representation of your thoughts can assist you with cultivating and organizing ideas. In the center of your map, write your topic and draw a circle around it. When you come up with a new idea, write it down, draw a circle around it, and draw a line to show how it connects to the topic in the center and/or the other ideas you've written down.

The second week should be devoted to writing an outline as well as a first draft. An outline can look like this:

I. Introduction (first paragraph)

1. Sentence to get the attention of your readers:

II. Body (second and third paragraphs)

1. First idea:

- a. Supporting information for the first idea:
- b. Supporting information for the first idea:

2. Second idea:

- a. Supporting information for the second idea:
- b. Supporting information for the second idea:

3. Third idea:

- a. Supporting information for the third idea:
- b. Supporting information for the third idea:

III. Conclusion (last paragraph)

1. Restatement of your thesis:
2. Insightful sentence to end your essay:

The third week should be devoted to editing and finalizing. Be sure you have time to have your essay read by someone with an eye for editing. Even an impassioned essay can be derailed by spelling and grammatical mistakes as well as awkward sentences. Scholarship judges have plenty of essays to read and are looking for any reason to dismiss one out of the stack. I also recommend reading your essay aloud, so you can hear how it flows.

**SCHOLARSHIP ESSAYS
ARE ALL ABOUT
THE PERSON BEHIND
THE ESSAY.**

Continued on the next page.

KEY POINTS TO KEEP IN MIND

Read and Follow the Instructions.

Nothing turns a scholarship essay reader off faster than an essay that almost applies to the contest guidelines. Don't write under the limit. Don't write over the limit.

Grab the Reader.

Don't underestimate a strong introduction. Hit the ground running in your first paragraph. This will help to distinguish your scholarship essay. Look at these two samples of introductory lines. Can you spot the difference?

Sample One: Strong mathematics skills are important for many reasons.

Sample Two: Mathematics is one of humankind's greatest achievements.

Sample one is vague, impersonal and boring. But sample two is specific and intriguing. It leaves the reader interested and wanting more.

Stay Focused on the Scholarship Essay Topic.

Judges are reading numerous scholarship essays and don't have the time to read through a tangent unless it illustrates your main point. Be sure your essay has one unified statement, or thesis, behind it.

Care About What You're Writing.

Scholarship essays are all about the person behind the essay. Judges can sense when you have a genuine emotional investment in your scholarship essay. Don't write about what you think you should write about. Write about what interests you.

You want your readers to feel your passion about whatever it is you choose to write. Furthermore, the scholarship sponsors want to find someone who is passionate about the same things they are.

Recycle Your Essay.

Don't waste time writing a different essay for all the scholarship competitions you enter. There are many scholarships and essay topics tend to overlap. With a bit of tweaking, one scholarship essay can fit the needs of several different contests. Recycle as much as you can!

SAMPLE SCHOLARSHIP ESSAY

The following essay was written by BCC alumnus, Juan Cruz. This essay was, in part, recycled from his admissions essay to Cooper Union. Mr. Cruz would go on to reuse parts of this essay for other scholarships.

Describe how mathematics will play a part in your future plans.

Mathematics is one of humankind's greatest achievements. Interestingly, humans may not have utilized mathematics first. Animals, through instinct, use mathematics to calculate various tasks in their everyday lives. One example is the hunting tiger that silently sneaks towards their prey instinctively pouncing when it is twenty to thirty feet away. Scientists have speculated that if sophisticated alien beings exist in the universe, we would be able to communicate with them using mathematics. The universal language is indeed mathematics and an essential part of my future plans.

I am interested in a civil engineering career. Specifically, I am interested in addressing New York City's constant transportation problems. I can envision incorporating old ideas with new ones in practical ways that consider budget, environmental and engineering issues concurrently. To become a recognized engineer, I must first complete my undergraduate studies and follow-up with my Master's and PhD. However, my dreams involving engineering are not just limited to New York City; I want to realize other goals that revolve around education.

My definitive career goal is to open a high school in the Bronx that revolves around engineering. The inspiration for this school comes from an older cousin who attended a specialized high school where he started learning the basics of architecture. By the time he graduated, he had a strong foundation in that particular field and went on to a successful academic career at an Ivy League School. He attributes his success to that early exposure in high school. Other high schools in the Bronx exist that revolve around specific careers like sports, medicine and public affairs. Why not one that will prepare young people for careers in engineering? Students could specialize in civil, mechanical, chemical, and computer engineering. I can visualize civil engineering students studying hydraulics, thermodynamics, structures, and environment. I can also imagine a mentor program as well as conferences and workshops in career and college preparation. Establishing this high school seems to be the natural evolution in my career as a civil engineer.

The durable qualities of such theoretical concepts as symmetry, proof, and change have been developed through thousands of years of human intellectual endeavors. Like art, language and music, mathematics is an essential part of human culture. The N.Y.S.M.A.T.Y.C. award is a testament to this tradition.

You want your readers to feel your passion about whatever it is you choose to write. Furthermore, the scholarship sponsors want to find someone who is passionate about the same things they are.