RESPONDING TO SCHOLARSHIP ESSAY QUESTIONS

Every Waubonsee Community College Foundation scholarship application requires an essay in the form of answers to Student Essay Questions. These answers are one of the most important pieces of your application. This is where the Scholarship Selection Committee will get to know you; it will help them determine if you are the right person to receive the scholarship award.

Committees often look for:

- Interest in and knowledge of chosen field
- Motivation, enthusiasm
- Creativity, originality
- Ability to express thoughts clearly
- Ability to face challenges and/or overcome obstacles
- Desire to achieve, dedication to goals
- Attention to detail and carefulness of work in completing the scholarship application

Begin by spending some time reflecting on your strengths. When you write down all of the great things you have accomplished, it will be much easier for you to create responses that convey your strong points to the judges. So *toot your own horn*!

- Make a list of all your accomplishments – note the three of which you are most proud
- Develop a list of your extracurricular and volunteer activities
- Think of a problem that you faced and write down how you were able to overcome it
- Put in writing your career goals, or your reason for wanting to attend college
- Pretend that you had to write a letter of recommendation for yourself and write down the three most important things you would say

Now you are on the way to writing a winning scholarship essay. Follow these steps:

1. Start in a WORD document.

2. Use your list to answer each Free Form Essay Question on the application. The questions cover (1) introduction, (2) goals, (3) accomplishments, (4) service, (5) overcoming obstacles, and (6) closing.

3. Your introduction will need a strong thesis statement or umbrella statement at the beginning in order to introduce the information that makes you a good candidate. Some possible beginnings:
   - An intriguing statement
   - An arresting statistic or shocking statement
   - A question
   - A quotation
   - A relevant story or anecdote
   - A description, often used for emotional appeal
   - A factual statement or summary of who-what-where-when-why
   - A comparison or contrast
   - A personal experience
4. Begin each answer with a clear topic sentence containing key words to help direct the reader:
   ✓ My family includes...
   ✓ I have always chosen challenging courses, and I have an excellent/very good academic record...
   ✓ My career goal is to finish my Associate’s degree at Waubonsee, then...
   ✓ I have developed strong leadership skills and know how to interact with a wide variety of people through working several different jobs...
   ✓ I was awarded a certificate of achievement for...
   ✓ I have done a fair amount of community service including...

5. Stress the areas that make you a good candidate for a scholarship. For example, if financial need is a consideration for you make a point of your financial need but not in a tacky way. Remember the questions are for your entire application, not for any one particular scholarship, so provide this information in general.

6. To answer the closing question, provide a concluding sentence that wraps up and summarizes key strengths. Some possible closing ideas include:
   ✓ A restatement of the thesis and an emphatic summary of major points, stated in fresh terms
   ✓ A quotation, story or quote that sums up the point of your answers
   ✓ A statement of the importance of receiving a scholarship in achieving your educational and career goals

7. Choice of words is important. Achieve a balance between bragging and modesty. Avoid exaggerations and clichés but do not downplay your worth.

8. Remember you are not sending a text! Make sure your essay is well written. Proofread your essay. Consider grammar, punctuation, and spelling. Capitalize where necessary. Avoid wordiness. Be clear and concise. It is a good idea to have someone else double check your work. Pay attention to the required word count – the length for each response is included on the application.

9. Format your answers as an essay; do not submit a letter, provide bullet points or use incomplete sentences. Follow the instructions.

10. Ensure your WORD document is in a normal format, and then finally copy and paste each section of your WORD document into the appropriate answer box in the Student Essay Questions section of your STARS Online application.

   Assistance is available for registered Waubonsee students from the Sugar Grove Tutoring Center (Collins 144) or at the Aurora Campus in the Aurora Tutoring Center (Room 215).

   If you have questions you may contact the Advancement Office at (630) 466-7900 ext. 2316.