

# General Scholarship Advice

(And things you can do *now* for a more successful future application to a major scholarship)

## Coursework and Independent Research

- Your transcript tells a story, not just through grades, but by course choice as well. You want your transcript to bear out what you say your passions and interests are in your scholarship application essays.
- You also want it to show that you have a good foundation for the graduate study or research you are proposing. If you are planning to aim for a Fulbright to study some aspect of contemporary politics in Latin America you should not only have classes in Latin American politics, but also Latin American history and culture. In addition, you should be able to speak and read Spanish (or Portuguese if you are planning to work in Brazil.) Be strategic in your choice of electives, as early as possible in your college career.
- Undergraduate research, including a senior project, is the best stepping stone to almost every scholarship you might apply for. By engaging in research, you demonstrate that you are capable of independent intellectual inquiry and possess strong time management skills. Research can be an ideal vehicle for developing an area of expertise to use as a springboard for graduate study or a Fulbright research scholarship, so choose your topic with an eye to the future. Your professors can help you to identify potential directions for research projects, which often stem from the course(s) you have taken with them. Be aware that Pacific has an internal competition for undergraduate research grants, including a very generous summer opportunity:

<http://www.pacific.edu/Academics/Research-and-Scholarship/Undergraduate-Research/Research-Grants.html>

While not essential, a study abroad experience will enhance any scholarship application, above all the Fulbright. There are all kinds of funding sources for study abroad that you will find in our database.

## Faculty recommendations

- Recommendations can make or break an application. The smartest, most well-prepared student will not get any of these scholarships without strong recommendations.

- Getting an A from a professor does not mean that she can write you a good recommendation. Recommenders need to know who you are, how you think, what your interests and goals are.
- The only way they can learn this is through one-on-one conversations, so you need to avail yourself of office hours. To start out, maybe you will go in and ask questions about the lecture or get more information about something that was just touched on briefly and intrigued you. Then go in to talk about paper topics you are considering and why. Next you can go in and talk about sources you are using for the paper and issues you are wrestling with. Then you can talk about future classes you should take in the area, then about undergraduate research ideas. Finally you will be talking with them about grad programs they would recommend and fellowships you are thinking about applying for. By the time you ask them for a recommendation they will have a lot to say about you.
- The ideal is to have letters from professors on campus who are knowledgeable about the field you are planning to pursue.

## Experiences

- Just as a transcript tells the story of your academic career, your resume tells the story of your experiences, and through them your interests, values and goals.
- Get involved in things you really care about. It is far better to be really involved in a few things than a little involved in a lot of things. Scholarship committees are looking for people who are passionate and want to make a difference. Note that
- Be creative in what you do with your summers. Do not settle for jobs unrelated to your goals or things you care about. If you can't find (or can't afford) an internship or unpaid opportunity that's related to your interests or goals, then make time each week to volunteer, while working your job that pays the bills.
- At the same time, if your resume shows that you have basically held a full-time job while attending college full-time, that also tells an important story. Scholarship committees are especially impressed by students who excel academically despite financial difficulties and familial responsibilities.

## The Big Picture

- Be *intentional* as you approach all these aspects of your undergrad experience. There is an importance difference between being calculating and being intentional about your undergrad career.

- Don't be a calculating trophy-hunter. Being calculating means trying to figure out what you think the committees want to see and then doing those things only for that reason. It means going into talk with faculty only to develop a relationship so you can ask for a recommendation.
- Being intentional means following your interests, finding out what you really care about and preparing yourself to do well in whatever that is. It means having a genuine interest in a subject and talking with faculty because of that interest. It means that you will feel that your time was well spent, even if you don't win a major scholarship.