

Foundation Scholarship Essay: Getting Started

When you apply for an SPSCC Foundation scholarship (spscc.edu/foundation), perhaps the most important element is the application essay. It is your only chance to give the application reviewers a sense of who you are, why you are at SPSCC, and why a scholarship would make a difference in your education.

Use this worksheet to get started on your application essay. As always, feel free to visit LSS-West (building 22 room 101) to work one-on-one with a writing tutor.

Audience

The people who will read your application essay are Foundation board members and SPSCC faculty and staff – people who care about student success. However, they are also strangers. They don't know who you are, what you have accomplished, why you are at SPSCC, or what you hope to do with your education. It's up to you to inform them of all that. Your readers are also busy people, with only a few hours to score 10-20 applications, so you should work to make your essay memorable and easy to read.

Keep in mind that you are writing to readers who are:

- Invested in seeing students succeed (so don't feel nervous about being judged or criticized)
- Unfamiliar with you and your story (so be sure to provide specific details about your educational path)
- Pressed for time (so reread and revise your essay several times before submitting)

Purpose

The main purpose of the application essay is to persuade your readers that you are a worthwhile investment. To accomplish that, you need to paint a picture of who you are and why you are here at SPSCC. Why does your education matter to you? What are your goals, both short- and long-term? What drives you to pursue those goals? These should be the central questions of your essay.

Prewriting

As with any major writing task, your application essay will be stronger if you allow for a multi-stage writing process that involves thinking, planning, drafting, and revising. To start, spend 5-10 minutes writing about each of the following questions. Let yourself write continually without worrying about phrasing or grammatical correctness. You can revise later.

1. Why have you chosen your field of study or career path?
2. Why are you at SPSCC? What will your SPSCC education enable you to do?
3. How would scholarship money support your success? What would it allow you to do?



Organizing

Now that you have some content to include in your essay, reread what you wrote. What are the main ideas that you would like to include? Write an outline that organizes those main ideas into separate sections. If you get stuck, here are some possible ways to organize your essay:

Option 1: Mimic the Prompt

- Section I ____ Yourself (educational or economic background)
- Section II ____ Your journey (field of study, career choice, goals)
- Section III ____ What your education at SPSCC means to you

Option 2 Chronological Narrative

- Section I ____ Where you are coming from (educational or economic background)
- Section II ____ Where you are going (educational/career goals)
- Section III ____ How SPSCC will help you get there
- Section IV ____ Why the money matters

Option 3: Field of Study/Career

- Section I ____ Reasons for choosing field of study/career
- Section II ____ How SPSCC will further your academic/career goals
- Section III ____ How the money will help

Option 4: Life Obstacles

- Section I ____ Reasons for being at SPSCC
- Section II ____ What obstacles stand (or have stood) in your way
- Section III ____ How you have overcome/managed those obstacles
- Section IV ____ How a scholarship would remove obstacles

Drafting and Revising

For guidance on revising your application essay draft, please refer to our handout titled “Foundation Scholarship Essay: Revision Checklist.”

