

CSURF Workshop/Sept 2009

Becoming a Strong Candidate for Scholarships

Seek an undergraduate experience that maximizes your personal, intellectual and professional growth. You become a strong scholarship candidate by striving towards meaningful ends.

- Pursue excellence in challenging classes. Good grades are prerequisite for scholarship success, but the best students seek more than the grade. Train yourself to thirst for knowledge. Take challenging and diverse courses outside your major. Try not to look at your curriculum as a fence around the pasture.
- Work on your communication skills. Many scholarships require essays and interviews. Take courses in the liberal arts tradition to develop your skills and to learn how to construct effective arguments.
- Get work, internship, and volunteer experience in your field. Start looking for such experiences right after your freshman year. Use every summer productively.
- Make time for public service and volunteerism in areas that you care about.
- Expand your knowledge of the world. Enrich your perspectives on people, places and events. Accomplish this by following the news and reading books, by undertaking travel and study abroad, by participating in intercultural events and attending lectures to hear fresh viewpoints, etc.
- Get involved in interesting extracurricular activities that are meaningful to you. There are no formulaic "best" activities. What you do with them is more important.
- Seek out leadership positions. This does not necessarily mean holding offices in five different clubs. It means becoming an active player and contributor. Make things happen! Start your own organization if you see an unfilled need.
- Consider submitting essays to essay contests and competing for smaller scholarships. These awards can function as building blocks.
- Seek the opportunity to do undergraduate research in your field whenever possible. This may take different forms with different majors, but it will help you prepare for your academic future and complement your classroom experience.
- Get to know people. Engage your professors, advisors, administrators and employers. Give them the opportunity to share opportunities and insights with you. They will be able to write more effective letters of recommendation for you, and you will gain the chance to discover their valuable life experience.
- Start assessing and reflecting upon your credentials and goals. This will help you clarify your direction in life and reveal what steps you should follow to reach those goals. It will also help you determine which scholarships best fit your situation.
- If it looks like you could reasonably compete, summon up the courage to go for it. Why should you be the person who rejects your application? When nothing is ventured, nothing is gained.

Center for the Support of Undergraduate Research and Fellowships

www.uncw.edu/csulf

Thanks to Lisa Kooperman at Vassar University for sharing this.