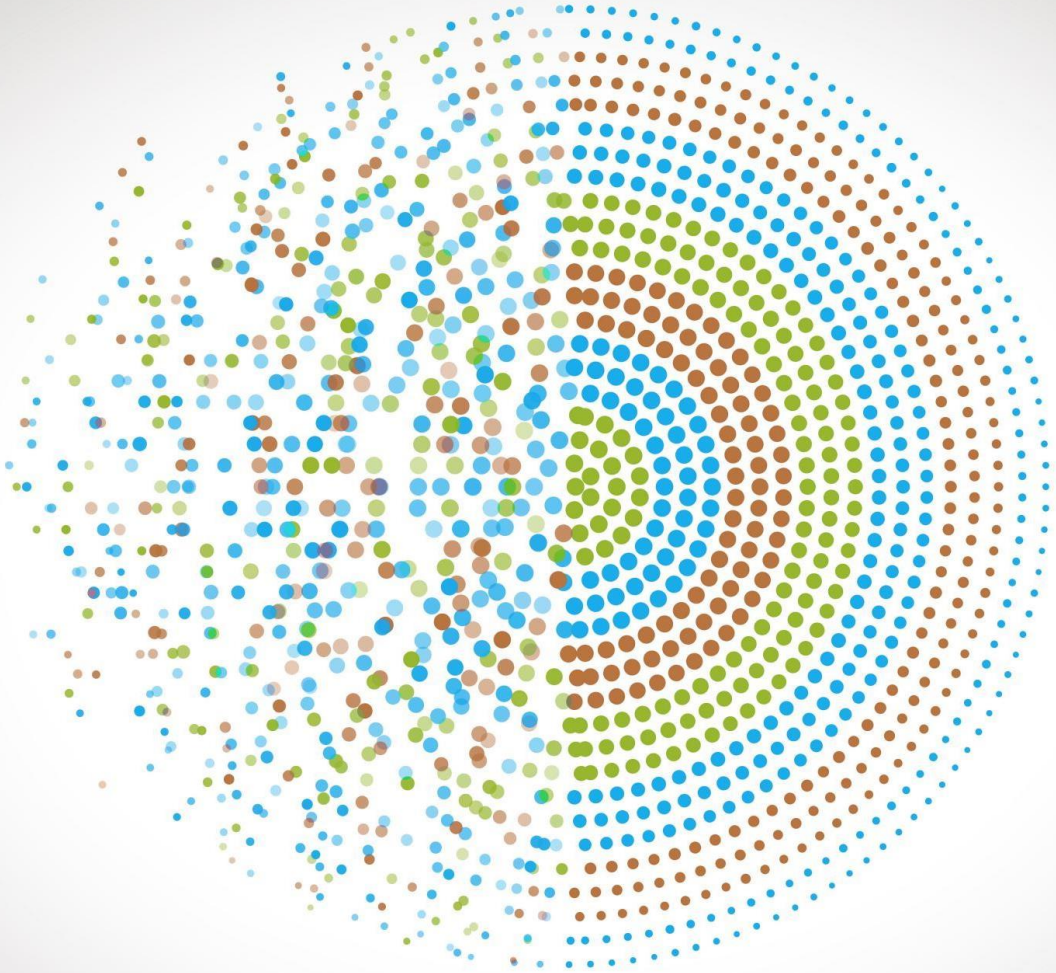


Scholarship Essay Workshop

Presenter: Prof. Eric Odegaard,
English Faculty



Today's Agenda

- How to Think like a Writer
- Persuasive Essays Answer the Right Questions with Effective Answers
- The Three Most Important Components of Strong Writing


How to Think like a Writer

- What questions does my writing have to answer?
- What key takeaway do I want reader to have at the end of reading my essay?
- Who is my audience?



Finding Key Questions

The Scholarship Writing Prompt suggests that your essay should focus on three areas:

- Describe any barriers (life experiences and/or hardships) to higher education that you have or are facing.
 - Detail any community service and leadership experiences.
 - Include your academic achievements, extracurricular activities, and any other relevant information.
- 

Questions Need Specific Answers

- What are some barriers or hardships to higher education that you face in your everyday life?
- Have you engaged in any community service or leadership experiences?
- What are some of your academic achievements, extracurricular activities, or any other relevant information?

Pro tip: Writers don't just provide information; they give readers experiences.

Three Building Blocks of Strong College Writing

1

Unity – Your essay needs to make one point (using subtopics). The focus of the essay should be clear.

2

Coherence – Each idea needs to connect to the next idea in meaningful way – “an unbroken thread of ideas”

3

Development – Writers give readers experiences, not just information. Readers should be able to imagine the details you include.

Building Block #1: Unity



The thesis statement is the heart of your essay.

The thesis....

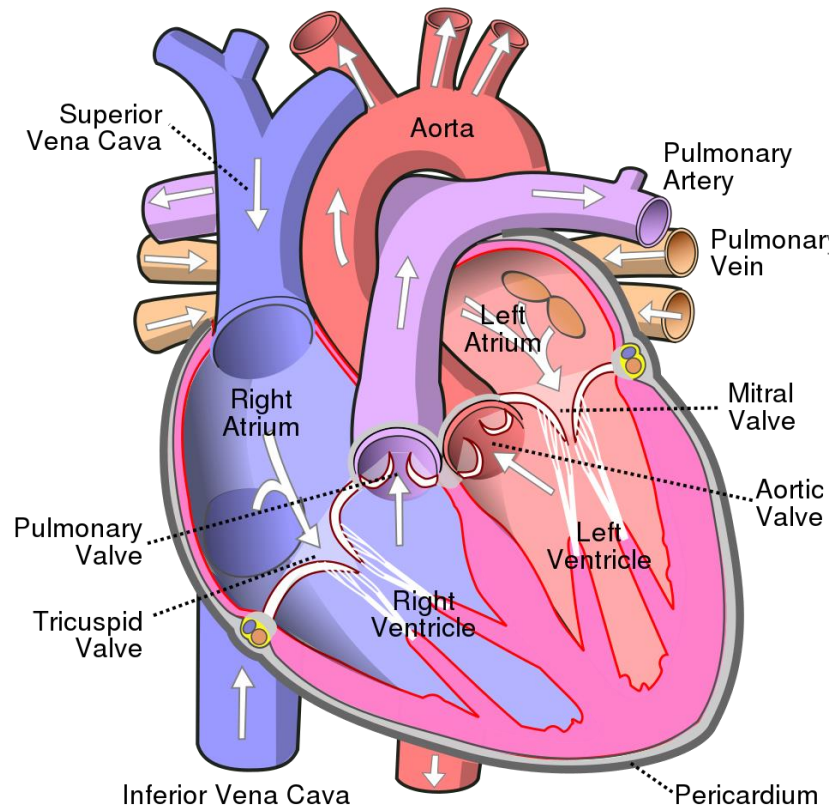
- is original, focused, and fully addresses the prompt.
- can be traced throughout the essay.
- is proven/demonstrated by the end of the essay.

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Which Statement Previews an Essay?

1. I would love it if the scholarship committee gave me some money to help me finance my education.
2. The challenges that I faced being a first-generation college student from a low-performing school, my contributions to the community, and my academic awards and extracurricular activities make me a good candidate for a scholarship.

Creating an Essay Map

The challenges that I faced being a first-generation college student from a low-performing school, my contributions to the community, and my academic awards and extracurricular activities make me a good candidate for a scholarship.

- Body Paragraph 1 – Academic/Personal Challenges
- Body Paragraph 2 – Contributions to the Community
- Body Paragraph 3 – Academic Awards and Extracurricular Activities

Building Block #2: Coherence

Coherence means that each idea is clearly connected to other ideas in the essay.

Examples:

- One reason I deserve a scholarship is that . . .
- My experience with _____ makes me an excellent candidate for . . .
- Challenges I faced with _____ show that you should consider me for . . .



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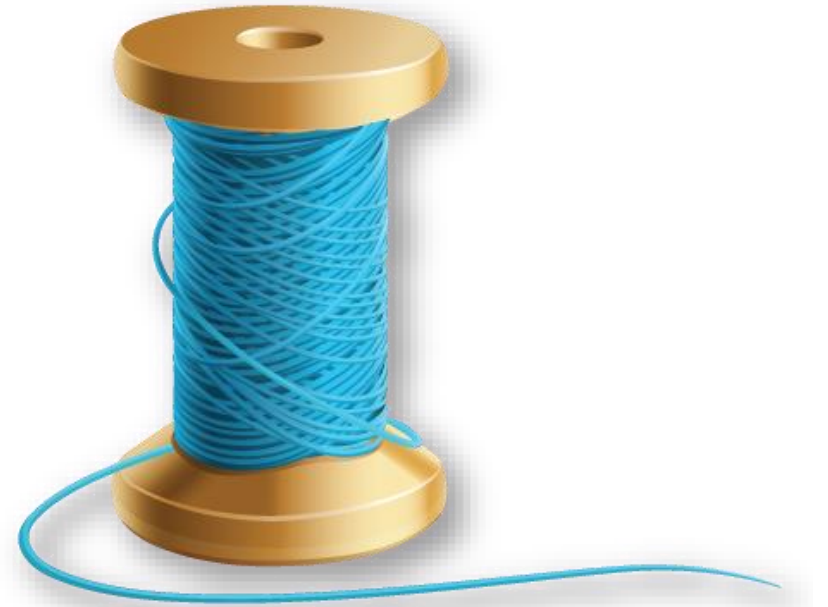
Pro tip: Your experiences are the reasons you deserve the scholarship.

An Unbroken Thread of Ideas

Every sentence in your essay should include ideas from the sentence before it and the sentence that comes after it.

Use Transitions:

- In addition to [insert personal struggle here], another reason I am a good candidate for the scholarship is my . . .
- Besides my work with [insert specific type of contribution to the community], an additional reason to award me the scholarship is my efforts in . . .



Building Block #3: Development

- Developed papers use specific details to prove points
- Be sure to answer the following questions: who, what, where, when, and why?
- Use writing that appeals to the senses



Showing vs. Telling

Showing

- To show means to give readers a mental picture of your topic

Since I was the first student in my family to go to college, I didn't have much guidance, which led me to doubt my ability to engage in the most basic tasks. I still remember my first day at Mt. SAC when the campus was swarming with students who all seemed to have places to go. And yet I couldn't even find my way to the financial aid office. I didn't ask a single person for help.

Telling

- To tell means to explain a topic using words that label ideas

I didn't know how to do the most basic things on campus, but I was shy and too afraid to ask for help.

Guiding Questions to Increase Development

- What did it feel like in that moment?
- Who was involved in the experience?
- When exactly was it?
- Where did it take place?
- How does this experience prove your point?
- Why are you telling this story?



How Specific Is Specific?

- There's almost no such thing as being too specific
- Find out the maximum number of words you can write for the essay
- The stories that you tell have to prove your paper's main points



Questions, Comments, or Concerns?