



Strategies for Crafting a Standout Aztec Scholarships Application

Best Practices for Applying

- Review our application dates and deadlines, and apply as early as possible during the application cycle
- Submit intent to enroll prior to applying if you are an incoming student
- File a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or California Dream Act Application (CADAA) by March each year to be considered for need-based scholarships
- Save progress frequently when applying to avoid losing already entered information
- Attend our “Everything You Need to Know” webinar and our workshops, and/or watch the recordings available on the website, as they provide important and helpful information

General Application Tips Organized by Application Section

Student Demographics/Health & Wellbeing

- Read each option carefully and only select those that apply specifically to you.

Citizenship/Residency Status

- Read through each option before responding. Only select the option that applies to you specifically.

Student Disability Services

- You may choose your answer based on your comfort level to disclose your disability. You are not required to answer "Yes," even if you are registered with SDSU's Student Disability Services.

Clubs, On-Campus Activities, Off-Campus Activities, Employment, Greek Life, Military/ROTC Affiliation, and Athletics

- Read each option carefully and only select those that you are actively participating in and not those you are planning to join in the future.
- Avoid selecting past activities or those for which verification cannot be provided.

Location of Permanent Residence

- Your permanent resident address is where your home address is located. Your permanent resident address is not the local address you are using for the sole purpose of attending San Diego State University.
- If you are a dependent student and your parents live out-of-state, your permanent resident address is your parent's home address.

First-time/Incoming Freshmen/CSU Calculated "a-g" High School GPA/High School of Attendance/School District of Attendance

- First-time freshmen are defined as students who have not previously attended any college after high school graduation or who have a General Education Development test (GED) certification.
- CSU GPA Calculator: <https://www.calstate.edu/apply/gpa-calculator>

Incoming Transfer Student/Community College Attendance

- Incoming transfer students are defined as undergraduate students in their first year at SDSU who previously started their college academic journey at a different higher education institution, completed 60 or more transferable semester units, and then transferred to SDSU to complete their degree.

Incoming Post Baccalaureate or Graduate Student

- Incoming post baccalaureate students are those in their first year pursuing a credential, advanced certificate, or second bachelor's degree in nursing, and who have already completed an undergraduate degree.
- Incoming graduate students are individuals admitted to a program of study leading to an advanced degree, such as a master's or doctoral degree.

Study Abroad/Internship Questions

- These questions are asked to match applicants to study abroad and internship scholarships. Applicants should answer yes even without firm plans for their study abroad or internship program. Study abroad and internship participation will be verified at the time scholarships are offered and disbursed.

Volunteer/Community Service

- Include up to five activities from the past three years only
 - Focus on activities that are related to your major
 - If you have activities that are not related to your major but are still important, highlight the transferable skills you learned such as teamwork, communication, technology adaptability, etc.
- Provide the accurate number of hours per week and explain the focus of the organization and your duties
- Provide accurate start and end dates. If you are still participating, enter "Present" for the End Date.

Short Answer Questions

- Do not rush; give yourself time to develop your responses. The responses to these prompts will likely serve as the deciding factor when comparing equally accomplished and deserving applicants.
- This is your opportunity to help committee members learn more about you, what makes you unique, and why they should select you as the recipient.
- Our committee members are made up of faculty and staff closely related to the scholarship, and they are your audience.
- Don't rely on artificial intelligence (AI) to respond. By responding in your voice, you are able to create a connection between you and the reader.
 - It is very apparent when students use artificial intelligence to respond to the prompts on the general application. Don't be tempted to rely on AI to answer on your behalf.
- Scholarship committees don't expect you to be perfect. They like to see how you've grown as a person or handled the obstacles that life has thrown your way.
- Complete your responses in a word processing application or Google doc first and then copy and paste the responses into Aztec Scholarships.
 - Question #1: *Tell us about yourself and what motivated you to choose your major or program of study. Briefly describe your future career goals in your response.*
 - Highlight your genuine passion for your major or program of study. Explain how it aligns with your career goals, and share specific experiences or interests that sparked your enthusiasm for the field, demonstrating a deep understanding and commitment to your chosen major.
 - If you are undeclared, it is perfectly fine to say just that. Since you don't have a major to write about, you can discuss your interests in two or three potential majors. You can explain how these interests developed, and what experience, if any, you have with them already. You can also explain how these areas are related, and, if applicable, how your potential majors will prepare you for a career. Again, you don't need to have a specific plan, but provide some general ideas of what you'd like to do professionally.
 - Question #2: *Highlight any qualities or experiences that make you stand out as an applicant.*
 - Here, the first step is to embrace your true self. By being genuine and authentic, you instantly differentiate yourself from others.
 - When explaining obstacles in your life, focus on how you overcame them. Show that you are a problem solver and able to persevere. You can mention difficulties from your past, but turn the attention to what you did as a result.
 - Use the "show, don't tell" writing strategy to convey information through details and actions, rather than stating something outright.

- Avoid generalizations--We have thousands of students who are first generation or work a part-time job, so don't rely on just those words or general information to tell your story...include what about those things that make you stand out from others.
- Question #3: *Explain the importance a scholarship would have on your academic journey.*
 - Clearly define your short and long term goals and explain how the scholarship funds would contribute to reaching those goals
 - Avoid generalizations--instead of simply saying, "a scholarship would help me pay for tuition," be more specific by explaining how the scholarship will directly enhance your ability to pursue your academic and professional aspirations and/or relieve financial stress.
 - Explain any relevant family circumstances and how you are currently paying for college. Include financial challenges or difficulties your family is facing.

Tips Related to Recommended Opportunities

- Recommended opportunities require the submission of additional materials by the deadline. All additional materials must be submitted electronically in Aztec Scholarships.
- Do not be concerned if your Recommended Opportunities list is short or if a list isn't generated, as the majority of our scholarships do not require the submission of additional materials.
- Students may NOT be eligible for all scholarships presented. Only apply to scholarships relevant to your personal experiences.
- If you are an incoming student who applied prior to submitting your intent to enroll, be sure to return to Aztec Scholarships a few days after submitting your intent to see if new Recommended Opportunities appear on your dashboard.

Tips Related to Letters of Recommendation/References

- Ask the individual before providing their information as a reference.
- Give your referee ample time to complete the reference request. Two weeks or more is recommended.
- Be sure the person you ask to provide the reference matches the requirements of the scholarship.
- Be sure the person you ask knows you well and will provide a positive reference.
- If a specific type of referee is not specified, a reference from a current or former professor, instructor, academic advisor, or someone who is able to evaluate your academic performance, motivation, personal strengths and goals is suggested.

- Make sure you double-check that the correct email address is entered for your referee.
- The deadline to submit the reference is the same as the scholarship deadline. The deadline is posted in the Recommended Opportunities section. Follow up with the referee if the deadline is near.