**Writing an Autobiography  
for a Scholarship Application**

**The Writing Process**

1. Visualize your audience.
   1. Think about who will read your autobiography and put yourself in the reader’s place. Is this a family scholarship? A professional corporation?
2. Think about the purpose of the autobiography.
   1. What do members of the scholarship committee want to know about you?
   2. How would an autobiography help them decide which applicants deserve scholarships?
3. Generate ideas for your autobiography. See the section of this handout that lists brainstorming ideas.
4. Write a rough draft of your autobiography.
   1. Select a format for your autobiography.
   2. Don’t worry at this point about grammar, spelling, punctuation, etc.
5. Revise your autobiography after a cooling-off period.
   1. Check the order of your paper. Is the information logically ordered?
   2. Is all the information relevant to the purpose of the autobiography?
   3. Have you been honest but positive about yourself?
   4. Do you need to add more information?
   5. Read the paper aloud to check sentence sense.
6. Type a clean copy of the autobiography and edit what you have written.

**Characteristics That Will Improve Your Paper**

1. Use language that is direct, clear, and sounds like you. However, avoid slang and overused expressions.
2. Create a tone that shows confidence, but not arrogance; sincerity, not stuffiness.
3. When appropriate, connect sentences with expressions like “then,” “in addition,” “finally,” “in contrast,” so that one idea seems to move logically into the next.

**Brainstorming Questions**

**Write answers to these questions to get ideas for your autobiography.**

1. What academic accomplishments are you proud of?
2. What other accomplishments are you proud of?
3. What are your personal strengths?
4. What positive changes have you made in your life?
5. Why have you learned about yourself in high school?
6. What realistic goals have you set for yourself?
7. Where are you in reaching those goals?
8. What course of study have you set for yourself looking forward?
9. Why do you need a scholarship?
10. What would you do with a scholarship?
11. What community did you grow up in and how was it influential in your life?
12. What contributions have you made to your community?
13. Does your community factor into your long-term goals? How?

**Selecting a Format for your Autobiography**

There is no one correct way to organize an autobiography. You might try the formats below just to get started and then use what is most comfortable to order your information logically.

1. Past
   1. Relevant background information
   2. Challenges faced, lessons learned
   3. Importance of community/involvement in community
2. Present
   1. High School Experience
   2. Accomplishments and Involvement (not just academic)
   3. Importance of community/involvement in community
3. Future
   1. Plans and goals
   2. Returning to your community/giving back?

**You could also start with this format:**

1. You, the person
   1. Family
   2. Personal values
   3. Involvement with community
2. You, the student
   1. Academic achievements (including grades)
   2. Other achievements while in school (jobs, organizations, teams)
   3. Community involvement in your education
3. You, the scholarship candidate
   1. Why you should be awarded a scholarship
   2. What you would do with the scholarship
   3. What are your goals?
   4. What role has the community played and how do you plan to give back to the community?