WRITING AN EFFECTIVE IVCC FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION

INTRODUCTION:
Each year, the IVCC Foundation offers several scholarships to deserving students. In order to apply, students must submit a brief essay explaining why they both need and deserve the funds. While each scholarship requires different qualifications, all application essays should be well-written and include enough details to be persuasive. Below are some ideas to consider when writing an application essay.

AUDIENCE:
This essay represents your formal presentation of self to a particular audience—those granting the scholarship. Because your essay will be what the committee knows about you for the scholarship application process, your supporting details must be descriptive, specific, and persuasive. You will be judged on this essay and the corresponding application.

Please write your essay for the audience defined by the scholarship. The "Illinois Valley Women's Club," "Jackie Norris," and the "Malcolm & Doris Ann Whipple" scholarships, for example, direct you to indicate the number of dependent children you claimed on the FAFSA. If you are applying for these scholarships, you may wish to describe the challenges that come from juggling work, school, and childcare responsibilities. An applicant for the "Anthony A. Ruda Veteran's" scholarship will highlight his or her experiences as a veteran.

EVALUATION:
1. Students who follow the formatting guidelines outlined above will earn 3 points.
2. Three people will read your essay.
3. Essays are scored on the following point scale:
   4—all areas thoroughly and specifically addressed
   3—demonstrates qualities of a scholarship recipient addressing essay details, but not excellent
   2—student followed bullet points in writing essay; very basic
   1—very few details, very little focus, vague

TOPICS:
Consider organizing your three body paragraphs around the following topics:
Educational and Professional Goals:
1. Goals in attending IVCC
2. Professional/educational goals beyond IVCC
3. Who or what has inspired these goals

School and Community Goals:
1. Participation in school events, clubs, or activities
2. Examples of volunteerism outside of the IVCC campus
3. Honors earned

Financial Need and Special Circumstances:
1. Reasons you are seeking a scholarship
2. Financial concerns, constraints or special circumstances that merit consideration; examples of these include medical bills, two or more members of the family in college, and events such as divorce, death, disability, and unemployment that cause drastic changes in family income

If you rework each heading into a topic sentence, you could then use the topics underneath each heading to formulate smaller claims to support each topic sentence. Each claim should in turn be supported by several details.

For example, the topic sentence of the Education and Career Goals paragraph might indicate that your goal is to earn a B.S. in Biology. Your third topic in that paragraph might be that this goal was inspired by your mother, who was an avid gardener. You could elaborate by describing how you spent your summers helping her decide which particular flowers and vegetables she would plant, detailing the specific tasks you performed to make the garden a success.

The second body paragraph could detail your experience working at a food pantry, homeless shelter, or animal shelter. You could describe friendships you have formed, or insights you have gained from helping others.

The financial need paragraph can include as many details as you choose to offer. The committee will access your FAFSA form, so you could complement that report with specifics about your situation. You might note that you do not currently hold a job because you are a full-time student, or explain that your sources of income are insufficient. If you are a single mother, you could outline the gap between the costs of raising your children and your income. Veterans might explain the limitations of some of their sources of income. The Illinois Veteran Grant (IVG), for example, only pays for tuition.

STRUCTURE/FORMAT:
The IVCC Foundation Scholarship essay is a formal essay, so it should look and read like a paper you would submit for a class. It might be best to follow the five-paragraph format. This means that your paper would consist of an introduction, three body paragraphs, and a conclusion.

Thinking of the essay as a combination of a narrative and a persuasive essay will help you structure it. Describe events from your life to support a thesis that you deserve the scholarship for which you are applying.

Basics of good narrative essays:
--It reveals something significant to you and includes the major events of the story
--It enlivens those events by using concrete, vivid language to create memorable images.
--It orders the events clearly, usually according to when they happened.

Basics good persuasive essays:
--It convinces your reader to adopt your point of view or to take a specific course of action (for this essay, you will want to persuade the scholarship committee to grant you a scholarship).
--It includes specific persuasive claims that you support with evidence in the form of examples, facts, statistics, etc.

Essays should be typed, double-spaced; Font size 12 Times New Roman; 1-inch margins; 2 pages but no more than 3 pages. It is very important to follow the guidelines, as three points in scoring are awarded for format.

CHECKLIST:
1. Does my essay open with an attention grabber? You might begin with a favorite quote and explain its significance to you. Or you might offer a statistic that relates to your future field of study.
2. Do my body paragraphs (which should be of roughly the same length) open with argumentative topic sentences that detail my strong candidacy, and by restating the topic sentence?
3. Do I have several smaller claims to support each topic sentence? Do I in turn support each of these claims with at least two details?
4. Have I revised my essay for unity, detail, and coherence?