

*** Sample Scholarship Essay Questions ***

Every year the Oregon Student Assistance Commission (OSAC) Scholarship asks students to write two essays on the following topics. You might see similar essay topics used in a number of other scholarships. The topics help the scholarship review committee get to know the applicant better and hear their story.

- 1) Reflect your personal point of view on your **most significant challenge or accomplishment** and its value to your life. Limit to one page 250-350 words.
- 2) Reflect your personal point of view on your **long-range goals** and what you need to learn to achieve them. Limit to one page, 250-350 words.

*** Sample College Essay Questions *** **What Do Colleges Want to Know?**

Generally, there are three types of questions: The "you," the "why us," and the "creative." Here are tips and actual sample questions for each type. Don't assume that the questions are currently being used by a college (most colleges adjust questions annually).

The "You" Question

Many colleges ask for an essay that boils down to, "Tell us about yourself." The school just wants to know you better and see how you'll introduce yourself. For example:

- "Please complete a one-page personal statement and submit it with your application." (James Madison University)
- "How would you describe yourself as a human being? What quality do you like best in yourself and what do you like least? What quality would you most like to see flourish and which would you like to see wither?" (Bates College)

Your Approach

This direct question offers a chance to reveal your personality, insight, and commitment. The danger is that it's open-ended, so you need to focus. Find just one or two things that will reveal your best qualities, and avoid the urge to spill everything.

The "Why Us" Question

Some schools ask for an essay about your choice of a school or career. They're looking for information about your goals, and about how serious your commitment is to this particular school. For example:

- "Why is UVM a good college choice for you?" (University of Vermont)
- "Please tell us about your career goals and any plans you may have for graduate study." (Westfield State College)

Your Approach

The focus is provided: Why did you choose this school or path. This should be pretty clear to you, since you probably went through some kind of selection process. Make sure you know your subject well. For example, if you say you want to attend Smith College to major in dance, the school will be able to tell how carefully you've chosen (Smith doesn't have a dance major).

The "Creative" Question

Some colleges evaluate you through your choice of some tangential item: A national issue, a famous person, what you would put in a time capsule, a photograph. Here the school is looking at your creativity and the breadth of your knowledge and education. For example:

- "Do you believe there's a generation gap? Describe the differences between your generation and others." (Denison University)
- "Indicate a person who has had a significant influence on you, and describe that influence." (Common Application)

Your approach

Again, you have something to react to, a way to show yourself and write about your real views. Just don't forget the importance of writing an informed essay. For example, don't write about a fantasy lunch with a famous writer and get the titles of her novels wrong. Also, when thinking about how creative to get, use common sense. Being creative to the point of wacky is a risk you may not want to take.

This article is based on information found in *The College Application Essay*, by Sarah Myers McGinty.

More College Application Questions:

Oregon State University (OSU) asks its applicants to complete an Insight Resume as part of the application process. The responses to these questions are limited to *100 words* so applicants have to be precise. Brainstorm what you would say to the following questions. The more you think and plan now the easier it will be when you have to write your own essays.

1) Leadership/ Group Contributions: Describe examples of your leadership experience in which you significantly influenced others, helped resolve disputes, or contributed to group efforts over time. Consider responsibilities to initiatives taken in or out of school.

2) Knowledge in a field/creativity: Describe any special interests and how you have developed knowledge in these areas. Give examples of your creativity – the ability to see alternatives; take diverse perspectives; come up with many, varied, or original ideas; or willingness to try new things.

3) Dealing with adversity: Describe the most significant challenge you have faced and steps you have taken to address this challenge. Include whether you turned to anyone in facing the challenge, the role the person played, and what you learned about yourself.

4) Community service: Explain what you have done to make your community a better place to live. Give examples of specific projects in which you have been involved over time.

5) Handling systemic challenges: Describe your experiences facing or witnessing discrimination. Tell us how you responded and what you learned from these experiences and how they have prepared you to contribute to the OSU community.

6) Goals/task commitment: Articulate the goals you have established for yourself and your efforts to accomplish these. Give at least one specific example that demonstrates your work ethic/diligence.