

Scholarship Guidance Program for High School Seniors and Senior 4-H Members

Reflection Paper

Kylie Anderson

University of Wyoming

Warren Crawford

Spring 2021

Introduction:

Scholarships are a crucial element in alleviating the financial burden of college. Recipients are chosen through an intense application process that focuses on awarding scholarships to individuals based on merit, academics, financial income, and culture. One of the hardest parts of this process is making an application stand out and creating it in a way that effectively highlights one's best qualities. In high school, I was taught how to fill out scholarship applications and draw attention to my best qualities in an effective and meaningful way. This paid off and upon graduating from high school, I was awarded multiple local and county scholarships that totaled over \$44,000. In college, I served as a volunteer scholarship judge for the Wyoming State 4-H Foundation and quickly found out that the majority of Wyoming youth have no training on how to make their scholarship applications stand out. With this knowledge, I decided to create a 4-H Scholarship Guidance Program and High School Senior Scholarship Guidance Program.

Project Description & Goals:

Under the guidance of my mentor, I researched what other websites claimed to be the most important elements within a scholarship, compared them to my own thoughts and experiences, and also compared them with the opinions of my focus group. My focus group consisted of eight high school seniors and juniors from around Wyoming who were actively involved in the 4-H program and were beginning to apply for scholarships in both the 4-H program as well as scholarships from other entities. Warren Crawford, my Capstone mentor, selected these high schoolers to be on the Wyoming State 4-H Leadership team and with that knowledge, I saw it fitting for them to serve as my focus group given their age range and their

involvement in 4-H. For the High School Senior Scholarship Guidance Program, I created two documents; a scholarship application timeline and a general tips and tricks document that explains what the most important parts of the application should be and how seniors can make their application stand out. For the 4-H Scholarship Guidance Program, I created one document that explains each of the 4-H application questions in depth and gives tips on what to include on the 4-H member's resume for this scholarship specifically. I also had a video filmed that gives a brief overview of the 4-H application process and what should be included within the application. The goal of these guides is to enable high school seniors to submit a scholarship application that best fits their skill set and improves their confidence in applying for scholarships. These guides are meant to increase the quality and quantity of scholarships submitted to the Wyoming 4-H program, the University of Wyoming, and other scholarships entities.

Methods and Community Engagement:

After creating the first two general scholarship guides, I sent the guides to both my mentor and my focus group for review in hopes they would provide constructive criticism on how to improve the guide for the most effective and visually appealing guide as possible. My mentor and focus group reviewed the guides and sent back their suggestions in a timely manner. Shortly after I edited the general scholarship guides with the feedback, I gathered a list of all of the Wyoming high school counselor's emails and drafted an informative email to the counselors discussing my Senior Capstone project and my goals for it. In the email, I attached both of the general scholarship guides in a PDF and JPG version to accommodate the preference computer programs or websites may have for one file or the other, assuming they would upload the guides onto their school websites. I instructed the counselors to contact me if they had any questions

about the guides and if they would like the 4-H scholarship guides as well. I sent this email to approximately 85 Wyoming High Schools and received positive feedback from a quarter of the counselors that received it. Of the counselors that responded, a quarter of them requested the 4-H scholarship guides when I had them finished. Next, I created a two-page guide for the Wyoming 4-H scholarship specifically. After I had finished creating my initial draft for this guide, I sent it to both my mentor and focus group for suggested edits. While waiting to hear back from my mentor and focus group, I contacted a videographer that would help me create the last part of my 4-H scholarship guidance program. I booked the videographer and used my Honors Capstone grant money to pay for the costs. After I received the suggested edits for my guide and received my fully edited video, I sent both the video and the guides to counselors who had requested the guides for their students. Along with that, I sent the guides to my mentor who had them posted on the Wyoming State 4-H Foundation Scholarship website.

Reflections:

Creating this guide has been extremely rewarding for multiple reasons. First and foremost, the amount of support and encouragement from my mentor, my focus group, and the counselors around the state demonstrated the immense passion that people have for youth. Youth are the next generation to influence the world and small things such as receiving a scholarship that will eliminate their financial worry may be the steppingstone for them to achieve their goals and influence the world for the better. I also take comfort in knowing that my scholarship success and knowledge was used for more than just myself and may help at least one kid in receiving a scholarship. Overall, this project has been an amazing learning experience for it has showcased the investment in youth that individuals around Wyoming possess as well as taught me that dedication to a meaningful project is worth the long hours put into it.

Conclusion:

In summary, scholarships are an important part of mitigating financial concerns among students. These guides were created to increase students' ability to fill out scholarships in a way that effectively highlights their best qualities and boosts their confidence when filling out a scholarship application in general or a Wyoming State 4-H scholarship.