

## COLLEGE STREET SMARTS (NONCOGNITIVE VARIABLES)

1. **BRUSH YOUR SHOULDER OFF.** Do you have confidence in your natural talents? Can you explain how your determination or good decisions helped you overcome a challenge? Before you can achieve it, you have to believe it!
2. **KEEP IT REAL.** Do you take the time to know the real you- your strengths and your areas for improvement? If you understand your abilities and strengths you know what it will take to become the person you aspire to be.
3. **WORK THE SYSTEM.** Do you know what the system is, how it works, and how to navigate it? In order to manage your own success, it is important to be aware of how the world around you operates. Knowing how to advocate for yourself, without becoming a victim, will help you handle and overcome discrimination in college and beyond
4. **MAP YOUR FUTURE.** Do you know what your life looks like in 5 years? In 10? If you don't know where you're going, you might end up somewhere else. When you prioritize daily goals related to the "big picture" you will know if you are taking small steps in the right direction.
5. **RECRUIT A CREW.** Do you know the people most likely to give you encouragement, advice and guidance? If you are able to seek help when you need it, you will have the support to stay determined with confidence and newfound knowledge. Positive friends, mentors, teachers, and supportive family members will make great additions to your network.
6. **BE A LEADER.** Do you look for ways to take charge of projects or to serve as a mentor in school, church or your community? When you learn how to effectively organize and influence others, you gain confidence and demonstrate commitment. Leading others leads you to your own academic success.
7. **SHOW SOME LOVE.** Do you have a sense of belonging and responsibility to your community? When you are actively engaged in making your community a better place, you get personal satisfaction in knowing that through your selfless efforts you can make a positive impact.
8. **MASTER YOUR KNOWLEDGE.** Are you eager to learn more about things that interest you? Do you enjoy sharing what you have learned? By owning and sharing your expertise you will develop independence. Don't be shy: show the world your talents.

**TABLE 4.1. DESCRIPTION OF NONCOGNITIVE VARIABLES**

<b>Variable Number</b>	<b>Variable Name</b>	<b>Description</b>
1	Positive self-concept	Demonstrates confidence, strength of character, determination, and independence
2	Realistic self-appraisal	Recognizes and accepts any strength and deficiencies, especially academic, and works hard at self-development; recognizes need to broaden his or her individuality.
3	Successfully handling the system (racism)	Exhibits a realistic view of the system on the basis of personal experience of racism; committed to improving the existing system; takes an assertive approach to dealing with existing wrongs, but is not hostile to society and is not a "cop-out"; able to handle racist system
4	Preference for long-term goals	Able to respond to deferred gratification; plans ahead and sets out goals

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<b>Variable Number</b>	<b>Variable Name</b>	<b>Description</b>
5	Availability of strong support person	Seeks and takes advantage of a strong support network or has someone to turn to in a crisis or for encouragement
6	Leadership experience	Demonstrates strong leadership in any area of his or her background (church, sports, noneducational groups, gang leader, and so on)
7	Community involvement	Participates and is involved in his or her community
8	Knowledge acquired in a field	Acquires knowledge in a sustained culturally related way in any field

## Gates Questions: Tipsheet

The Millennium Gates Scholarship application involves a fair amount of writing in response to eight questions. Although you probably have an excellent GPA and a lengthy records of activities such as community service, so do all of other applicants. The **Gates Millenium Scholarship questions** provide you the opportunity to show who you are and stand out from other applicants. Even if you have a great GPA and an extensive record of extracurricular activities, it is often the essays that will determine whether or not you are the winner for a scholarship. Thus, you will want to put a fair amount of work into these eight short essays.

You are limited to 20 typed lines, 7000 characters. That's about 350 words each. You will want to take time to craft each of these responses separately and revise and edit before adding them to the on-line application.

The first question asks you to discuss the subjects in which you have excelled, and what factors you attribute to your success. Here, you will obviously want to discuss what you have a passion for when it comes to academics, and what has driven you to excel in the classroom. For specific examples, you could use topics such as all of the all-nighters you have pulled, a career/life goal that motivates you to do well in the classroom, or perhaps a classroom experience where you became the student that everyone else looked to for help/guidance.

The next question asks you to discuss the subjects in which you have had difficulties, what factors contributed to those difficulties, and how you have dealt with them so that they don't cause you problems again. In what areas have you made the greatest improvement? What problem areas remain?

Obviously, this essay question invites you to elaborate on a situation where you have overcome a challenge (in the classroom here, to be specific). You will not want to write an essay on how you failed at something, but rather, a situation where you failed at first, but learned from your mistakes, figured out how to improve, and are now excelling in that area. Clearly, not all of us have failed at something; if that is the case for you, then write about a subject that has been a challenge for you and how you have successfully navigated your way through it.

The next essay question on the application asks you to describe a situation in which you thought yourself or others were treated unfairly, or not given an opportunity that they deserved. You are asked to explain why you think it happened, how you responded, and the result of your response. You should also elaborate on whether you thought your way of responding made a difference and if the situation improved.

Here you will want to describe a situation where decisions weren't made fairly (a situation where you or someone else deserved something, but someone less deserving received it instead). Don't describe a situation where you reacted too harshly, but one where you reacted in a fair, reasonable manner, and hopefully also achieved good results. This essay question is designed assess your ability to see an injustice as an opportunity to solve problems, using people skills as well as analytical skills to understand the situation and to identify rational solutions. Solving a problem like this requires both self-confidence and maturity, the ability to be proactive and to be an advocate for positive change, rather than reactive to and fearful or resentful of figures in authority. Be sure to address in your essay how you used your people skills to address the problem and get it solved in a civil and assertive manner.

The next question asks you to discuss your short and long term goals, and explain ways in which some of those goals are related, identifying which of the goals are your top priorities.

Basically, your essay answer will be describing how you plan to succeed in life, how your success will benefit society, and how the scholarship can help you get there. As you get ready to write this section, do some research so that you can be very specific about professional goals and the logical steps one must take to reach those goals. The long and the short term goals must support one another as the small decisions and actions that must be taken to achieve the larger goals. What steps have you taken in the past couple of years to make your larger career and college goal a reality? If you want to teach, have you volunteered to tutor other students? Teach a Bible study class? If you want to be a doctor, have you worked at a clinic, taken all the high school science courses you need?

Next you will be asked to discuss a leadership experience you have had, and to include how you became a leader and how the experience has influenced your goals. You are encouraged to think of all the areas of your life: school, family, work, church, extra-curricular and/or volunteer participation in clubs, teams, performance groups, service group--any community where the goals are long term and shared within the group. Do not simply repeat the activities you have provided in the leadership section of your application. You will want to focus on just one or two leadership experiences as illustrations of how you rose up and attained respect from your peers and advisors, teacher, coaches, and how they gradually begin to perceive you as the leader. Describe what you did as a leader and how it had a positive impact on the organization you were a part of. Also be sure to discuss the affects that this experience had on you as a person.

Your next question will be to discuss your involvement and accomplishments in community service at school or other communities in which you have participated. What did you accomplish? How did it influence your goals? Again, in answering this question you will not want to simply repeat information that you have already provided on other parts of the scholarship application. You are asked specifically not to use the same example from the previous question, even if this experience involved leadership. Here you will use details to illustrate your involvement—how you act as a member of, not only as a leader in-- a community designed to help the needy and how you were able to make a positive impact. Fund-raising, feeding the hungry, volunteering in clean-up projects, at animal shelters, serving as a peer tutor or mentor, participating in a political action project, organizing church youth groups to work with young children, working in a camp for younger students, working with the aging population: these are some of the activities and communities you might consider.

The next question on the application section asks you to explain what areas (academic or non-academic) you have acquired knowledge in outside of school, how you sought out this knowledge and how you mastered the skills. The Gates Foundation is interested in supporting and respecting knowledge gained outside the classroom. Think of this as a chance to talk about life knowledge gained outside of school—in churches, neighborhoods, families, at jobs—all are sources of wisdom and knowledge. So are hobbies or avocations. Have you taken music lessons? Studied another language on your own? Learned to cook or rebuild an engine from a family member? Studied the Bible? You can also discuss how you learned more about an academic subject outside the classroom. This is the place on the scholarship application essay to really elaborate on your passions outside of the requirements and extra-curricular projects at school: to show more about who you are as a person and to illustrate that you have many interests and the intellectual curiosity and ambition to learn more.

The next question on the Gates Millenium Scholarship Essay asks you basically to describe anything else about your personal characteristics or obstacles you have overcome that may help the scholarship committee in evaluating your application. This part of the scholarship application is where you have a chance to say something about yourself that you haven't already. Obviously, don't repeat your accomplishments discussed earlier in the application. Think of something else unique to say that will helps you stand out further to the selection committee. Key values and beliefs and how they have informed your choices, qualities others have admired in you that helped you appreciate your strengths, experiences and successes you have had that were not addressed earlier: these are areas rich with detail to support your application.

The last question applies only to students who graduated from high school or earned their GED more than one year ago. It asks you to discuss the activities you have been involved in since completing high school (community service, leadership, employment) that qualify you for this scholarship. Once again you will not want to just repeat information already included in your scholarship application. Go further and discuss one or two specific activities, and the contributions you made to the organization/community through them. Also try to tie in how these activities further developed your leadership abilities.

# GATES SCHOLARSHIP TIPS

**YOU CAN'T WIN, IF YOU DON'T PLAY.** – The scholarship application process requires that students be active in the process. Start the scholarship search process now. Begin drafting at least one personal statement.

**IS IT TOO LATE?** – It's never too late to build on your experiences. The upcoming summer and start of the senior year is still a time when students can gain leadership, community service, or work experience. Look for opportunities that allow you to maximize your development. If you have already sought these types of experiences, congratulations and keep it up!

**PAINT A PICTURE.** – Very few scholarships require a personal interview. Your scholarship packet is the closest you will come to having the scholarship committee interview you. Will they leave with a “pixilated” perspective where they are unclear about who you are, and more importantly who you strive to be? Or will they sit in a room and admire your application, as many admire great paintings such as the Mona Lisa. This is no paint by numbers activity, don't be afraid to open up with personal stories and details that help readers understand the real you.

**WHO'S REPRESENTING YOU?** – Many scholarships will ask for one to two recommendations from people you know. Who will you choose? Most scholarships discourage family member recommenders. Know a teacher, a coach, a counselor, or an employer? More importantly, the question is do they know you? Sit down with your recommender and make sure they know your story, hopes, and aspirations. Give your recommenders the gift of time. The last thing you want is to have someone rushing as they try to advocate for you.

**JUST ANSWER THE QUESTION.** – Your personal statement could be a written masterpiece, yet if it does not respond to the scholarship prompt readers will be left wondering. You will need to find balance between answering the question and doing so in a concise manner, as long essays may drag on and rarely add to the quality of the response. Make sure to follow the word count recommendations of about 350 words.

**Poor me!** – Students are not discouraged from sharing about hardships in their lives, yet students should be sure to address both external factors that impacted the situation, the student's role in the situation, and the steps taken to deal with or overcome the situation. These details can make a student look less like a victim, and more like one who has overcome adversity.

**MAKE SURE TO CHECK YOUR ESSAYS** – Your attention to spelling and grammar are important. Your scholarship application represents you! We each have a story to tell. You just do not want others struggling to read or understand that story. Your English teachers, counselors, and family members can be quite helpful if they provide you with constructive and critical feedback that helps you shine through.

*Avoid handwriting your essay responses* – If your family does not own a computer, seek out resources at your school or the local library that will allow you to type your responses. Most scholarships may accept handwritten responses, but most readers will tell you that there is less strain in reading and understanding typed responses. Help your reader help you by providing them your responses in a format that will cause the least stress on both parties.

**DEADLINES CAN BE DEADLY** – The deadline for the Gates Millennium Scholarship Application is **Wednesday, January 11, 2012 at 11:59 p.m. EST.** All materials must be complete and submitted in order to be considered for the scholarship.

**LIVING LA VIDA “LOCAL”** – Diversify your scholarship search to include both local and national scholarships. National scholarships tend to come with great prestige – and with greater competition. Don't shy away from national opportunities, but also make yourself aware of local or state opportunities that may have less competition and can add up.

**NEVER, EVER PAY FOR A SCHOLARSHIP SEARCH** – Be aware that there are scams that seek to charge families for assistance with finding and applying for scholarships. Instead, save that money by visiting your counselors' office or seeking out FREE online scholarship searches.

# Requesting a Recommendation or Nomination

## Letters of Recommendation

Think of your application for the Gates Millennium or Dell Scholarship as a team effort. You are the team captain, and it's your responsibility to ensure that other team members--your nominators or recommenders--work with you toward your goal.

**Your application for the Gates Millennium Scholars Program requires two forms to be completed by adults:** one from a counselor, teacher or higher education professional who can evaluate your academic record. This is your **Nominator**. Educators are encouraged to nominate any student who meets the minimum eligibility requirements—please check that you do meet the requirements before requesting a nomination.

The second form must be completed by an adult who knows about your leadership, community service and other qualities. This is your **Recommender**. This can be a teacher or counselor, or a community member, supervisor at work, etc. It can be the same person you choose as nominator, or a different person who knows you better as a leader and contributor outside of school. Choose an adult who you have been involved with through school or an outside organization who knows you pretty well but is not a family member.

Nominators and Recommenders can complete the forms on-line or send them in by mail. It is important that you provide the nominator with your correct Registration Identification Number so that the form can be matched to your application.

**Your application for the Dell Scholarship** will require an on-line recommendation. We do not at this time have more details about what is required of the recommender, so be sure to check the website after the application becomes available on November 1 to find the instructions so you can share them with the supportive adult you choose to recommend you.

### **Some tips for obtaining a successful recommendation:**

The earlier you request a nomination or recommendation, the better. Many counselors and teachers will want to discuss your application with you before they write. Students who request letters early also avoid the rush of requests for recommendations that inevitably take place later in the year. Allow your recommenders enough time to write a good recommendation. The applications for these scholarships are due in mid-January, so it would be best to request your recommendation well in advance of the winter break. A good goal is to confirm your nominator and recommender before Thanksgiving.

Give your recommenders plenty of information. Tell them who else is nominating or recommending you, in case they'd like to compare notes. Provide information about your

activities and awards, and your challenges and struggles along the way to your success. You may want to prepare a “Brag Sheet” and provide copies of your application responses to share with your recommender so that they know more about how you see yourself and can reinforce important positive messages about you.

Recommendation letters are most effective when specific and personal. Do not be afraid to ask them to write about something in particular. If one of your papers or lab projects particularly impressed a teacher, remind your teacher of the specifics. If you still have an assignment bearing the teacher’s enthusiastic notes, refresh his or her memory with a copy. If in a particularly difficult time in your life this adult helped you, tell him or her whether it's okay to write about it. Help your recommenders show the committee what you're like to be around and visualize the positive impact you’ve had on others in your school or community, your unique strengths and your resilience.

Make sure you feel confident that the person you ask has plenty of good things to say about you. Consider asking: “Do you have any reservations about recommending me?” This may give you a chance to address any concerns the person may have about your merit and discuss how you have grown and improved from your experiences. If you get the impression that the person you have approached has serious concerns about recommending you or may not have positive things to say, find someone else. It will feel awkward, but in the end this is better for you and for that adult. Remember, you are the team captain responsible for building the strongest application possible.

### **Tucson GEAR UP Scholarship Recommenders Dinners**

Because your recommenders are an important part of your scholarship application team, we would like to invite them to a special dinner to learn more about the scholarships you are applying for and to discuss tips for giving high quality recommendations. It is not required for recommenders to attend this dinner, but we hope it will help them help you to succeed with your application.

Your college coach will soon provide you more details so that you can invite your recommender to attend this dinner on either December 5 or December 6, 2011. Please begin thinking about who you will ask to join your scholarship application team and follow up with your college coach for more information about the dinner invitation.