**VAHCDO Scholarship Program**

**Hints for Students and Agencies**

**For Member Agencies:**

* Establish a relationship with the school system and local high schools; they can suggest eligible students.
* Engage the students early, and often.
* Visit the schools and visit the students at home, engaging the parents as well.
* Work with the students to help meet deadlines (early submission is recommended to ensure all elements are complete and received), request reference letters, complete and submit the application, and prepare for the interview.
* Post award-
  + Help prepare the student for the scholarship presentation, so they are comfortable saying a few words about themselves, their journey and future goals.
  + Coordinate luncheon tickets and transportation for the recipients and their family member(s).
  + If the Executive Director will not be in attendance, determine a staff member to introduce the recipient.
  + Assist the Scholarship Committee with pictures (formal and casual) of the recipient for the presentation and marketing materials.
  + Notify the Scholarship Committee if the recipient needs help with appropriate attire for the presentation.
* Please be aware that your student may qualify for additional scholarships as a VAHCDO Scholarship recipient, but membership is required (SERC, NAHRO, etc.)

**For Students:**

* Start early and submit well before the deadline so you have time to correct any errors or deficiencies.
* Carefully review and follow the application directions.
* Don’t be shy! Now is the time to brag! (but, don’t exaggerate or embellish)
* Pay attention to details and proofread everything. Ask a teacher or other trusted adult to proofread as well.
* Meet all deadlines and cooperate with follow up communication and scheduling the interview.
* Be sure your contact information is up to date, with address, telephone, email, and current school.
* Include all important information- **academics**: GPA, academic awards, Dean’s list, math bowl champion, etc., **leadership activities**: officer positions in clubs and organizations, leadership conferences, captain of athletic teams, etc. , **extra-curricular activities**: music, sports, clubs/organizations, hobbies, academic camps, employment, internships, etc., **community service**: all volunteer activities and service activities, and **unique talents**: personal interests or passions and favorite extracurricular activities, personal traits, heritage, gender, hardships you went through in the past, for example.
* Reach out to Resident Services or other Housing Authority staff, school counselors, teachers or even clergy if you need help. Everyone wants to see you succeed, so don’t be afraid to ask for help if you need it!
* Ask for reference letters early (see recommendations on asking below).
* Prepare yourself for the interview early and practice! (read through interview hints below)

### **HOW TO ASK FOR RECOMMENDATION LETTERS**

* Find an educator with whom you can discuss your extracurricular activities, college aspirations, other classes, etc.
* Provide your recommender with all of the information they will need to prepare and submit your recommendation.
* Read the application requirements carefully – an application may have a limit of one recommendation, may allow more than one, or may require more than one.
* Make sure to give your educator friendly reminders weeks before your scholarship deadline.
* Give thanks! Surprise them with a hand-written thank you card (not an email or social media post!).
* Maintain communication.

### **Prepare for the Interview**

* Be on time!
* Dress like you want to win, that it is important to you!
* Prepare ahead of time-review your submitted application details thoroughly, review the scholarship program information and the organization who is providing it, and learn about current affairs by reading national newspapers.
* Leading up to your interview, make a list of questions you think they may ask. Get advice from teachers, mentors, friends, or your parents and practice what to say. Think about your answers. If someone asks why you want to be a finance major, don’t say it’s because you like money. Instead, talk about your interests in the stock market, accounting, or the financial sector.
* Be prepared to talk about a subject(s) you are passionate about, your goals and dreams, and to share what makes you unique and deserving.
* Be aware of body language, try not to show signs of nervousness.
* Think before you speak- carefully listen to the question, stay on topic and do not ramble, make eye contact and enunciate! Speak clearly, and slowwwwwwly ... Above all else, answer all questions honestly.
* Answer questions thoroughly, eloquently, concisely, and positively.
* Ask questions. Have at least one or two questions to show that you are actively engaged and interested.
* Remember your manners.
* Be yourself & stay confident. It can be intimidating trying to impress complete strangers, but here’s something you should know — you’ve already impressed them. If they didn’t see something remarkable or unique about you, you wouldn’t have been selected for an interview. Walk into your meeting with confidence, smile, and be yourself. You’ve worked hard to get here, so enjoy the moment. Always conduct yourself as though you are the best candidate and deserving of the award.