Dear Teachers and Recommenders,

Your contributions to the Duluth Superior Area Community Foundation’s scholarship process are invaluable. The insight you provide about applicants is hugely important and without it, our committees couldn’t do their work nearly as well. We appreciate your time and dedication.

We want to make recommendation writing as simple as possible. This sheet is one tool toward that end.

Please understand that – although content is important – format and delivery method are not. We’ll take your free form letter or we’ll take a form; we’ll take paper or we’ll take an electronic submission – via either email or our new web portal. Whatever best suits your needs.

The Community Foundation, along with other scholarship providers in the area, has created a Universal Recommendation, a form that can be used for any local scholarship. Completing and distributing one form per student should save you time. This year’s form is just a large text box for you to:

explain why we should invest in the college education of this applicant. We hope you’ll address the following:

1. Character and perseverance
2. Predictions of success in college
3. Applicant’s strengths
4. Other comments

You can find the form at http://dsacommunityfoundation.com/scholarship-recommendation-form.

Electronic submissions are sent either via our scholarship application portal or via email. Students will start the process by entering your name and email into their application. The system will then email a request to you, with a link to the portal. Once there, you’ll have the option to type straight into the text field or upload something you’ve previously written. We’ll happily take: a Word document, a scanned letter or form, or the Universal Recommendation.

Of course, a simple email is fine too. Complete the form, save it, create an email to me at scholarships@dsacommunityfoundation.com, attach the recommendation and hit ‘Send.’ We prefer recommendations to come from official email addresses (...@isd709.org, ...@isdXXX.k12.mn.us, ...@umn.edu; or ...@cirrus.com) but also understand that people work from home and therefore will accept ...@gmail.com; ...@hotmail.com addresses. In those cases, please give us a phone number and don’t be surprised if we call to verify that the recommendation actually came from you.

The portal will send a confirmation immediately and we’ll confirm the reception of all emailed submissions within two business days of receipt in our office, so if knowing we got it is important, send it electronically. If you don’t receive that email, please follow up – either by phone (218-726-0232) or by email (scholarships@dsacommunityfoundation.com).

Of course, paper is OK too. Scholarships Committee

They should be mailed to:

Duluth Superior Area Community Foundation
222 East Superior Street, Ste 302
Duluth, MN 55802

Finally – and perhaps most importantly – several members of Community Foundation’s selection committees shared their thoughts about what makes a good scholarship recommendation. There is a mixture of ideas expressed and none are absolute, but perhaps their ideas will help when you sit down to write. Please find those below:
## Thoughts From Scholarship Committee Members:

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<th>There is a certain &quot;spark&quot; that makes one teacher recommendation stand out from the other. When a teacher really speaks <strong>personally</strong> about that student, it speaks volumes. You can tell from their passion in how they write whether they really believe in that student's qualifications. I don't really care about the teacher's bio, but rather how they know the student, whether in class or from some extra curricular activity. The teacher's bio takes away paper space spent talking about that student.</th>
<th>I prefer recommendations from teachers that focus directly on describing the behavior of the applicant as a student and learner. Is the applicant a self-starter, enthusiastic and curious? Does the applicant come to class well prepared? Does the applicant show interest in not just meeting the standards of today's classroom but eager to push beyond that level? Does the applicant ask relevant questions and appear sincere in gaining greater understanding of the subject being studied? Does the applicant demonstrate interest in applying newly acquired knowledge and understanding? Is the applicant able to synthesize newly acquired knowledge and apply it more broadly than in the context of acquiring such knowledge? These are the sort of questions that I would like to receive answers from an applicant's teacher.</th>
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<td>It would be most helpful if the teacher could identify where a given student stands relative to other students likely to be considered for any given award. Comments that state that &quot;the student is exceptionally qualified&quot; or &quot;should be given serious consideration&quot; are not that useful, since nearly all of the candidates would fit that description. Comments that state that this is the best student I have had in the last five years (or, one of the best half dozen or so in the last year) are more helpful to me in making distinctions between highly qualified applicants.</td>
<td>It would be meaningful to include some observations about the applicant's interaction with other students within the classroom. As colleges/universities place more emphasis on various forms of group interaction and learning, such observations regarding how the applicant would work and learn in group settings are helpful. And please omit the glowing generalizations regarding the &quot;goodness&quot; of the applicant. A bit of that is OK, but far too many recommendations primarily contain meaningless fluff.</td>
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<td>A few thoughts on what I would look for in a recommendation, for a scholarship which values primarily academics and character: 1. In what way is the recommendation writer qualified to give the recommendation? 2. How do you know the student, and for how long? 3. What characteristics set this student apart from other highly qualified peers? 4. What appears to motivate the student: ?self interest, ?intellectual curiosity, ?making a societal difference 5. Is the student well rounded, or uni-dimensional? 6. Has the writer been aware of student's character attributes, such as integrity, honesty, fortitude, courage?</td>
<td>I find it most helpful when recommenders refer to specific qualities required for a scholarship, rather than writing broad, general accolades. In describing those specific qualities of an individual, I like a brief anecdote that illustrates the student's possession of that quality. Nothing has to be long or wordy--one good story sticks with me more than a long laundry list of positives.</td>
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<td>Opening statement about quality of student: &quot;Jeff is one of the best students I have had in my teaching career at XXX.&quot; Some personal examples of quality of student: &quot;Sara volunteered to lead the XXX at XXX. She coordinated the efforts of about 50 students to lead the best XXX we have had.&quot; Brief summary of knowledge of student: &quot;Sam has been enrolled in both my 11th and 12th grade XXX classes and has been on the XXX team that I coach for all four years of high school.&quot; Brief statement of history about the letter writer: &quot;I've been a XXX teacher at XXX for about 10 years and teach both higher level XXX and some basic sections. Also I have been the adviser to XXX for past five years.&quot; The letter does not need a comprehensive listing of activities of the student except for those the letter writer is personally involved in. The comprehensive listing of activities is found elsewhere in the application.</td>
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Myself, I am looking for character - service, giving, leadership -- or worker-bee'ism ... really pitching in -- in a meaningful way, to...whatever it may be. I am not necessarily looking for the person with the most events noted, but instead, a commitment & indication of the student learning from what they are doing for service and all around "good citizenship".

THANKS AGAIN FOR YOUR VALUABLE ASSISTANCE!!