



VCCF Scholarship: **Success is in the Details!**

Scholarship Timeline:

- November 27, 2019: Online Application opened.
- December, 2019 & January, 2020: Do Application.
- BEFORE starting Application:
 - Confirm Recommenders ASAP. Let them know they will be asked to answer a few questions and may upload a letter of recommendation if they have one prepared.
 - Obtain an Unofficial copy of your latest Transcript to upload.
 - Update your Brag Sheet.
 - Write your General Essay.
- COMPLETE and Submit your GENERAL APPLICATION, with PLENTY of time to do Second Essays for additional scholarships.
- Sunday, January 26, 2020 at 10:00 pm: Online Application must be submitted together with ALL supplemental materials (Recommendations, Transcripts and Essays)
- Early May, 2020: Student Notification of award or denial sent. VCCF will award over 1.2 MILLION DOLLARS in scholarships each year to Ventura County students.
- Early May, 2020: Mandatory Scholarship Orientation for Scholarship Students.
- May 30, 2020: Scholarship Reception & Donor Appreciation Event at CSU Channel Islands.

NOTE: This application is unusual because you will fill out the General application BEFORE you see a list of scholarships for which you qualify that might each require a Second Essay (in addition to the General Essay). Therefore, it is very important that you do NOT wait until the last minute to start this application.
****Estimated time for completion ranges from 2-5 hours or more.****

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

ONE: Read this Guide, BEFORE going to the website. You will be more knowledgeable about the application process AND will be less likely to make mistakes.

TWO: Go to the VCCF Website (www.vccf.org) CLICK on “Apply For Scholarships” link on the home page.

THREE: READ the important Information on the Apply For a Scholarship page. At the bottom, you will see tips and advice.

FOUR: Find the “ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES” link at the bottom of the Apply For A Scholarship Page. Click, and then click again on “2020 Scholarship Eligibility Guidelines.”



Review the Guidelines for each Scholarship Fund very carefully. Identify the scholarships for which you think you may qualify. **DO NOT SKIP THIS STEP.** Your answers on the General Application will determine which scholarships you qualify for—you want to be sure to fill it out correctly so that you will be considered for every possible scholarship.

- TIP: Print out the Guidelines. Highlight or underline the specific descriptor words in each of the scholarship descriptions that you have identified as possibilities. There are questions on the General Application that will determine your qualification for those scholarships. For example: *Are your parents Calavo members?* If your parents are members, you want to be sure to answer “Yes,” or you will not be considered for the Calavo scholarship.
- Does the identified scholarship require a Second Essay? Highlight that prompt so you can think about how to answer it.
- Eligibility for scholarships that require Financial Need is determined by recent Cal Grant Income and Asset Eligibility Ceilings (see attached) BUT based on your income for 2018 and your assets as of today in December, 2019 or January, 2020.
- Read the scholarship descriptions VERY carefully.
 - Many are very specific (e.g. *Do you or your parent work for the Finch Family Ranches?*), read carefully.
 - “MUST” criteria vs. “PREFERENCE FOR” criteria. “Must” is exactly what it means—eligible students MUST meet that criterion. “Preference for” means that eligible students DO NOT need to meet that criterion. BUT students that do, get special consideration in the Review process.
 - Many scholarships are limited to students who live in a particular city or attend a particular school.
 - Scholarship Requirements and Preferences are embedded in the Scholarship Questions.

FIVE: Gather the information that you will need to complete the application:

- Your basic information, name, email address (NOT the email address assigned by your high school), and contact information. Please make sure to notify VCCF if you move or change your address. Otherwise, you risk not being notified of your award.
- Your Parents’ **2018** Tax Return.
- Estimate of Family’s Current **Accessible** Assets (not including house, retirement, small business assets or value of rental properties)
- Brag Sheet or Resume including your extracurriculars.
- Your UNWEIGHTED CUMULATIVE (All classes, 9th to 12th grade) GPA. **Must match what is indicated on your transcript.**



- Your most recent unofficial academic transcript issued from your current school's Registrar's Office. You will upload this into the General Application. Do NOT use the transcript from Student/Parent Connect/Q/Aries.
- Email Addresses for Two or Three Recommenders: one must be a teacher currently teaching at your school plus one or two more of your choice.
- Every applicant must write a General Essay of between 300 and 500 words, telling the Scholarship Committee why they are a good candidate for VCCF scholarships and explaining how VCCF scholarships will help them. Some scholarship opportunities require an additional essay in response to a specific prompt, which must be submitted in addition to the General Essay.

THE APPLICATION:

- ✓ Complete the Application in full. You may save and return later to complete.
- ✓ SAVE the application OFTEN.
- ✓ The Application will time out due to inactivity. To avoid this, have everything ready to enter once you start the Application.
- ✓ Provide everything that is required, but do not supply things that are not requested.
- ✓ Proofread the entire application carefully. Ask someone else to proofread it too.
- ✓ Ask for help if you need it.
- ✓ Remember that your scholarship application reflects you!
- ✓ The VCCF Scholarship Application has two parts, which are submitted separately:
 1. The General Application which is used for two purposes:
 - a. To determine your eligibility for scholarships that only require the General essay.
 - b. To determine your eligibility for scholarships that will appear on your matched list under the Opportunities Tab. These Opportunities require Second Essays.
 2. The Matched Opportunities Scholarship Applications which require Second Essays.

THE SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION

- Click on the "GET STARTED" Green Box on the "Apply for a Scholarship" page.
- The next screen says "Welcome!" and has a link to "Opportunities." On the upper right you will see two buttons, "Sign Up" or "Sign In." If you have not yet created an account, click on "Sign Up." If you have already created an account, click on "Sign In."
- **Create an account.** Create an account using your college-dedicated email address. (VUSD students: Do NOT use your venturaedu.org email account.) **Make a note of your password.**
- If you have applied for a VCCF scholarship in the past few years, you may use your previous account and do not have to create a new one.



- You will receive a confirmation email. You will need to click on the link in that email to activate the General Application.
- ****There is only one long screen for the General Application, so SAVE often.****

Personal Information:

Start by filling out your personal information.

- Use the same information that you used on your college applications.
- The questions about the county and city you live in and your current high school or college are embedded scholarship eligibility questions. Answer them carefully, referring back to the Scholarship Guidelines that you have highlighted. (Note: If you are a college student and your family still lives in Ventura County, you are still a resident of Ventura County and the city where your parents live.)
- While you have the option of not disclosing your gender, there are scholarships that are gender specific, which you will not be considered for if you do not disclose your gender.
- Ethnicity: If you have Latino/Hispanic heritage, check that box. The only ethnicity-specific scholarship funds are for Latinos/Hispanics. You may check multiple boxes.

Financial Status

It is very important that you take the time to fill out these questions correctly as they will determine your eligibility for many of the scholarships.

- Most students under the age of 24 will be considered dependent. In general, your FAFSA status should be your guide. There are a few exceptions in the application which are similar to the FAFSA exceptions.
 - If you are under the age of 24 and think that you should be considered independent, please contact the VCCF Scholarship Director, Dr. Cristina Miranda at scholarships@vccf.org
- One Parent MUST electronically sign to certify that the student is Dependent.
- If your parents are separated or divorced, enter information about the Parent who was listed as the Custodial Parent on your 2020-21 FAFSA.
- Using 2018 income figures, provide the Parents' income. The total income will be both Taxed and Untaxed income. (Hint: What did you enter for Income on the FAFSA?)
- Using TODAY'S assets, what is the total value of Parents' ACCESSIBLE CASH AVAILABLE TO PAY TUITION.
 - TIP: Exclude Retirement Accounts, Rentals, Small Business, and other assets that cannot be readily liquidated.
 - Include the Student's 529 Accounts.
- When asked about the number of family members, be sure to include siblings who are away at college.



- When asked about the number of college students, include all family members who will be in college during the NEXT school year, including parents and siblings. (The Student will count as “1.”) (Note: This is different from FAFSA.)

EMBEDDED ELIGIBILITY QUESTION TIPS:

- **TIP:** This is where you will want to refer back to the VCCF Scholarship Guidelines printout where you circled scholarship funds you thought you would qualify for, looking carefully at the descriptor words that you have circled.
- Do any of the questions include those descriptor words? If so, be sure you answer the question in the correct manner. **For example:** “Do you attend Ventura High School?” If you do and you have circled the Bethany Anne Cody Scholarship on your Scholarship Guidelines Printout, be sure to answer “yes”, as that is a MUST criterion for this scholarship, even if you have indicated that you attend Ventura High School elsewhere on the application.
- When asked if you intend to return to Ventura County, respond “Yes.”

ACADEMIC INFORMATION

- Pick your Major:
 - Be **very careful** with this question which will play a large part in determining whether you qualify for particular scholarships.
 - Are you undeclared or undecided, or is your major unlisted? DO NOT choose one of those options from the drop-down menu, as that choice will disqualify you from the Fairburn Scholarship, which is a large scholarship, for which you can apply in successive years.
 - Take a look at your list of scholarships; what are the majors that are required for those that you are interested in? You may have a specific choice and a broader choice. Choose the **BROADEST** major. For example: Biological Sciences is a broader choice than Neuroscience and will make you eligible for more scholarships. Biology would be an even broader choice.
 - Are you planning to **DOUBLE MAJOR**? The system is set up so you can only select one major. However, in your General Essay of 300-500 words, be sure to include a sentence or two about your intended double major. In the drop-down menu, select one of the two majors – ideally the one that will qualify you for the most scholarships. (The system will provide you a list of recommended opportunities based on your choice in the drop-down menu. Once you have finished the general application, you will be able to click on the "All Opportunities" link in your dashboard where you will see an "Apply" button next to the name of each scholarship. You can click on whichever of these you meet the criteria for, even if it wasn't in your original list of recommended scholarships. This will allow you to apply to scholarships that match your second major.)
- Enter Your Academic Status for FALL 2020. (Note: “rising” means that you will be that status next fall. For example: current college freshmen are also “rising” college sophomores.) Most of you will be “Current high school senior enrolling in [2-year or 4-year] college/university.”



- **IMPORTANT: The VCCF Scholarship will NOT allow you to apply for scholarships for BOTH 2-year (Community College) and 4-year colleges. At this point, you need to make a choice, where are you most likely to land and where you will need financial assistance in FALL 2020: community college or a 4-year college?**
- **TRANSCRIPT:** Your most recent unofficial academic transcript issued from your current school's Registrar's Office. You will upload this into the General Application. Do NOT use the transcript from Student/Parent Connect/Q/Aries.
- Enter your **CUMULATIVE UNWEIGHTED GPA** (9th grade to present for High School Students.) **MUST** match the GPA that is on your transcript!!!
- **STRATEGICALLY list up to FIVE of the colleges** and universities on your list.

Note: The VCCF Scholarship Application does not account for the way current high school seniors go about choosing colleges and universities (choose a well-balanced list of 8-14 public and private schools where there probably are NOT favorites AND the student does not know which school they will be attending until May 1.) This explains why you, as a high school Senior, will be asked seemingly unanswerable questions such as "**Are you currently enrolled or will you enroll this fall in a public California college (UC, CSU, or California community college)?**"

The following are tips to help you navigate these questions, in order to qualify for as many scholarship opportunities as possible:

- When you reviewed the 2020 VCCF Scholarship Guidelines, identifying scholarships that you think you will qualify for, did a certain scholarship have a public school, private school, or geographic requirement? If so, list the school(s) that fits that requirement first.
- Be sure to list in any order (if you applied to these schools):
 - a University of California campus,
 - CSU Channel Islands or another CSU if you didn't apply to CSUCI,
 - a California private school, and
 - an out-of-state school.
- You will have a choice of indicating whether you have been Accepted, Not Accepted, or Status Pending for each college that you list. DO NOT list a college to which you have been denied admission.
- If you are applying to both public and private schools, answer "Yes" to the question "*Are you currently enrolled or will you enroll this fall in a public California college (UC, CSU, or California community college)?*".
- If CSU Channel Islands, Cal Lu or any other schools listed are somewhere on your college applications list, check "Yes" to the question of whether you may be attending one of those schools.
- Click "Yes" that you are enrolling in an accredited school next year.

Test Scores: Enter your best scores. I'd recommend "Super-scoring" your SAT (provide only your best score for each category, if you took the SAT more than once.) If you did not take the SAT or ACT, leave these blank.

Community/Volunteer Service, In School and Out of School Extracurriculars, Work Experience in Past 3 years

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- First, enter your total Community Service Hours (in school and out!) in the past two years.
- Then, use your Brag Sheet and Resume to list your most important activities. You may list up to 10 in each category. Again, just as with your college applications, you should limit your activities to high school (or if you are in college, you may enter both, but college activities are probably preferred). TIP: You have a limited space so use a bullet pointed list, rather than full sentences.
- Note: For the In School Extracurriculars, I recommend listing ALL activities that you have participated in during high school, despite the way the question is worded which seems to direct you to only list current activities at your current school.

INDICATE THE VCCF SCHOLARSHIPS YOU HAVE RECEIVED IN THE PAST

- High School Seniors will click on the last choice, “I have not previously received any VCCF scholarships.”

CUT AND PASTE YOUR GENERAL APPLICATION ESSAY INTO THE BOX PROVIDED. 300-500 words telling VCCF why you are a good candidate for VCCF scholarships and explaining how they will help you.

Essay writing tips:

- Just like your college application essays, you want to write a compelling essay highlighting your personality and academic passions in an interesting way.
- Think about what the word “good” means. Show the qualities that make you a “good” candidate.
- Based upon the Recommender’s Questionnaire, the committee wants to know if you are hard-working.
- If you have a unique backstory, include it.
- Talk about your contributions, past, present, and future to Ventura County.
- Talk about your future academic and career goals and how receiving a VCCF scholarship will help you achieve those goals. (For example: Reduction of your financial burden.)
- You might use one of your UC essays or your Common App as a starting point, adding or trimming as needed.
- Use 12-point font, please.
- Have another person review your essay. No spelling or grammatical errors, please!
- Remember, the Committee considers over 2,000 applications per year. Yours needs to stand out.
- Don’t wait until the last minute!

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION / REFERENCES

Every applicant must include 2 letters of recommendation/references with their application. At least one reference must be from a current teaching faculty member at the school you are currently attending.

- The other MAY be a community member such as clergy, mentor, volunteer supervisor or employer. (Another current teacher is also ok.)



- No relatives, friends or neighbors.
- Use the link on the Letters of Recommendation Section to invite your recommenders.
 - You are required to have TWO Recommenders: a teacher at your current school AND someone else (teacher, mentor, etc.)
 - You MAY add a THIRD Recommender who will address another aspect about you (teacher, mentor, etc.)
- The VCCF Scholarship application will email your recommenders. That email includes a link for your recommender to use to set up their own account with VCCF.
- IMPORTANT: Your recommender will be required to answer a questionnaire about you. Here are the questions:

Describe This Applicant

- What is your relationship to this student? (Counselor, Teacher, Mentor, Spiritual Leader, etc.)
 - How long have known this student?
 - What are areas of strength for this student?
 - Does the student participate a lot in class, collaborate with and listen to others?
 - Describe this student's work ethic in school and extracurricular activities
- By clicking the link, the recommender will be able to upload a letter of recommendation as a file from their computer.
 - Respect the people from who you are requesting letters of recommendation/references, and give them plenty of time to complete them. Don't forget to give each recommender a handwritten Thank you note.
 - After you submit your application, you can go back into your application and check to see if your Letters of Recommendation/References have been submitted. You can also edit and resend recommender requests. You may make changes until the deadline, even if you have already submitted your General Application.

IMPORTANT: Do NOT go to the next step until you have reviewed the previous sections THOROUGHLY. Again, is all of the information accurate? Did you answer the scholarship eligibility questions sprinkled throughout the General Scholarship application correctly, to position yourself to qualify for the scholarships you identified as a match for you? (geography, college choice, gender, financial, major etc.)

CERTIFICATION OF APPLICATION:

Please read the Certification Statement closely, click on the box stating that you have read and certified the statement, electronically sign and date.

SCHOLARSHIP ORIENTATION

Click "Yes" that you will be able to attend the Scholarship Orientation if you are selected for a Scholarship.

**SUBMISSION OF GENERAL APPLICATION:**

If you have completed all of the previous sections and feel confident that you have filled out the application to the best of your ability.... **CLICK ON: SUBMIT APPLICATION**

NOTE: If you are missing information, the application will not let you submit until you have made your corrections.

CONGRATULATIONS, you have completed the General Application!

IMPORTANT: You have now applied for every scholarship that you are eligible for that **DOES NOT** require a Second Essay. You will NOT have access to a list of those scholarships. That is why it is so important that you have thoroughly reviewed the Scholarship Guidelines, so you answer the General Application questions correctly.

Also, you will be considered for at least 4 additional Scholarship Funds that are not listed in Scholarship Guidelines; these are awarded at the discretion of the Scholarship Committee.

But wait, you are NOT done!!

OPPORTUNITIES TAB**(MATCHED SCHOLARSHIPS)**

- After you submit your application, you will see a new screen. On the left will be “General Application” with a check mark, since you have completed it. You will also see “Other Recommended Opportunities.”
- In the center of the screen, you will see a list of “Recommended Scholarships” that your General Application answers have determined that you qualify for! These are **ONLY** the scholarships that require a Second Essay.
- When you click on the name of a Recommended Scholarship, you will see a description of the eligibility criteria for the scholarship. (NOTE: This is usually **BUT NOT ALWAYS** the same information you found under the Scholarship Guidelines that you printed out. Refer back to the Scholarship Guidelines to double check that the information is the same. If it is not, consider the requirements and preferences in the Scholarship Guidelines, not the Application itself, to be the accurate information.)
- You will see the Second Essay prompt and any other required information.
- Just as with your General Application Essay, write your responses in Word or another program first, and then cut and paste into the application.
- Proofread your narrative to be sure that your spelling and punctuation are correct.
- NOTE: You may find that:
 - There are scholarships listed that do not apply to you. Be sure to check all requirements.
 - There are scholarships you thought you qualified for and they are not listed. If one of the scholarships that you thought you qualified for doesn't appear on your list, you may go back into the General Application and revise your answers so it does show up. If it still doesn't show up on your Recommended list and you are positive that you qualify, contact Dr.



- Martinez (see below.)
- **Use Caution in changing your General Application because your revised answers may affect your eligibility for other scholarships.**
 - You can filter your Recommended Opportunities List by clicking at the top right corner.
 - Should you run into issues, please email the VCCF Scholarship Director, Dr. Cristina Martinez at scholarships@vccf.org.
 - You may submit AS MANY of the Recommended Opportunities Scholarships as you wish. Unlike past years, there are no limitations.

Your COMPLETED GENERAL APPLICATION together with your transcript AND Letters of Recommendation AND any required Second Essays MUST BE SUBMITTED by 10 pm on SUNDAY, January 26th, 2020. No Exceptions!

Next year, watch for my email about the VCCF deadlines and Bootcamp sessions so that you can reapply or apply for scholarships for college students.

Disclaimer: I have no affiliation with VCCF, I produce this FREE guide in an effort to assist Ventura County students in completing the VCCF application to which I only have public access. You may find a link to this FREE guide under the "RESOURCES" tab at www.ceciliajohnston.com I accept no responsibility for any inaccuracies or errors. Always read the VCCF information and guidelines thoroughly. Should you have any questions about the scholarship itself, please contact the VCCF Scholarship Director at scholarships@vccf.org

Should you have any suggestions or corrections for this guide, please contact me at ceciliajohnston@ceciliajohnston.com Thank you!