

Tips & Tricks for a Strong Application

The **Four-Year Undergraduate Scholarship** uses one application for more than 30 unique awards ranging from \$1,000 to \$20,000. This year, over \$1 million will be awarded to 150+ students from Northern New Mexico! Use these tips to put your best foot forward:

Know the Basics

- Must live in Northern New Mexico (Los Alamos, Mora, Rio Arriba, San Miguel, Sandoval, Santa Fe, or Taos counties) for at least 366 days.
- Students at the New Mexico School for the Deaf, New Mexico School for the Arts, and the Santa Fe Indian School are eligible regardless of county of residence.
- 3.25+ GPA (unweighted).
- Planning to pursue or currently enrolled in a four-year undergraduate program.
- No ACT/SAT required and U.S. citizenship is not required.
- Current undergrads: Preference may be given to first-generation and nontraditional students studying in-state.

Essays: Tell Your Story

- Be authentic—share your goals, challenges, and motivation for pursuing college.
- Answer each prompt directly, within the word limit. Be clear and specific.
- Highlight your leadership—at school, in your family, in Tribal activities, or in your community.
- Show your commitment to service and how you plan to give back.
- Use the optional essay to explain special circumstances or provide context.



Use AI Responsibly

- AI tools (like ChatGPT or Grammarly) are fine—but your essays must be your own voice.
- Don't copy/paste AI-generated text. Committees can tell when it's not authentic.
- Use AI as a helper for brainstorming, outlining, or polishing—not as a substitute for your story.

AI Do's

- ✓ Brainstorm essay topics.
- ✓ Get feedback on clarity or grammar.
- ✓ Use it to organize your ideas.

AI Don'ts

- ✗ Submit AI-written essays.
- ✗ Let AI decide your story.
- ✗ Use words or phrases that don't sound like you.



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Transcripts

- Unofficial transcripts are fine but must be complete.
- High school seniors: Submit grades through the end of junior year.
- College freshmen: Submit high school + current college transcript.
- All other undergrads: Submit your most recent transcript.

Final Reminder

- The committee looks for students who show achievement, leadership, service, and clear career goals, along with qualities like determination, resilience, and a commitment to making a positive impact.
- Use your application to highlight not just what you've done, but who you are and the difference you want to make.

Recommendations Matter

- Two letters required:
 - One academic (teacher, professor, or counselor).
 - One extracurricular (coach, supervisor, employer, Tribal/community leader) or another academic.
- Choose recommenders who know you well and can speak to your character, leadership, and service.
- Provide recommenders a "cheat sheet" of your accomplishments, goals, and career plans.
- Ask early to give them plenty of time.

Pro-Tips for a Strong Application



- ✓ Start early—don't rush essays or letters. Proofread—check spelling, grammar, and clarity.
- ✓ Complete the financial need section—even if optional, it may qualify you for more awards.
- ✓ Recognize your leadership—it can include caring for siblings, Tribal commitments, or work responsibilities. Leadership isn't only about holding titles.
- ✓ Stay positive and specific—when writing about challenges, focus on resilience and growth.

Questions? Contact Us:

scholarships@lanlfoundation.org



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