



2009-2010 USC Topping Scholarship Program

Online Application Deadlines:

Freshman Applicants – Friday, February 13, 2009

Transfer & Graduate Applicants – Wednesday, May 13, 2009

Dear Topping Scholarship Applicant:

On behalf of the USC Norman Topping Student Aid Fund (NTSAF) Governing Board, we would like to congratulate you on your academic and personal accomplishments thus far. Specifically, we would like to praise your dedication to your scholarly pursuits. Your interest in applying to the NTSAF is representative of your efforts to make a positive change in your community through higher education.

The purpose of the NTSAF is to assist students with high financial need who demonstrate an extraordinary level of community awareness in their pursuit of higher education at the University of Southern California (USC). The NTSAF is a scholarship program with over thirty eight years of tradition and demonstrated commitment to the support of students at USC. We take pride in the fact that the NTSAF is the only student-initiated, student-funded, primarily student-administered scholarship program in the nation. The NTSAF Governing Board, which is composed of primarily current USC undergraduates, distributes over half a million dollars in scholarship aid each year.

Our selection process is extremely competitive. To ensure that your application receives full consideration, we recommend that you: 1) carefully read the eligibility requirements and selection criteria and 2) follow the application instructions and helpful hints sections.

We understand that the scholarship process is very important to you and your family. For this reason we take great measures to ensure that all completed and eligible applications are reviewed by the NTSAF Governing Board. Thank you for your interest in our program and we look forward to receiving your online application. Please do not hesitate to contact our office at (213) 740-7575 or ntsaf@usc.edu for any reason. We are happy to assist you throughout this process!

Sincerely,

Ashly-Nikkole Davis
Governing Board Chair

Christina L. Yokoyama
NTSAF Director

CONTENTS (Application Instructions)

- How to Submit the Application
- Topping Scholarship Award & Requirements
- Eligibility Requirements
- Selection Criteria
- Application Preparation
(application, letters of recommendation, autobiography)
- Application Deadlines
- Special Application Notes
- Selection Calendar

NTSAF APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

HOW TO SUBMIT THE APPLICATION

Complete applications must be submitted via our online process only: www.usc.edu.ntsaf

TOPPING SCHOLARSHIP AWARD & REQUIREMENTS

The NTSAF offers supplemental scholarships to entering freshmen, transfer and graduate students based on the USC Financial Aid package for each Topping Scholar. The Topping Scholarship is renewable during the student's undergraduate or graduate tenure at USC if the Topping Scholar fulfills all scholarship requirements. These requirements include maintaining a minimum USC cumulative grade point average of 2.5 (3.0 for graduate scholars), continual full-time enrollment and full attendance at all NTSAF required events. The Topping Scholar's class standing and program of study determines the maximum number of semesters of scholarship eligibility.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

To be eligible for scholarship consideration, candidates must:

- Apply for USC admission for Fall 2009 as a freshman, transfer or graduate student,
- Have high financial need (usually defined as having a need greater than or equal to the cost of tuition by the USC Financial Aid Office), AND
- Demonstrate community awareness.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Applicants admitted to USC are evaluated on the following criteria for a finalist interview:

- Financial Need
- Community Awareness
- First-Generation College Student Status
- Volunteer Efforts
- Extraordinary Circumstances

Applicants who reside in the local USC community and first-generation college students are given primary consideration in the selection process. However, selection is not limited to these populations.

APPLICATION PREPARATION

Step 1: Application – Step one of the application includes demographic information, education, volunteer, and employment experience. Answer all questions completely. Provide only the requested information and confine your responses to the space provided. All application components must be submitted online.

Step 2: Letters of Recommendation – Two letters of recommendation are required. It is preferred that one letter be from an instructor, counselor or school administrator. The second letter should be from a supervisor at a volunteer organization or your place of employment. Both letters must be current and may not be from a relative and/or friend.

The online application process requires you to submit the contact information (recommender name, position/title, organization/company, email address and phone number) of two recommenders. Each recommender will be sent an email with instructions on how to submit letters (click here to see recommender email).

PLEASE NOTE: Both letters of recommendation must be received by 11:59pm PST on the appropriate deadline.

Allow your recommender at least two weeks to complete your recommendation (a month is strongly suggested).

The letter should address the selection criteria:

1. Financial Need
2. Community Awareness
3. First-Generation College Student Status
4. Volunteer Efforts
5. Extraordinary Circumstances

Step 3: Autobiography – Your autobiography is an essential part of this application and carries MAJOR emphasis. Your autobiography should include descriptions and explanations of your experiences in relation to our selection criteria (financial need, community awareness, first-generation college student status, volunteer efforts, and extraordinary circumstances) that will enable us to evaluate your eligibility for a finalist interview.

The following MUST be included in your autobiography:

- A summary of your personal background and circumstances.
- A description of your community awareness and your commitment to community involvement.
- A description of your current financial situation and how it will affect your educational experience at USC.

It is *preferred* that you upload your autobiography document. Your autobiography must be typed, double-spaced, and no longer than three (3) pages. Please use the Times New Roman font with a minimum font size of 11-point.

You also have the option of typing your autobiography directly in the space provided (1200 word maximum).

Helpful Hints for Autobiography:

- Pay close attention to the selection criteria of the NTSAF.
- All first-generation college students and residents of the local community are encouraged to highlight this in the autobiography as the NTSAF targets, but is not limited to, these specific populations.
- The NTSAF pays special attention to the quality (NOT quantity) of your volunteer efforts, specifically those which demonstrate engagement with urban environments.
- Highlight any extraordinary circumstances that have impacted your path to a university degree.

APPLICATION DEADLINES

The online application submission process must be completed by 11:59pm PST on the appropriate deadline:

Freshman Applicants – Friday, February 13, 2009
Transfer & Graduate Applicants – Wednesday, May 13, 2009

SPECIAL APPLICATION NOTES

- The Norman Topping Student Aid Fund online scholarship application deadlines for the 2009-2010 academic year are 11:59pm PST on the appropriate deadline:
 - Freshman Applicants - February 13, 2009
 - Transfer & Graduate Applicants - May 13, 2009
- The complete application (including signed application, autobiography, and two letters of recommendation) must be submitted by the appropriate deadline otherwise, the application will NOT be reviewed.
- The NTSAF Governing Board Executive Committee reserves complete discretion to determine an applicant's eligibility.
- All decisions made by the NTSAF Governing Board are final and are not subject to appeal.
- Application materials submitted to the NTSAF become the property of USC and will not be returned to the applicant.
- All applicants must obtain, complete and submit all forms required by the USC Financial Aid Office by the required deadlines.
- All selected members of the 2009-2010 entering cohort are required to attend the NTSAF Retreat (August 14-16, 2009) or forfeit their scholarship eligibility.
- Selected scholars are only eligible for the Topping Award once during their tenure at USC (either as an undergraduate OR as a graduate student).
- NTSAF applications are not automatically forwarded to all who are eligible for USC financial aid. Applications must be accessed by visiting the NTSAF website (www.usc.edu/ntsaf).

NTSAF SELECTION CALENDAR

FRESHMAN SELECTION TIMELINE

December 2008 Online application available at www.usc.edu/ntsaf

February 13, 2009 **Freshman Applicant deadline** (11:59pm PST)

March 2009 Application processing

April 11 & 12, 2009 **Freshman Finalist interviews**
Applicants selected for interviews will be notified by April 3rd

April 2009 Selection of Freshmen Topping Scholars
Notifications for Freshman Scholars by April 17th

TRANSFER & GRADUATE SELECTION TIMELINE

May 13, 2009 **Transfer & Graduate Applicant deadline** (11:59pm PST)

June/July 2009 Application processing

Late July 2009 Transfer & Graduate finalist interviews (Date TBA)

Early August 2009 Selection of Transfer & Graduate Topping Scholars
Notifications for Transfer & Graduate Scholars

NTSAF REQUIRED EVENTS FOR SELECTED SCHOLARS

August 8, 2009 New Scholar Welcome Breakfast

August 14-16, 2009 Topping Scholar Retreat