How to Apply for the SSSA Phelps Scholarship

Welcome! This guide explains what the Student Success Service Award (SSSA) committee is looking for and how to write an application that shows the committee the difference you've made for other UNC students.

What You Need to Submit

Email both documents to **student.success@unco.edu** with **"SSSA Scholarship application"** in the subject line by the deadline.

1. **Personal Statement (up to 750 words):** Describe how you've positively contributed to UNC students' success as a peer tutor, SI leader, or mentor. Include a brief note on your financial need and what this scholarship would mean to you.
2. **Letter of Recommendation:** From someone who has worked with you recently (not a high school teacher or coach) and can speak to your student service work, academic record, interpersonal and communication skills, and any volunteer or extracurricular involvement that shows your commitment to student success.

Writing Your Personal Statement

The committee is reading for two big things: what you do and why you do it. Aim for about 500-750 words, and don't go over 750.

- **Show what you do.** Name your role(s), how long you have served, and what a typical session or week looks like. Numbers help: semesters served, students supported, sessions or hours.
- **Tell one or two real stories.** Pick a moment when a student you supported had a breakthrough, or when you changed your approach because something wasn't working. A specific story tells the committee more than a list of qualities.
- **Explain why you do it.** What does being a mentor or tutor mean to you? What keeps you coming back? What have you learned about students and about yourself?
- **Show your impact.** Don't only describe your effort; show what changed for the students you worked with.
- **Include other service.** Briefly mention volunteering or involvement that connects to student success, and how it fits with your main role.
- **Share your financial need.** See the next section.
- **Use your own voice.** It's fine to talk about your accomplishments. Let specific examples do the work.

Sharing Your Financial Need

The committee also wants to understand how this scholarship would affect you. In two to four sentences, include:

- **Your situation:** Any jobs you work, how many hours, or other responsibilities that compete with your time, including how you pay for school.

- **What the scholarship would change:** For example, fewer work hours, more time to tutor or mentor, or the ability to stay on track to graduate.
- **How it connects to your service:** Supporting you means continued support for other students.

You decide how much personal detail to share. Being specific and honest matters more than including every hardship.

Choosing and Asking Your Recommender

- Choose someone who has seen your work with students recently, such as a supervisor, faculty member, or program coordinator.
- Ask early, at least 3 weeks before the deadline.
- Give them the scholarship description, the committee criteria, and your draft personal statement so their letter is specific and consistent with yours.
- Confirm how and when they will send it.

Sample Personal Statement Outline

Replace the brackets with your own details. Please don't copy this word for word.

Opening: A short scene or moment that shows what you do as a tutor/SI leader/mentor.

Your role: *I have served as a [role] for [time], working with [students/courses/programs]. In a typical week, I [what you do].*

Impact: One example of a student or group you supported, what you did, and what changed.

Why it matters to you: What being a mentor means to you and what you have learned.

Financial need and what this would mean: Your jobs or responsibilities, and how the scholarship would help you.

Other involvement (optional): Volunteering or activities that connect to student success.

Before You Submit

- ☐ Personal statement is 750 words or fewer
- ☐ Includes concrete examples and shows impact on other students
- ☐ Includes a brief, specific note on financial need
- ☐ Proofread for spelling and grammar
- ☐ Recommender knows the deadline and has the committee criteria
- ☐ Both documents emailed to student.success@unco.eduwith the correct subject line