

2019 WSOS Application Essay Questions & Guiding Points

Essay #1: The mission of the Washington State Opportunity Scholarship (WSOS) is to build pathways into high-demand Washington careers for Washington students. We do this by reducing barriers to education for high-potential students in the state through financial aid, student supports and career services. WSOS values Scholars who demonstrate strong interest in and a drive to pursue science, technology, engineering, math (STEM) and health care majors and careers.

We encourage you to write about the steps that you have taken to actively explore the field of the major you've chosen. We equally value hearing about formal opportunities (like participating in a related club, volunteering, internship) and self-directed opportunities (like researching by going to the library or watching YouTube videos).

Think about an experience you had that inspired you to pursue a STEM or health care major. In 500 words or fewer, tell us:

- What influenced your interest in that major?
- What are steps you have taken to learn more?
- What career do you see yourself entering with this major?

The essay should inform the reviewer of the applicant's:

- *Investment in pursuing their major through **significant exploration**.*
- *Evidence of the **initial steps taken** toward their desired STEM or health care major.*
- *Ability to connect how their **major leads to a career**.*

Note: We recognize that not all opportunities are available to everyone. The investment can be in a formal, traditional way or self-directed.

Here are examples of topics and supporting evidence a student could include to earn maximum points for the essay portion:

- A student who is interested in majoring in nursing because of the care their grandmother had received when she was hospitalized. Throughout high school, the student signed up to volunteer at a local hospital, helped at a health care fair in their community and participated in health care clubs. While applying for college, the student researched nursing programs in Washington state and applied to colleges with nursing programs they liked. The student talks about their plans to pursue their BSN with a concentration on geriatric care.
- A student shares the first time they became interested in code during middle school. They had a field trip at Microsoft and talked to programmers about the different things codes are used for. In high school, they started doing a lot of research online, watched YouTube videos about coding, participated in online forums and eventually taught themselves how to code. They want to pursue a major in computer science and land a career as a programmer at a start-up.

Essay #2: In addition to a strong STEM or health care interest, WSOS values Scholars who demonstrate resiliency, initiative and follow-through. We know students are more likely to succeed in STEM or health care majors and careers when they exhibit these qualities. We also understand that Scholars' academic success to date may have been limited by extenuating circumstances despite strong potential for future excellence.

Think about a significant experience that challenged you (academically or personally). In 300 words or fewer, tell us:

- What was the challenge?
- What did you do to overcome the challenge?
- What did you learn about yourself as you faced the challenge?

The essay should inform the reviewers of the applicant's:

- **Ability to overcome** challenges.
- **Ability to navigate and utilize resources** or support to overcome the challenge.
- **Mindsets about obstacles** as growth opportunities rather than roadblocks.

Here are examples of topics and supporting evidence a student could include to earn maximum points for the essay portion:

- A student is the first person to pursue a college degree in their family. Since their sophomore year, they have been working 12 hours a week as an elementary school tutor and helps take care of their young siblings while their parents are working. This student shares that they find it challenging to find time to begin the college application process. They talk about how they talked to their counselor and college admissions advisors, saved their money they earned to fund their college visits and learned ways to fund their education. The student has learned the benefits of how talking to the right folks can help pave the way to achieve their goal.
- A student has identified that writing is their weakness and is failing their composition class. They talked to their professor and asked for resources that will help them improve their performance in the class. In addition, they took the initiative to practice their writing skills and started a daily journal. By the end of the term, they were able to turn their failing grade to a passing grade. Through this experience, the student has learned to strengthen their weakness by asking for help.
- A student identified a school discipline policy that caused a disproportionate number of students to be suspended, which made it more difficult for those students to stay on track in their classes. The student ran for student council so they could help change the policy, but wasn't elected. However, the student did not give up. They organized a small group of students who came up with a proposal for changing the policy. Together, these students met with the assistant principal to advocate for their strategy. Since then, the school administration came to a compromise and plans to change the policy. This experience reinforced this student's sense of determination and empowerment.