

# How to win a SCHOLARSHIP

by Julie Boatman and Mary Ann Eiff

**A**s the chair of several scholarship committees, Mary Ann Eiff is often asked questions such as, “What could I have done to increase my chances of winning?” or “Why didn’t I win?” A scholarship program rewards those who have worked hard in their chosen career paths. Showcasing that you have the discipline, attention to detail, and enthusiasm to make good on what the scholarship has to offer is the key to making your application stand out. Eiff offers several suggestions for making your application shine.

## Follow directions

Many applicants make the mistake of not following directions. “Who wants a pilot or mechanic who cannot follow instructions?” says Eiff. “You would be surprised how many applicants simply do not do what they are told.” For example, if you are told to send five complete sets of paperwork, ensure that you send five copies of each page of the application.

One easy way to know that you have all the right copies is to put the paperwork in the order it is listed in the instructions. There is probably a reason for that order. And follow instructions to the letter: if the instructions say to send the materials stapled, don’t send them in a folder. “My personal reason for instructing the applicants to staple and not to put in folders is that the folders do not fit into boxes that are readily available. We spent almost 10 hours just removing the folders from many of the 600 applications for Women in Aviation, International scholarships this year,” recalls Eiff. Avoid sending attachments such as



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*Kathy Petersen (above, left), a Continental Airlines 737 captain, presented a 737 Type Rating Training Award to Andrea Averyt of Tustin, California. Continental Airlines awarded two 737 Type Rating Training scholarships at the 2003 Conference. Airbus Chairman Allan McArtor (below, right) and Airbus VP Renee Martin-Nagle (below left) presented two A-320 Type Rating Training awards at the 2003 Conference. The winners were Ellen Beth Berris of Memphis, Tennessee, and Tracy Thompson of Amherst, Ohio and San Juan, Puerto Rico.*



# Applying for a scholarship isn't like buying a lottery ticket: you can control your chances of winning with a good application.

videotapes or CDs containing parts of your portfolio, unless the sponsor specifically requests such material. Most scholarship committees want to evaluate applicants on an even playing field, and extraneous material adds hassle and won't influence those making the decisions in your favor.

*Every year, Aircraft Technical Publishers presents the Maintenance Technician of the Year Award to an individual who made outstanding contributions to the maintenance field. The recipient for 2003 was Marsha Buckingham (left), shown here with Scholarship Committee co-chair Kim Wheeler. In addition to the honor and the plaque, Buckingham received a \$1,000 award.*



## Recommendation letters

Your letters of recommendation should be very current, not several years old. Typically, one letter should be from a person in aviation, one who knows your skills and experience. This person can address your abilities and how you perform on the job. Another letter should be from someone who has known you for a long time, such as a neighbor, Girl Scout leader, or a person in your church. This reference can address your moral character, and how you have worked to get where you are today. The third letter can be from someone who knows your work ethic. This might be another person in aviation, or it might be a friend. This person

could also address some of your history of what you have achieved, and how, and where you are expecting to go from here. Be sure your recommendation letters are signed by the person who writes them, and there is a typed name and address and phone and e-mail address, so if there is a question, they can be contacted. "I even had to use the contacts to track down one of our finalists last year," says Eiff. "She had moved, and I needed to find her to tell her she had an airline interview in a couple of days. Because her contacts' phone numbers were on the letters, I was able to find her."

## Appropriateness

Be sure you are eligible for what you are applying for. You must meet the minimum requirements for the scholarship, or you may need to wait another year or two before you apply for that particular scholarship. "Yes, every year, we have someone apply for a type rating, but they admit they need a private pilot certificate first!" says Eiff. "We attempt to meet all skill levels' needs by offering a wide range of scholarships for the diverse membership of WAI. There should be scholarships for everyone, or please let me know, and we will attempt to find sponsors for the missing populations."

Believe it or not, many scholarships go unawarded. "We had scholarships for management this year because last year, it was mentioned that the management population had been ignored," says Eiff. "But we had no eligible applicants. The same thing happened with some engineering scholarships—we failed to award all we had to offer for lack of applicants."

## Neatness counts

Most careers in aviation—professional pilot, maintenance technician, engineer—require attention to detail. How you prepare your application speaks loudly about how detail-oriented you are.

Start by using a copier that makes clean, clear copies. Some special considerations exist for copying logbook pages. Make a copy of the left and right page as best you can—that counts for one logbook page. Then, cut that copy and paste it onto a single sheet so the whole page can be copied in a readable format onto a single 8.5 x 11" sheet of paper. You may need to shrink the copy some to make it fit onto one page if your logbook is large. The 8.5 x 14" folded pages, and also the 11 x 17" pages, are difficult to fold neatly and then the reader must turn the whole application sideways to read the logbook. Make it easy to access and read your times. Be sure that at the end of each page, your total time for the previous page has been included. "You would be surprised how many people do not add their total time on each page," says Eiff. "How will the airlines know how many hours you have, and how frequently you fly?"

Also, make the aircraft types that you fly clear on your logbook pages. "We realize that you fly the same airplane every day, but in the first entry on each page, give the entire N-number and type of aircraft, as well as the complete date, year included," says Eiff. You also need to sign each logbook page, to verify correctness of those entries. Put the logbook pages on 8.5 x 11" paper, with the writing across the narrow way of the page.

## Are you current?

Just as you would prepare for a checkride, you need to be current. Be sure your medical is current and appropriate for that next rating you desire and that copies of *all* your certificates are included, not just the last one you received. For the airlines, a copy of your driver's license is required, along with your driving record, available from your state. Your pass/fail record from the FAA is required for the airline type ratings, too. If you plan to apply in December for a

type rating, get started right away on collecting those two pieces of required information. It takes several months for some states to get those driving records to you.

## Fill in the blanks

Your level of conscientiousness continues to show by how you complete any forms in the scholarship package. On the application, as with all forms, fill out all blanks *legibly*. When you leave them totally blank, the readers wonder whether you forgot or missed the blank, or if it was intentionally left blank. Mention only one company's name at the top of your application, and copy the blank form before you fill it in. Then make the required copies after you have separately filled in each application.

If a sponsor knows you have applied for another scholarship you are less likely to receive their scholarship because they will know you also have a chance with their competitor. If you are chosen by two sponsors for type ratings you will be asked to choose the one you most desire. The sponsors also want to spread the ratings to reach as many WAI members as possible. The other sponsor will then go down their list to their next choice of applicants. "This has happened on several occasions with the air-

lines," says Eiff. "I have been able to intervene, and the scholarship winners have had their ultimate dreams fulfilled."

## Writing the essay

The essay is your opportunity to give the sponsors a feel for your personality. Address the guidelines and question given for the essay. Be original! Too many essays start out with: "I always wanted to fly..." Let your recommendation letter writers fill in the blanks. "That is why one of the reference letters should be from a longtime friend," says Eiff. "That person can describe your struggles and how as a child you yearned for the sky, or you took everything you found apart to see how it worked." Here are some ideas to get you started:

- *My attraction to the industry began when...*
- *I always wanted to receive training from....*

There is no need to reiterate what the resume or recommendation letters have already addressed. But you must address each of the guidelines somewhere within your package. See the WAI web site ([www.wai.org](http://www.wai.org)), and then click on "scholarships," then on "guidelines" to see the complete list of what to cover. This is what you are graded on. Things



*CAE Simuflite has been sponsoring scholarships at the International Women in Aviation Conference for many years. In 2003, Donna Poling, Human Resources Manager for CAE, Inc. (left) presented a Maintenance Training scholarship to Nicole Cagnolatti of Long Beach, California. The training awarded was Citation maintenance initial training, a 10-day course with 60 hours of instruction.*

like financial need, achievements, or service to the community are weighted differently for each scholarship and then scored using a point system. Cover all issues requested. “Tell us what makes you unique and why you should be our winning entrant,” says Eiff.

don’t need to send the letters of recommendation separately. Many people have the person who is doing the letter send it directly to us. Also, it is the applicant’s responsibility to make sure that all of the paperwork is in. We get people who thought that the person sent their letter

mended. Tape the envelope after sealing and tape over the address label with long strips of clear tape. Only one package is needed even if you’re applying for multiple scholarships. Many applicants put each scholarship in a separate envelope, then put the two envelopes in another larger envelope. “Put the shipping address on each of the inner envelopes, in case the outer envelope should become opened or burst, which happened this year,” recommends Eiff.



*Delta Air Lines sponsored Engineering, Maintenance and Business Management scholarships in 2003. Jerry Bemis (far right), VP of Line Maintenance Operations and Captain Bud Sittig (far left), awarded the scholarships (left to right) to Kelly Atkinson of Alexandria, Virginia—Engineering; Paula Sasser of St.Louis, Missouri—Management; and Marla Crossley of San Diego, California—Maintenance.*

## Assembling the final product

Put the papers in the order given, as noted above. “If the documents are presented in a manner in which things are easy to find, it makes it so much quicker to process them,” notes Tahereh Behbehani, who processes the scholarships at headquarters. Be sure all pages are exactly the same size. Put the original application and all the original copies of your recommendation letters in one set and label it “Originals,” then put it on top of the set for that sponsor. Staple the sets of paperwork for each scholarship you are applying for. Many people are still sending five sets, and want two scholarships. “I must keep one complete set for each sponsor and send 4 sets to each of the scholarship sponsors,” says Eiff. “The sponsors have from 4 to 8 readers who help choose the winners, so we need to give them enough copies of your applications.”

Another tip from Behbehani: “You

of recommendation in, but that person never did.”

Sealed reference letters concern some applicants. Even if your reference letter writers don’t want you to see their letter of recommendation, open the letter and copy it. If they insist on sending the original directly to the scholarship committee, ask for 10 sealed copies to include in your packet, or find a different letter writer. “I spent more than 20 hours this year copying reference letters because they were either sent separately or late, or were sealed and never copied,” recalls Eiff. “You may need to push your letter writers to get the letters to you before the shipping deadline. Tell them you need their letter 10 days *before* you mail the package.”

## Ship on time

Be sure your package is postmarked on or before the last stated day for shipping. There is no need for special handling, but good packaging is highly recom-

## After shipping

“Do not call and ask if your package arrived,” asks Eiff. “With more than 600 applications arriving in December, we will not be able to tell you if your package arrived for about a month or longer. It takes that long to get through all the applications, make sure all the paperwork is present, and enter the names into the computer.”

Behbehani adds, “If an applicant would like to know if her package has arrived, send it UPS or FedEx and note the tracking number, or send it certified mail. We have a number of people who do that already.”

If you have questions before or after shipping, the committee is happy to attempt to answer them, but please limit your calls. If you need special consideration, please ask, “but try to get everything assembled well in advance of the deadline so if Aunt Jane gets ill, you already have your application ready to send,” says Eiff. “We are not insensitive, uncaring people and we realize that sometimes, special circumstances are unavoidable, but do try to assemble everything well in advance.”

Unfortunate situations have happened, says Eiff. “We have been offered bribes and services. No, thank you! That is just not appropriate behavior for applicants.”

Eiff concludes, “This is a volunteer position we do as a member of the Scholarship Committee for WAI. Thanks to all the applicants for making the job as easy as possible for us by following the instructions given with the application for a scholarship.

“We do hope to be able to call you to the stage to receive an award next year!”

