Topping Scholarship Application Instructions
University of Southern California

Online Application Deadlines:
See dates @ www.usc.edu/ntsaf

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 40 years of tradition and demonstrated commitment to the support USC students. 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 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,

Christina L. Yokoyama
NTSAF Director

Felipe Martinez
NTSAF Associate Director

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NTSAF APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

HOW TO SUBMIT THE APPLICATION
Applications must be completed and submitted via our online process only: www.usc.edu.ntsa

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 eligible semesters of scholarship.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS
To be eligible for scholarship consideration, candidates must:
- Apply for USC fall admission (in the same year as the Topping Scholarship deadline) as a freshman, transfer or graduate student,
- Have high financial need (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 – This section requires demographic information, educational history, volunteer efforts, 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 contact information (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.

You must type your autobiography directly in the space provided in the online application.

It is recommended that you type your autobiography in a Word document, then copy and paste it into the online application. Please use the Times New Roman font with a minimum font size of 11-point; 1500 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.
- Do not use special characters (#, $, &) as the system will give you an error message when you try to submit your application.

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

See applicable dates at www.usc.edu/ntsaf

SPECIAL APPLICATION NOTES
- The Norman Topping Student Aid Fund online scholarship application freshman and transfer & graduate deadlines are posted at www.usc.edu/ntsaf.
- The complete application (including signed application, autobiography, and two letters of recommendation) must be submitted online by the appropriate deadline. Incomplete applications 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 entering cohort are required to attend the NTSAF Welcome Breakfast and Topping Scholar Retreat or forfeit their scholarship eligibility.
- Selected scholars are eligible for the Topping Scholarship either as an undergraduate OR 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  
Online application available at www.usc.edu/ntsaf

February  
Freshman Applicant deadline (11:59pm PST)

March  
Application processing

April  
Freshman Finalist interviews (usually first Saturday in April)  
Applicants selected for interviews will be notified last week of March

April  
Selection of Freshmen Topping Scholars (usually second week in April)  
Notifications for Freshman Scholars (usually by third week in April)

May 1  
Freshmen Commitment Deadline to USC & USC NTSAF

TRANSFER & GRADUATE SELECTION TIMELINE

May  
Transfer & Graduate Applicant deadline (11:59pm PST)

June/July  
Application processing

Late July  
Transfer & Graduate finalist interviews

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

NTSAF REQUIRED EVENTS FOR SELECTED SCHOLARS

Early August  
New Scholar Welcome Breakfast (two Saturdays before USC Move-in Day)

Mid August  
Topping Scholar Retreat (Fri-Sun before USC Move-in Day)