

Thank You Letter Guidelines for Scholarship and Award Recipients in the College of Information Sciences and Technology

A donor who provides a scholarship does so to give meaningful help to students. Your scholarship or award is a gift from a person, persons, or group (identified as “donor” in this document). The donor usually learns of the impact of the gift through a thank you letter from the individual who has benefited from this generosity.

Before you write your thank you letter, review the following three questions that many donors ask; then consider the guiding questions to shape your response.

DONOR QUESTIONS	GUIDING QUESTIONS
<p>How has my support made a difference?</p> <p><i>Tell the donor about the specific ways in which their support has helped you reach your professional and educational goals.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did the scholarship allow you to take advantage of an internship or co-op, study abroad, or join a volunteer organization? • Did the support help you or your family deal with difficult financial burdens? • If you received aid because of outstanding grades, how did you feel to see your efforts rewarded? • Did the award help validate your course of study? If so, how? • Did the award help you redefine your goals and move you into a new career path? • Did the scholarship provide you with the ability to be successful in some way, even if the scholarship was used to fully or only partially pay for tuition expenses?
<p>Who have I helped?</p> <p><i>Tell the donor about you as a person.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are your goals, short term, long term, or both? • What are your interests outside of the classroom? • Where are you from? • Why was Penn State important to you, and how did coming here influence your life?
<p>What are your plans after graduation?</p> <p><i>Tell the donor about the impact of their gift today and as you see it potentially affecting your future.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you starting a job, going to graduate school, or volunteering? • Are you traveling, moving to a specific place, or starting a family? • Did the support given by the donor allow you to experience things that changed or helped shape your plans? • Even if you are not graduating this year, how are your future career plans being shaped now because of the financial assistance of the donor?

Additional Suggestions:

- 1. Do not begin your letter with the salutation, “Dear donor” or “Dear benefactor” or anything similar.** The donor is a real person. If you do not know their name, refer to your notification letter or e-mail, or send an e-mail inquiry to scholarships@ist.psu.edu.
- 2. Do not address the individual by his/her first name unless you have met him/her and he/she has specifically indicated that you should do so.** In many cases, the individual who has helped your academic career will be much older than you, and may have different ideas about what sort of address is socially appropriate.
- 3. Be respectful.** Address the individual with Dr. or Ms. or Mr. or Mrs., as appropriate.
- 4. Do not state the obvious,** such as *“My name is Bob Smith and I am a student at Penn State.”*

Final Thoughts:

A scholarship is a financial arrangement. As such, a letter is the proper mode for communication. Take time to think about the tone and content of your letter. Make sure its language is suited to the task, and that you remember, first and foremost, that the donor has given to the College of Information Sciences and Technology so that they may help students like you. They are interested in hearing from you and hope that their aid will help you to succeed.