



# Topping Scholarship Application Instructions University of Southern California

**Online Application Deadlines:  
See dates @ [www.usc.edu/ntsaf](http://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 45 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](mailto:ntsaf@usc.edu) for any reason. We are happy to assist you throughout this process!

Sincerely,

Dr. Trista Beard  
NTSAF Associate Director

## CONTENTS (Application Instructions)

---

- How to Submit the Application
- Topping Scholarship Award & Requirements
- Eligibility Requirements
- Selection Criteria
- Application Preparation  
(application, letters of recommendation, autobiography)
- Application Deadlines
- Special Application Notes

# NTSAF APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

---

## HOW TO SUBMIT THE APPLICATION

Applications must be completed and submitted via our online process only: [www.usc.edu.ntsaf](http://www.usc.edu.ntsaf)

## 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 award is based on the individual's USC financial aid package. The undergraduate award is a maximum of \$5,500 per academic year. The maximum graduate award is \$10,000 per academic year. 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, full attendance at all NTSAF required events, and completion of 20 hours of community service per semester. 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.

The following checklist provides specific questions to help determine your eligibility for the Topping Scholarship:

- Are you applying for USC admission for Fall 2019 as a full-time freshman, transfer, or graduate student?  
**OR** Are you a USC Spring 2019 admit?
- Do you have high financial need (Expected Family Contribution of less than \$20,000) and eligible for federal, state, and/or university funding including:
  - Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (SEOG)
  - Pell Grant
  - Work-study
  - Cal Grant (including the California Dream Act)
  - University (USC) Grant
- Do you demonstrate community awareness and contribute to the betterment of a community through volunteer efforts?

## 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 recommendation letter should address the selection criteria noted on **Page 2** of this instructions packet.

**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:**

- Summary of your personal background and circumstances.
- Description of your community awareness and your commitment to community involvement.
- 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](http://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](http://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](http://www.usc.edu/ntsaf)).

## **NTSAF SELECTION CALENDAR**

### **FRESHMAN SELECTION TIMELINE**

- December Online application available at [www.usc.edu/ntsaf](http://www.usc.edu/ntsaf)
- March 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**

- June Transfer & Graduate Applicant deadline (11:59pm PST)
- June/July Application processing
- Mid-July Transfer & Graduate finalist interviews
- Late July 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)