Criteria	Exceptional (3 points)	Good (2 points)	Emerging (1 point)	Not Present (0 pts.)
Letters of Recommendation: Service (8%)	Letters provide compelling and detailed evidence of the applicant's exceptional collegiate leadership and service contributions. Includes specific, relevant examples that highlight the applicant's unique service activities and impact at the collegiate level.	Letters provide positive evidence of the applicant's service contributions. Contains some specific details relevant to the applicant's service but may lack depth or exceptional examples.	Letters provide general or insufficient evidence of the applicant's service contributions. Lacks specific examples and detail, offering only vague or minimal support.	

Criteria	Exceptional (3 points)	Good (2 points)	Emerging (1 point)	Not Present (0 pts.)
Letters of Recommendation: Advocacy (8%)	Letters provide compelling and detailed evidence of the applicant's strong advocacy efforts in higher education contexts. Includes specific, relevant examples that highlight the applicant's leadership and impact in advocacy at the collegiate level.	Letters provide positive evidence of the applicant's advocacy efforts. Contains some specific details relevant to the applicant's advocacy but may lack depth or exceptional examples.	Letters provide general or insufficient evidence of the applicant's advocacy efforts. Lacks specific examples and detail, offering only vague or minimal support.	

Criteria	Exceptional (3 points)	Good (2 points)	Emerging (1 point)	Not Present (0 pts.)
Letters of Recommendation: Personal Character (8%)	Letters provide compelling and detailed evidence of the applicant's outstanding personal character and professional growth in the higher education setting. Includes specific, relevant examples that highlight the applicant's integrity, empathy, and other strong personal traits.	Letters provide positive evidence of the applicant's personal character. Contains some specific details relevant to the applicant's character but may lack depth or exceptional examples.	Letters provide general or insufficient evidence of the applicant's personal character. Lacks specific examples and detail, offering only vague or minimal support.	

Criteria	Exceptional (3 points)	Good (2 points)	Emerging (1 point)	Not Present (0 pts.)
Essay: Relevance to Prompt (12%)	The response fully addresses all aspects of the prompt with precision. Examples and details are highly relevant and contribute significantly to enhancing the reader's understanding. No extraneous information is present.	The response adequately addresses most aspects of the prompt. Examples and details are generally relevant, though some may be less directly connected to the core of the prompt. Some minor irrelevant information may be included.	The response only partially addresses the prompt and lacks focus. Examples and details are irrelevant, and there is extraneous information.	

Criteria	Exceptional (3 points)	Good (2 points)	Emerging (1 point)	Not Present (0 pts.)
Essay: Self-Reflection (12%) *Prompt: "Discuss how college experiences (academic, leadership, internships, service) have shaped your development since receiving your scholarship award. Please provide a reflection on maturity, resilience, and adapting to college-level challenges.*	Provides a profound and insightful self-reflection how college experiences (academic, leadership, internships, service) have shaped their development since their scholarship award. Personal insights and lessons learned are articulated with depth, showing a strong understanding of the topic and a capacity for critical thought and self-awareness.	Self-reflection shows thoughtful consideration and some depth. Personal insights and lessons learned are present but may not be as deeply explored or articulated as they could be. There is evidence of critical thinking, though it may not be consistent throughout.	Self-reflection is superficial, showing limited insight into experiences or plans. Personal insights and lessons are poorly articulated, demonstrating little critical thought or self-awareness.	

Criteria	Exceptional (3 points)	Good (2 points)	Emerging (1 point)	Not Present (0 pts.)
Essay: Impact and Outcomes (12%) *Prompt: "Reflect on the impact your actions have had on others or your community. Share examples of tangible outcomes achieved in a collegiate environment and changes that resulted from your leadership and collaborative efforts."*	Demonstrates a clear and compelling impact on both the individual and the collegiate community. Outcomes of actions or contributions are thoroughly described and supported with strong evidence, illustrating significant, sustained change or achievement.	Shows a clear impact on the individual and/or community, with some evidence of the effects of actions or contributions. Descriptions of outcomes are present but may lack the depth or detail needed to fully illustrate their significance.	Impact on the individual or community is unclear or minimal. Descriptions of outcomes are vague, unsupported by evidence, and fail to demonstrate any meaningful change or achievement.	

Criteria	Exceptional (3 points)	Good (2 points)	Emerging (1 point)	Not Present (0 pts.)
Essay: Future Goals (12%) *Prompt: "How have your academic or career goals evolved? How will the scholarship continue to support persistence, graduation, or next-level professional plans (grad school, career readiness)?* *Discuss how you plan to continue leading, serving, and supporting others in the LGBTQIA+ community at the college or professional level*	The essay presents clear, specific, and realistic future academic or career goals. It thoroughly explains how the OPALGA+ Scholarship will directly aid in achieving these goals. Additionally, the applicant offers a strong, detailed plan for continuing leadership, service, and support within the LGBTQIA+ community. The goals are deeply reflective of personal passion and commitment.	The essay presents academic or career goals that are somewhat specific and realistic. It explains how the OPALGA+ Scholarship will help but may lack detail or depth. The plan for involvement in the LGBTQIA+ community is present but could be further developed.	The essay offers vague or underdeveloped future goals. The connection between the OPALGA+ Scholarship and the applicant's goals is weak or unclear. The plan for leadership and support within the LGBTQIA+ community is minimal or lacks detail.	

Criteria	Exceptional (3 points)	Good (2 points)	Emerging (1 point)	Not Present (0 pts.)
Essay: Specificity and Detail (12%) *Prompt: "Use specific examples and detailed descriptions to illustrate your narrative."*	Uses specific examples and detailed descriptions effectively to support points. The level of detail adds depth and richness to the response, making it highly compelling.	Provides some specific examples and descriptions to support points. There may be occasional gaps in the level of detail or specificity.	Examples and descriptions are vague or lacking in detail. There is little to no engagement or depth in the response.	

Criteria	Exceptional (3 points)	Good (2 points)	Emerging (1 point)	Not Present (0 pts.)
Essay: Organization/Language/Tone (3%)	The response is exceptionally well-organized and logically structured, with a seamless flow of ideas. Each point builds on the previous one, creating a cohesive and easy-to-follow narrative. Language is clear, precise, and enhances the reader's understanding. The voice is confident and authoritative, and the tone is appropriate for the audience and purpose.	The response is generally well-organized, with a logical structure that allows for understanding. Most ideas are clearly expressed, though some areas may need refinement for better coherence or smoother transitions. Language is clear but may occasionally lack precision or sophistication. The voice is generally consistent, and the tone is suitable but may fluctuate at times.	The response lacks clear organization and logical structure, making it difficult to follow. Ideas are poorly expressed and lack coherence, with jumbled or disconnected thoughts. Language is unclear or imprecise, hindering the reader's understanding. The voice is inconsistent, and the tone is inappropriate or shifts inappropriately for the intended audience and purpose.	

Criteria	Exceptional (3 points)	Good (2 points)	Emerging (1 point)	Not Present (0 pts.)
Essay: Spelling/Grammar/Punctuation (3%)	The response is free of spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors.	The response contains a few minor spelling, grammar, or punctuation errors that do not significantly interfere with meaning.	The response contains frequent spelling, grammar, or punctuation errors that interfere with meaning.	

Criteria	Exceptional (3 points)	Good (2 points)	Emerging (1 point)	Not Present (0 pts.)
Special Circumstances and Significant Hardships (10%) *Prompt: "OPTIONAL: Please provide a detailed response addressing any special circumstances or significant hardships you have faced or overcome. We are interested in learning about your unique experiences, including but not limited to:* ● *Significant hardships or obstacles you have encountered, including family/financial hardships* ● *Difficult emotions or personal challenges you have navigated* ● *Challenging coming-out stories or experiences related to your identity* ● *Transition challenges (first-generation college navigation, adjusting to campus culture, financial independence).* ● *Experiences of bias/discrimination on campus.* ● *Balancing academics with work, caregiving, or activism.* *Your response should give us insight into how these experiences have shaped your personal growth, resilience, and future aspirations. Feel free to share specific examples or anecdotes that illustrate your journey. Your honesty and openness will help us understand your background and the strength of character you bring to our scholarship program."*	Applicant has faced and overcome significant special circumstances. Clearly connects past experiences to future aspirations, demonstrating how hardships have shaped goals and character.	Applicant has faced and overcome some special circumstances. Connects past experiences to future aspirations, though the narrative may lack depth or conviction in places.	Applicant has faced minimal special circumstances. Attempts to connect experiences to aspirations, but the link is weak or unclear.	