BRAINSTORM WORKSHEET

- Write ideas in note form, NOT full sentences
- Don’t self-edit yet--just write everything that comes to mind
- This is NOT your actual essay! Don’t agonize over it.

GCC Foundation Scholarship personal statement prompt:

All scholarships require submission of a 250-500 word personal, biographical statement.

- Your personal statement is vital to helping our selection committees select recipients because it allows them to learn more about you than just your grades, activities, and achievements. Your statement is your moment to shine, show your personality, share your goals and passions and compel our reviewers. We encourage you to take care in creating your statement, as it is your chance to “stand out” from other applicants. Your personal statement should address the following:
  - Tell us about who you are and what has shaped you
  - Skills, interests, personal qualities, motivations, formative experiences or identities
  - Tell us about your experience at GCC: your major, a class or extracurricular involvement that sparked something for you, meaningful encounters with faculty/staff/peers, personal growth
  - Tell us about your future goals—life, work, and educational
  - Your larger purpose, interests, hopes and dreams, motivations, curiosities (we know these may change in the future—you’re not writing a contract!)

What are five adjectives that describe your personal qualities?

What are two or three specific things you’re good at?
What are two or three things that are really important to you? (Could be people, values, goals, activities, places, objects)

What’s your major? Why did you choose it?

Describe one or two specific moments from your college experience. Possible ideas: your decision to come to GCC, your first day of class, a time when a professor blew your mind, something you learned from a classmate, a time you were nervous or unsure of yourself but moved forward anyway.
Read through what you just wrote in the last box. Think about details you can add to make your reader feel like they’re right there with you. How did each of your five senses feel in the moment you described?

What did you see?

What did you hear?

What did you feel physically?

What did you smell or taste?

For the following questions, keep in mind that it’s ok to write about goals you’re still deciding about--nobody will come after you if your plans change!

What do you hope your immediate next step will be after GCC? Be specific--if you plan to transfer, what school might you apply to and what might you study there? If you plan to work, what specific jobs might you pursue?

What certificates or degrees do you plan to obtain in the long-term?

What kind of job/career do you hope to have in 5 years...10 years...20 years? Why?
What are your long-term life goals? Examples of ideas to expand on: earn enough money to support yourself and/or family; be an example to your child; be able to travel; use your skills in a certain way; pursue a certain hobby or project.

What is something you are looking forward to learning at GCC (or another school in the future), or a skill you hope to develop?

How do you plan to ‘give back’ to your community in the future? Think short-term (the GCC community, the area where you live now) and long-term (how your education and work might give you skills to contribute to your future work, school, local, or global communities).

Is there anything you haven’t written about already that makes you stand out as a student at GCC? This could be a barrier you faced in coming back to school or a part of your identity (ex: older student, immigrant, will be the first in your family to graduate from college), a defining experience you’ve had (ex: got GED/Hi-SET, military experience, parenting), or an activity/passion of yours (ex: started a science club, volunteered for Big Brothers/Big Sisters, avid mountain-biker).
Now that you have filled this out, use it as a resource to draw from as you outline and draft your essay.

EXAMPLE OF ESSAY STRUCTURE

**Introduction/Paragraph #1:** Grab the reader’s attention with an interesting first few lines. Tell your story: describe a moment which conveys something important you want the reader to know about you. This paragraph might be separate, or you might decide to merge it with the next one.

**Paragraph #2:** Write about your past and your present. What brought you to this moment in your educational path? This might be a time to write about a barrier you faced or something that makes you stand out (if you didn’t mention it in paragraph #1), and you should **definitely** mention your experience thus far at GCC.

**Paragraph #3:** Write about your future. What are your life/work/educational goals and how does GCC fit into them? How will the education this scholarship will contribute to enable you to give back or pay it forward to the world in some way, whether now or in the future?

**Conclusion:** Leave a lasting impression. Like the introduction, the conclusion might be separate or merged with the previous paragraph. You may want to tie your conclusion in with the story/moment you described in the intro, and you’ll definitely want to express thanks to the reader for considering you for this award.

**WRITING TIPS**

- Don’t waste hours writing pages and pages, but in general don’t worry too much about the word limit during your initial draft--it’s usually much easier to edit down than add more during your revision process.

- Revising and proofreading are different activities! Focus on organization, meaning, and wording when you revise. Focus on spelling and grammar when you proofread. Don’t waste time proofreading until you’ve finished revising.

- If you’re stuck on the intro, try skipping it for the moment and coming back to it later--sometimes writing the body of the essay will help you figure out how you want to start.

- This is only one EXAMPLE of a possible way of organizing your essay...if another way makes more sense to you, go for it! Just make sure each paragraph has a clear purpose.