

**Rural Discovery Scholars
Scholarship Application Personal Statement**

ESSAY PROMPTS

- 1. What three experiences or activities have helped you explore your desire to study and possibly pursue a career in biochemistry, biology, chemistry, environmental science, materials science, or molecular biology? (100 – 200 words)**

This question may initially seem like it's calling for an in-depth response, but you don't have much space to expand on your experiences here; at best, you'll be able to fit three short paragraphs. You can squeeze extra information into this essay by referencing a topic that you've written about in more depth elsewhere – for example, if you wrote about a research or volunteer experience for your Common Application essay, you don't need to spend a full paragraph rehashing it here.

- 2. Interest in science manifests itself in many forms. For example, some people explore their interest in science by using natural compounds to dye fabric, record seed preferences of birds at backyard feeders, experiment with the chemistry of cooking and baking, or study family pedigrees for patterns of gene expression. Describe how you express your interest, curiosity, or excitement about science. (100 – 200 words)**

Don't feel pressured to get too creative with your response; a predictable answer about your first science fair project is better than a confusing reference to a modern art gallery, unless you can do a great job of clearly connecting said experience to your interest in science. Pay attention to the word "explore" in the prompt – try to stick to experiences in which you were an active participant, rather than just a passive receiver. For example, participating in a hands-on summer camp is much more relevant to this prompt than attending a public lecture.

- 3. Scientific exploration clearly excites you. What are your expectations for your time at Westminster? How do you believe Westminster will help you meet your goals? (100 – 200 words)**

This is a traditional "Why School?" essay. The first step in this essay is to outline your goals, ideally a mix of career and academic ones. Then you need to do some research on Westminster's major programs, academic focused extracurricular activities, and opportunities for learning. If you do discuss research opportunities, try to be specific (ideally individual projects). Referring to individual classes can be effective, but try to also discuss the intrinsic motivations you have for taking them.

- 4. In a rural setting, Westminster students find creative ways to have fun on campus. Please describe an unusual way in which you have fun. (100 – 200 words)**

To answer this question, you should look towards your hobbies or your intellectual passions in order to find something unusual. However, you shouldn't feel pressured to try to find some sort of "unique" way that you have fun; it just needs to be unusual. Even if you don't collect stamps or explore abandoned factories, you can still point to the fact that reading biology papers in your spare time is an unusual way of having fun. Because the prompt asks for something "unusual," you should probably avoid conventional pastimes such as playing or watching sports (unless in the latter case, it is a sport that is not popular, such as curling), watching television or movies, reading books, and the like. Otherwise, pretty much any pastime is fair game.