



*American Council
for Polish Culture*

www.polishcultureacpc.org

PETER J. OBST - MEMBER, PULASKI SCHOLARSHIP COMMITTEE

Greetings,

As the only member of the Pulaski Scholarship Committee who is also a past recipient of the scholarship, I feel uniquely qualified to offer some advice to those who choose to apply. Every year we receive anywhere from 15 to 28 applications. Each applicant has something to offer and it is a pity that we only have a limited amount of money to disburse each year. This situation reminds me of the Star Trek original series episode where an advanced alien race is able to save only one population from among three doomed planets. Because of limited resources they are tasked to put their intended beneficiaries to the test. Though ours is a much more of a down-to-earth situation, the committee knows full well that receiving the scholarship can give a significant boost to the career advancement and life of the recipients.

From the materials we receive, we the committee, need to learn about the applicants and discern who are the best qualified as candidates to receive our support. Poring over the applications is a chore in which we invest many hours in an effort to be fair and impartial, and to make the best choices.

That is why, the applications should be well organized and complete. The advice below is to help you put together a package which will represent you well.

It is not a good idea to put the items into a “presentation binder.” If such is required the application may be too large. It’s best to use a large paper clip or a spring clamp to hold everything together. Sub-sections may be stapled together. You may want to place the package in a standard file folder before placing it into a manila or other kind of large-size envelope.

It is strongly recommended that you start work on putting this application together well ahead of the deadline and mail it out so that it is postmarked before the deadline date. The committee receiving a FedEx envelope postmarked on the last day (or day after – yes, it has happened) does not speak well as to the applicant’s state of diligence. Envelopes postmarked after the deadline will be rejected (this too has happened). The chairman does not give

“extensions.” Contact with the Chairman should be limited strictly to questions about the scholarship application procedure or technical aspects only.

When you send out the packet do NOT use the “recipient’s signature required” option – that is, don’t make us go to the post office. If you feel the need to have confirmation for delivery, use another option. In general the USPS (and other delivery services) are consistently reliable.

I suggest that you preface the package with a **cover letter** addressed to “Pulaski Scholarship Committee Chairman and Members.” It is not necessary to produce an individually addressed letter for each member. After a brief salutation/introduction this letter should address the specific individual items that comprise the application. These required items (see the requirements: Application, Section II) may be organized as follows:

1. Polish Descent (one of the following must apply, otherwise don’t bother with the application) **(II, A, a)**

- a. if you are Polish-born and a not a citizen of the USA, but a permanent resident thereof, attach a copy of the document granting you residency
- b. if you are a naturalized US Citizen and have a United States Passport attach a copy of the picture page (this has all the necessary information).
- c. if you are a naturalized US Citizen and do not have a United States Passport, list the number of your Naturalization Certificate, the place where and date when it was granted (do not copy the certificate if it bears a warning against copying) and attach a copy of the travel document which gave you entry to the USA (Polish passport with appropriate visa is good)
- d. if you were born in the United States of Polish ancestry, give a short description of your line of descent from your nearest Polish immigrant ancestor. If (for instance) that person happened to be your great-grandmother, then the information should be in the form suggested below (supply any details and dates you may consider important). At the very least you should supply the date of arrival in the United States and that person’s place of origin in Poland.

A typical example of the ancestry statement:

*I trace my Polish roots to my great-grandmother
- Ewangelina Kowalska, trained as a nurse, emigrated to the United States in
1932, from Kielce, Poland; in the United States she married Angus O’Brien, a
physician, in 1938; their son (my grandfather)*

- James O'Brien (born in 1942) married Mary Smith and had a daughter Jane (my mother) born in 1970,
- Jane O'Brien married Arthur Montgomery (in 1995) and I, Arthur Montgomery Jr., was born on July 4, 1998.

You should also attach a copy of a document testifying to your ancestor's Polish origin. This could be any one of the following: passport, Polish id, naturalization document, birth/baptismal/marriage/death certificate, first communion certificate, ship's passenger manifest, US census listing, family bible record, steamship ticket, etc. If you have more than one document pick the one that best proves your ancestor's Polish origin. Keep it simple, the statement should be concise and accurate, there is no need to compile an exhaustive family history or elaborate family tree.

If your statement exceeds two paragraphs, you may want to attach it as a separate page.

FYI – If your ancestor emigrated to the United States after 1918 you are eligible to recover your Polish citizenship (it is legal to have dual-citizenship). If you had gone through this procedure you may attach a copy of your Polish citizenship certificate and dispense with the above ancestry statement.

2. Resume (II, A)

By this time in your career you should have a resume of at least one, possibly several, pages in length. Attach it as part of you application.

You must supply a **permanent contact address** (preferably your normal home address, not a dormitory or a temporary school residence address). Your telephone number, e-mail and date of birth should be included. If all these are not listed in your resume, supply them here.

3. Transcript (II, B)

We understand the costs and trouble involved in obtaining transcripts. I recommend the following, which is acceptable to the Chairman and committee.

At your school's registrar obtain an official copy of your transcript "for your own use." Attach the original to the Chairman's packet, send copies to the other committee members.

If you are currently taking **courses not listed** in the transcript, mention them here.

4. Extracurricular Activities (II, E)

Please tell us about any: community service, membership and activity in organizations (especially in the Polish community), research work, travel, outside courses, language studies, publications, projects, presentations, events, clubs,

people-to-people contact, charitable service, involvement with governmental and NGO organizations abroad, self-study courses, hobbies, training, internships, teaching assignments, accomplishments and awards, etc. List things that you consider significant in developing your life and career. Do you speak/read Polish? Have you spent time in Poland? If this section runs longer than two paragraphs attach it as a separate page. Don't forget the Letter of Recommendation for this section (see Item 7 below).

5. Career Goals (II, A, b)

Please tell us about your aspirations, what you will do with your advanced degree, what kind of work, research or scientific inquiry you intend to do in the near future. We understand that things have a way of changing and life sometimes gets in the way. Is there a scholarly project or additional study in your future? If this section exceeds two paragraphs you might want to attach it as a separate page.

6. Significance of the award (II, A, d)

Here is an opportunity to tell us about your economic situation, and how you intend to spend the award, should you receive it. Often students use this money to pay tuition and keep their student loan amount down. As the funds are not restricted, you may use them for any legitimate purpose in finishing your studies. In the past individuals have also used the funds for: a laptop computer and software for their writing and research, financing travel to study with a renowned scholar or to do research at an out-of-country institution, or even a demo recording for a musical dissertation.

7. Two Letters of Recommendation (II, C and II, E)

- a. **Faculty** – this could be from your dissertation/thesis coordinator or faculty member, someone familiar with your academic work
- b. **Extra Curricular** – written by a person who is familiar with your extracurricular work at the university or outside, or a person in a Polish community organization if you are involved in such.

If possible, obtain an unsealed letter of recommendation, attach the original to the chairman's packet, and copies for the other Pulaski Scholarship Committee Members.

If the writer of your letter of recommendation insists on giving you a sealed copy of the letter, obtain five sealed envelopes with the letter, signature on back as is customary, and attach one to each packet.

If the writer insists on mailing the recommendation letters separately to the Chairman and the Pulaski Scholarship Committee members – so be it, but it makes our work more difficult.

8. Work – Paper (II, D)

In this section of the requirements we are looking for a sample of your work, any of the items mentioned in the requirements under Research will work, depending on the stage of your advanced degree study. Try not to send long projects, presentations or papers - summaries or shorter articles that may have been published in scholarly literature are better. Even though members of the committee have advanced degrees, often we are faced with reading extremely technical papers outside of our field(s). This is where an outside evaluator's comments are valuable. Attach whenever possible.

9. Fee (II, F)

Attach a check or money order for \$25 (\$20 if you already are an ACPC member) to the packet sent to the Chairman only. The chairman will reject any application without the fee. I hope that if you are not familiar with our organization you will look us up at our website: www.polishcultureacpc.org and perhaps participate in some of our activities in the future.

That finishes my comments concerning the Application Items. When you put together your application try to include everything in one package. I wish you success. Unfortunately, we can't give every applicant a scholarship grant, if you do not make the cut I **strongly recommend** that, if next year you are still working toward your advanced degree, you should reapply. Only those who have received the scholarship are ineligible. Nothing in life is guaranteed, but those who keep trying succeed in one way or another.

Good luck!

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