Abigail Clark

Dr. Becky J. Smith Scholarship Application

Undergraduate Student Scholarship Essay

It is an immense honor to be applying for the Dr. Becky J. Smith Scholarship. Dr. Smith’s dedication and leadership in the field of health education and public health, both nationally and internationally, is exceptional. I aspire to become a leader in the field of health education and can only hope to be as influential and effective in my endeavors. My desire to work in the field of health, current academic achievements and financial status make me an excellent candidate for this scholarship.

As a student at SUNY Cortland, I have proven my dedication to health education by achieving the President’s Award multiple times and by making the Dean’s list almost every semester. My current grade point average is 3.78. Currently, in my senior year, I am working towards a degree in health education with a minor in psychology. In the Spring of 2022, I will be student teaching near my hometown. Within the next year, I plan to become a certified health educator and will start teaching skills-based adolescent health education in a public school district. In addition, I will continue my education by earning a master’s degree in a health-related field. In my first teaching position, I plan to create a school wellness committee and will work outside of the classroom to enrich the health and wellness of my school and community. Thanks to the professors I have had the pleasure to learn from and get to know at SUNY Cortland, I feel confident in my preparation and am excited to begin my career in the field of health education.

While I eagerly seek to graduate in the spring, I will soon be faced with the task of paying back my student loans. The Dr. Becky J. Smith scholarship would be immensely helpful in reducing the overall cost of my undergraduate degree. As the third child out of four, my parents were not able to contribute as much, financially, to my education as they would have liked. (However, I am still appreciative of their decision to have four children.) Finding a teaching position will not be easy, particularly in health education, as most school districts only have a few health teachers. Plan “B” will be to substitute teach to gain classroom experience and begin working on my master’s degree. More loans will seem daunting, but necessary, as I continue my educational path. To reduce this year’s loan amount, I am choosing to move home in the spring to student teach. This decision will also allow me to return to my job at Red Robin as a server and bartender to help pay for my college expenses. It is possible that I will continue working outside of education, and possibly in a public health position, until I secure a teaching position.

Fortunately for me, my desire to pursue a career in a health-related field started before I arrived at SUNY Cortland. I was selected in my senior year of high school to participate in the New Visions Honors Academy. This program offered me the opportunity to shadow various human services and education professionals throughout the school year. In addition, I traveled to an elementary school once a week to teach conflict management and resolution skills to elementary students. This experience helped me realize my passion for working with children and narrowed my broader goal of seeking a career in a health-related field to becoming a certified health teacher. While at SUNY Cortland, I have had the opportunity to attend various workshops, trainings, and events related to health education. I have participated in the Child Abuse Recognition and Reporting (CAR) workshop, School Violence Prevention and Intervention (SAV) workshop, Dignity for All Students Act (DASA) workshop, Green Dot Programs, One Love Workshop, Take Back the Night event, and a 21-Day Anti-Racism Challenge. I also had the opportunity to host a “tabling event” in the student life center for the Title IX office, in which I was able to gain more than fifty student pledges for the “It’s On Us” campaign. In addition, I am a member of the Eta Sigma Gamma Kappa Chapter at SUNY Cortland, which is a national health education and promotion honor society. Finally, I am observing fifty hours in a high school health education classroom and have had the opportunity to teach two mini lessons this semester. I feel so fortunate for the amazing opportunities and learning experiences I have had thus far. I plan to use this knowledge and these experiences to follow in Dr. Becky J. Smith’s footsteps and will continue her efforts to share information and invoke change in the fields of health education and public health.

Based on my accomplishments, my desire to learn, my goal of becoming a leader in the field of health education and my financial need, I am an excellent candidate for the Dr. Becky J. Smith scholarship. It is an incredible honor to be a candidate for this award and I am hopeful that you will select me. Regardless, I will do whatever it takes to achieve my goals and continue my journey, with the hope to one day leave behind such an incredible impact on students’ lives, health education, and public health.