



## Washington Journalism and Media Conference

Dear National Youth Correspondent,

Congratulations on your selection as a National Youth Correspondent to the Washington Journalism and Media Conference (WJMC). I look forward to welcoming you to George Mason University in the Washington, D.C. area this summer!

A significant number of our students fundraise in order to attend the Conference. Therefore, we have assembled this easy to use fundraising guide to assist you in your fundraising efforts. Included are useful tips and techniques that previous students have used to successfully raise funds – and that you can use as well to meet your fundraising goals.

I urge you to utilize the same dedication, commitment, leadership skills and creative thinking that made you an exceptional scholar, and earned you your nomination to attend the Washington Journalism and Media Conference. You will be amazed at how successful you can be and at the generosity of friends, family, and your community if you organize your plan and follow the simple steps outlined here.

Remember, fundraising can be exciting, personally and professionally rewarding, and successful with ingenuity, planning, hard work, and perseverance; all the qualities of a student leader like you. This experience will help you grow as an individual and will give you confidence to meet new challenges you may encounter in the future.

I sincerely hope this guide is helpful to you in your efforts and I look forward to meeting you this summer!

Sincerely,

Elena Johnson  
Program Director  
The Washington Journalism and Media Conference

Attending the Washington Journalism and Media Conference is an amazing experience, and is well worth the commitment of your time and resources. Many families fundraise to earn tuition to attend the conference. To be a successful fundraiser, you will need to be resourceful and organized. Dedicate your available free time, and plan your strategy in advance. This guide will help you be a more successful leader and will ultimately yield a tremendous sense of satisfaction when you reach your fundraising goals. Remember, start early, plan ahead and use *all* of your resources. Good luck and have fun!

**5 Steps to Successful Fundraising**

1. Set Your Goal
2. Identify Your Potential Sponsors
3. Personalize your Plan
4. Follow Up
5. Acknowledge and thank your Donors

**1. Set Your Goal**

The best place to begin your fundraising is to figure out exactly what you need. The easiest way to do this is to start with a budget. Use this sample worksheet to determine what funds you really need to raise. Think about what contributions you or your family will make and what financial assistance may come from your school, your church, your extended family, and your community.

**Budget Worksheet**

Your Conference Costs	
Conference Tuition	\$1995.00
Travel (airfare, train, etc.)	+
Incidentals (souvenirs, meals while traveling)	+
Total Conference Costs	=
Available Funds	
Your Savings	
Family contributions	+
Total Available Funds	=
Sponsorship Funds Needed	
Conference Costs	
Available Funds	-
Required Sponsorship Funds	=





### 3. Personalize your Plan

The most important part of any fundraising effort is to have a plan that works for *you*. Think about how you will approach the individuals and organizations. Take time to articulate your thoughts about why you want to attend WJMC and how hard you have worked to earn such a special recognition. You should put together information about yourself and the conference. Present this information to them so they see this as an opportunity to invest in *you*. Answer any questions they have. Included in this guide are **Sample Letters** and a **Sponsor Sheet** to use in your fundraising efforts.

#### A. Use Social Media Such as Facebook, Twitter, blog, or others

Using social media can be a great way to tell your family, friends, and community about your commitment to attend WJMC. Keep your friends updated on your progress as you go about asking businesses, community organizations, family, and friends for funds to attend the Conference. Share your excitement for WJMC and recognize those that have provided you with money or other gifts to get you to Washington, D.C. You can also report information from WJMC by checking out:

**Facebook:** <http://www.facebook.com/WJMC.Mason>

**Twitter:** [http://twitter.com/wjmc\\_gmu](http://twitter.com/wjmc_gmu)

**Blog:** <http://wjmc.mason.wordpress.com/>

**YouTube:** <http://www.youtube.com/user/Wjournalism>

**Flickr:** <https://www.flickr.com/photos/125637763@N04/sets/>

#### B. Sample Letter to Friends and Family

When soliciting family and friends you can call, email, send a letter or talk to them in person. They should be familiar with your academic achievements and often will be very supportive in helping you achieve your goal. Let them know how excited you are about the conference and tell them what an honor it is to be nominated as a National Youth Correspondent. Those who know you well will likely be receptive to rewarding your success. If you get regular “gifts” from family members on your birthday or holiday, consider asking that it be an “early gift” donated to support your conference attendance.

#### C. Sample Letter to Business/Organization

Your letter to businesses or organizations should be thoughtful, organized and concise. This could also be the start of a networking opportunity for future internships or job opportunities. Never underestimate the relationships you will build through fundraising. If possible, go in person to drop off your letter. You may have an opportunity to speak directly with the potential sponsor. Make sure you are poised and ready to talk about why this conference is so meaningful to you and what an honor it is to represent your state and school as a National Youth Correspondent. Dress professionally and take care with your appearance. Be prepared to give the following information:

- Description of the conference
- How you were nominated to attend
- Description of your academic achievements and career goals
- How much money you will need

## D. Sponsor Sheet

Get creative in your approach and add a note to Facebook or other social media sites. Add a link to <http://wjmc.gmu.edu> on your wall and spread the word about your achievement and your fundraising goals. Think about creating a Blog or web page to chronicle your journey to the conference and use it to keep sponsors up to date about your fundraising effort, and later, to share with them the highlights of your experience in D.C. We will also supply you with a press release to share with local media (newspaper, local TV, radio and school media) to get the word out about your nomination as a National Youth Correspondent and sponsorship opportunities. Press releases will be distributed to you via email.

### Tips for Speaking with Potential Sponsors

- ✓ Do your homework and target companies or business that have a reputation for supporting educational and community endeavors.
- ✓ Start with the places that you and your family frequent (local restaurants, salons, retail shops, neighborhood businesses)
- ✓ Dress Appropriately-remember you are asking them to make an investment in you!
- ✓ Practice your “intro” with friends and family-don’t forget to make eye contact when speaking with a potential donor.
- ✓ Create sponsorship levels for their donation (e.g. Bronze \$25, Silver \$50, Gold, \$100).
- ✓ Make your request clear and concise so they know exactly what you are asking for.
- ✓ Bring a copy of your acceptance letter, and information about yourself and the conference. Make several copies so you can leave one with each company you visit.
- ✓ Don’t give up and don’t get discouraged! Fundraising is hard, but rewarding work. There will be people who say, “No,” but don’t let them stop you from achieving your goal.

Also, don’t turn away any amount of sponsorship. In these economic times, many small donations can quickly add up to a large amount of support. Keep in mind that their donation is not tax-deductible and should not be represented as a tax deductible gift. Contributions made for a specific person do not qualify as tax deductible according to the rules of the Internal Revenue Services (IRS). **Sponsorship checks should be made out to you, the individual student and not Washington Journalism and Media Conference**

#### **4. Follow up**

If you are not able to make individual contact with a sponsor, make sure to follow up with a phone call or email in a few days. Reference the materials that were dropped off or mailed and ask if they need any additional information or have questions. Remind them that any donation amount is appreciated.

##### **Press Release**

Potential sponsors will want to know how they will benefit from making a donation. Let them know they will gain publicity when you reference their sponsorship in your press release. You may also mention their sponsorship if you have created a website or Blog for your conference journey. Offer to make a presentation about your experience when you return from the conference. Press releases will be distributed to you via email.

##### **Collecting Contributions to the Conference**

Inform any sponsors that all checks should be made payable to *you*, the individual, to support your conference registration and travel. Your final conference registration and tuition is due in full by **May 15**. Tuition is paid online by credit card.

##### **Send a Thank You Letter**

After receiving a donation, immediately follow up with a thank you letter. If you are able, give them an update on your fundraising status and, of course, thank them for their generous donation, no matter the amount. We have provided a sample thank you letter for you to personalize.

#### **5. Acknowledge and thank your Donors**

After you return from the Washington Journalism and Media Conference, make sure to share your experience as a National Youth Correspondent with your sponsors. Send another thank you note highlighting your time in Washington, D.C. and what you learned. Consider adding a picture of you in D.C. or uploading conference photos onto a shared photo site or update your Facebook or web page to inform your family, friends and donors what a difference they made helping you achieve your goal. Offer to do a presentation or slide show for any organization that is interested and encourage educators and mentors to consider nominating other deserving student leaders for the opportunity to attend a future WJMC.

By creating and implementing a successful fundraising campaign you are building leadership skills that will carry with you for the rest of your life. Sponsors will be impressed with your perseverance and follow-through. In turn, they will be more likely to sponsor other students in the future. Your dedication and hard work will pay off as you also pay it forward.

Best of luck in your fundraising efforts! We wish you much success and look forward to seeing you this summer.

## Sample Letter to Family/Friends

Date

Ms. Jane Smith  
100 South St.  
City, CA, 00000

Dear Jane,

I have been nominated as a National Youth Correspondent to attend the Washington Journalism and Media Conference this summer. This amazing opportunity will be held at George Mason University--US News and World Report ranked #1 school to watch. I was selected because of my excellent academic record and sincere interest in journalism and the media. I am extremely excited about this student leadership experience and traveling to Washington, D.C. However, the cost of the conference is more than my parents and I can contribute, so I am asking for your help.

The Washington Journalism and Media Conference is a once in a lifetime opportunity. As a National Youth Correspondent, I will be recognized as one of the most promising young leaders in journalism and will join others from across the country to share in this unique experience.

I will attend educational seminars, attend speeches by industry leaders and be challenged to work with my peers through simulations and group discussions. In addition to this amazing experience, I will also earn one college credit for my work. I will develop my leadership skills and gain a greater insight into the issues surrounding careers in journalism and the media. You can find more detailed information about the selection process and conference at [www.wjmc.gmu.edu](http://www.wjmc.gmu.edu).

My cost to attend the conference will be \$1995.00, not including my travel expenses. My parents' contribution plus funds I have already raised \$\_\_\_\_\_, but I still need to raise \$\_\_\_\_\_. I would greatly appreciate any amount that you might be able to give me. If you would like to sponsor me, please make the check out to (your name), as it will go directly to my travel and conference registration fund.

Thank you in advance for any support you can provide. I will call you soon to follow up.

Sincerely,

Joe



## Sample Letter to Business/Organization

Date

Ms. Jane Smith  
Vice President  
ABC Corporation  
100 South St.  
City, CA, 00000

Dear Ms. Smith,

I am a junior at (Name of your High School) here in (town/city I have been nominated as a National Youth Correspondent to attend the Washington Journalism and Media Conference this summer.. I was selected because of my excellent academic record and sincere interest in journalism and the media, and attending the program could help me decide on a college and a career. However, the tuition for the Conference is more than my parents and I can contribute, so I am writing to ask if you will sponsor me with a financial contribution.

The Washington Journalism and Media Conference is a once in a lifetime opportunity. The Conference will be held at George Mason University—US News and World Report ranked #1 school to watch. As a National Youth Correspondent, I will be recognized as one of the most promising young leaders in journalism and will join top students from across the country to share in this unique experience. I will take part in educational seminars, meet and interact with industry leaders and be challenged to work with my peers through simulations and group discussions. In addition to this amazing experience, I will also earn one college credit for my work. I will develop my leadership skills and gain a greater insight into the issues surrounding careers in journalism and the media.

My participation in this conference depends on whether I can raise \$\_\_\_\_\_ in sponsorships. The conference tuition is \$1995.00 and my travel to the conference will be \$\_\_\_\_\_. I will be investing all my resources to attend this conference and through my friends and family, I have already raised \$\_\_\_\_\_.

That leaves me with a balance \$\_\_\_\_\_, and I am hoping that (insert name of business or organization) will consider sponsoring me with some or all of these cost. I have also contacted (list other organizations you are soliciting) for their financial assistance. My tuition must be paid no later than May 15.

Thank you in advance for considering my request. I will contact you in the next few days to discuss the possibility of receiving your support. Please feel free to contact me (email and phone) if you have any questions. I look forward to talking with you.

Sincerely,

Mary Smith



**Sample Thank You Letter**

Ms. Jane Smith  
Vice President  
ABC Corporation  
100 South St.  
City, CA, 00000

Date

Dear Ms. Smith,

I sincerely thank you for your generous contribution which is making it possible for me to attend the Washington Journalism and Media Conference, held at George Mason University this summer. Upon my return, I would be honored to share the highlights of my experience and what I learned from this unique student leadership opportunity. (Or add a link to your personal webpage or Blog if you have created one).

Thank you again for making this amazing experience a reality for me.

Sincerely,

Mary Smith