A Step by Step Guide to the Udall Application

The best applications will reveal:

- **A Strong Commitment** - A deep passion for the environment, tribal policy, or Native health care is evident from the stated career goals, and through activities, service, academic pursuits, references, etc. Involvement in relevant campus or community activities is consistent and ongoing. The application gives insight into the student's motivation or the driving force behind her/his passion.

- **A Strong Character (the Udall Factor)** - leadership, service, and integrity. Application reveals a desire to make a difference and solve problems. Demonstrated leadership experience goes beyond sitting on a committee or planning an event to motivating others and producing results that benefit the campus or community. References attest to character and potential.

- **A Strong Trajectory** - The career goals, activities and service demonstrate that the student has begun to work towards a career that will allow him/her to make significant contributions to environmental issues, her/his tribe, tribes in general, or Native Americans in general through political or public service, community action, or scientific advances. The reader understands which issues related to the environment, tribal policy, or Native health care the student wants to work on, how they plan to do it, and is convinced that they will go on to use their degree to help Indian people or impact the environment.

**Evaluating the Application**
What follows is a brief overview of the application questions, ways to evaluate responses, common mistakes, and examples of effective responses.

**B. Your Aspirations**

1. **In one or two sentences, describe your career goal.**
   This is where the applicant should give you the big picture, and by setting broad yet realistic goals, show you the general direction their career will take.

2. **What are your professional aspirations? What issues, needs or problems do you hope to address? Indicate in which area(s) of the environment, or tribal public policy, or Native American health care you are considering making your career and specify how your academic program and your overall educational plans will assist you in achieving your goals.**
   This answer should provide more of a "roadmap" for reaching the goal stated in B1. The best career goal statements will articulate a clear path and set the tone for the rest of the application in the sense that the many of the activities, academics, service, research and leadership support this trajectory.

   - What issues or problems does the student want to address or solve? Why are they passionate about these specific issues or problems? What motivates them?
   - How does the student see themselves actually making an impact? What kind of education and career path will enable them to meet their goals?
   - Are they making progress down this path?
C. Your Schooling
This section is primarily comprised of lists of schools attended, courses taken, and awards/honors received. Academic achievement criteria are arranged in order of importance on the Rating Form. When reviewing transcripts, readers look for:

- An upward trending GPA
- Strong performance in courses required for major/in the stated field of interest
- Evidence of challenging coursework
- Courses that are appropriate to interests and career goals

Problems with schooling and transcripts:

- A history of withdrawals or incompletes
- Downward trending GPA
- Multiple schools attended

Applicants should address these issues by explaining the attendant circumstances (in Additional Information, for instance).

D. Your Programs and Activities
This section provides an overview for the reader: it tells the reader what kind of activities the student participates in; whether or not leadership roles have been assumed; the duration of the activity; and whether the student is well-rounded. The most significant activities that are listed in this section should be expanded on in the short essays. In particular, students should expand on an item from D1 or D3 in their short essay response to D7.

In general, readers look for:

- Some involvement in issues related to the student's career goals;
- Making things happen; creating opportunities, taking initiative
- Some consistency among activities, internships/jobs, and service that demonstrates a reflective and deliberate participation to gain certain kinds of experience

1. List any programs and activities in which you have participated on campus or in your community while in school (such as clubs, publications, debate, dramatics, music, art, student government...). Please list in descending order of significance.

When reviewing the list of college and high school activities, readers will note:

- Sustained commitment and participation, versus a day here and a day there
- An assumption of leadership roles and increasing responsibility within an organization
- For applicants in tribal policy or health care, participation in cultural and traditional activities
- Some variety, including sports, arts, etc. to indicate that the nominee is well-rounded
- High school activities (especially if they indicate an early involvement in environmental or Native American issues)
2. List internships, assistantships, and jobs (including summer employment) you have held in the past four years.
If the applicant hasn't participated in many campus or community activities/programs related to their interest in the environment or Native American issues, readers look here to see if the applicant has sought out opportunities in his/her area of interest and/or worked more than 15 hours a week to put him/herself through college.

3. List public service and community activities. Do not repeat items listed previously. Please list in descending order of significance.
Public and community service includes:

- Work for government at any level, paid or volunteer (city council, tribal youth court, firefighter, etc.)
- Education (mentoring Native youth, leading hikes in a nature preserve, teaching biology at a local school, etc.)
- Work for a non-profit or public interest group (state PIRGs, Sierra Club, NCAI Youth Commission, etc.)
- Cultural or Environmental preservation/restoration
- Health care, paid or volunteer (work in clinics/hospitals, HIS, shadowing physicians, etc.)
- Volunteering for campus community

4. Describe non-course-related research experience, if applicable. Indicate which areas of the environment, or tribal public policy, or health care your research affects, and the ways in which the experience will assist you in achieving your goals.
This question was added a few years ago to give applicants with heavy science backgrounds the chance to elaborate on their activities and goals. However, many students will describe non-scientific research. Regardless, we want students to explain:

- What role he or she took in the research
- Why the research was undertaken
- What was learned from the experience and/or the research itself

5. Describe a leadership experience in which you made a difference on campus or in your community.
The best answers will briefly describe the problem or situation, explain the student's role, and demonstrate the impact of the student's actions. Because there are many interpretations of what constitutes leadership, here are some qualities that a Udall Scholar should demonstrate:

- Motivates or inspires others to action
- Works with opposing groups to bring about consensus
- Identifies problems and implements solutions
- Takes initiative and seeks out opportunities

Leadership is Not (Only):

- Serving on a committee
- Organizing an event or raising awareness
- Mentoring or advising

In short, we're looking for leadership that goes above and beyond. Although committee work, event organizing, or mentoring can be part of a leadership experience, students should demonstrate that they made significant contributions, delegated responsibility and involved and inspired others.

**Examples of less effective leadership responses**

- I organized an environmental conference on my campus. It was hard work, and I did it all myself.
- Every month our Eco House hosts a vegan dinner to educate campus about eating sustainably, and I participate regularly.
- I'm the chair of our campus environmental organization. We show films and bring in speakers to raise awareness of climate change.
- I lead groups of students on wilderness trips. As leader, I make sure no one falls off the mountain or drowns in the river.

**An effective (and unique) leadership example**

Early in my NASA Space Grant Research Internship, my mentor asked me the question "how can we increase the education and participation of the Navajo Nation Dine College community in advancing the body of knowledge in basic and applied natural and social sciences with particular focus on natural resource protection?" Instantly I replied, "summer program!" As a former student of Dine College, I knew the obstacles students encountered when summer approached—the need for employment would equal or exceed the desire for research experience. I also knew that students would rather expand their education with hands-on training on issues important to the Navajo community than work at a local fast food chain. After helping Dine College faculty develop and advertise the program, I moved back to the Shiprock campus to manage it during the summer. I engaged fourteen students, all of whom were given the opportunity to analyze geographic, social, economic and biophysical aspects of land degradation through both physical measurements and local knowledge. I worked all summer with the "biophysical" team at the Shiprock campus, and we then trained the "socio-economic" team from Tsaile and Chinle campuses when we conducted fieldwork in Canyon de Chelly. At the end of the summer, the students were proud to present a completed, applied, participatory research project to the College and to local Chapters. The students were so confident in their new skills by the end of the summer that they volunteered to help conduct a field mapping training of 125 natural resource managers—and it was a huge success!

6. **Describe a specific activity or experience that has been important in clarifying or strengthening your commitment to the environment, or tribal public policy, or Native American health care.**

This question is intended to provide additional insight into the student's motivation or passion. The statement should reflect on what they learned from the experience and explain how the experience strengthened or clarified their commitment.
Examples of less effective responses

- I attended Power Shift. I met lots of students just like me, and it was very inspiring!
- I spent last semester in a developing country, and was shocked to see people living in garbage dumps. Now I want to help clean up the environment.
- When I was 12 years old I went camping. As I watched the sunset from a mountaintop, I knew I had to save the environment for future generations.

An effective (and unique) clarifying experience example
During my high school exchange year in Germany I spent two weeks in Calabria, Italy, participating in an international bird protection camp. In past years local sportsmen shot birds flying north from Africa to their breeding grounds in Europe, seriously threatening their survival. International treaties protecting these beautiful birds had been enacted, but despite police presence, we saw several honey buzzards shot by poachers. The grim reality facing policy makers hit me: just because powerful leaders in ritzy hotels sign treaties protecting the environment, doesn't mean that ecosystems are safe. I was enraged at the slaughter we had failed to prevent, but encouraged by our overall success and the potential of our international camaraderie. I asked myself, "how can we work internationally to protect our common resources? How can we make treaties more effective, and work better to implement them?" The experience and questions are still with me, driving both my studies and my career goals.

7. Describe briefly your most significant public service, community, or campus activities associated with your interests in the environment, or tribal public policy, or Native American health care in which you regularly participate. Explain the duration, degree, and significance of your involvement.
Applicants should expand on one significant community or campus activity. Readers look for substantive participation that shows the student assuming responsibility, taking initiative, and making an impact. The best answers will explain why the activity is important to the student. Common mistakes include:

- Listing several activities without conveying the extent or significance of time and effort involved
- Failing to distinguish the student's unique contributions within a group project

An effective (and unique) public service example
As a former student of Diné College, I knew the obstacles students encountered when summer approached—the need for employment would equal or exceed the desire for research experience. I also knew that students would rather expand their education with hands-on training on issues important to the Navajo community than work at a local fast food chain. So I designed a summer program to give students the opportunity to analyze geographic, social, economic and biophysical aspects of land degradation through both physical measurements and local knowledge. After helping Diné College faculty develop and advertise the program, I moved back to the Shiprock campus to manage it during the summer. I worked all summer with the "biophysical" team at the Shiprock campus, and we then trained the "socio-economic" team from Tsaile and Chinle campuses when we conducted fieldwork in Canyon de Chelly. At the end of the summer, the students were proud to present a completed, applied, participatory research
project to the College and to local Chapters. The students were so confident in their new skills by the end of the summer that they volunteered to help conduct a field mapping training of 125 natural resource managers—and it was a huge success!

8. What additional information do you wish to share with the Udall Scholarship review committee?
This is an opportunity for the applicant to explain a lower GPA, a lower level of involvement due to family obligations, a hardship they overcame, expand on their commitment, etc. Common mistakes include: leaving it blank, thanking the committee, focusing on financial need, or trying to explain the lack of courses, activities, or experience to support the nominee's "interest" in the environment, tribal policy, or Native health care.

Examples of less effective responses

- I met several Udall Scholars at COP15, and I really want to come to the Orientation.
- I'm the perfect candidate for this scholarship: I care about the environment, and like Mo Udall, I play basketball too!
- Thank you for reading my application; I really need the scholarship money.

Effective additional information example 1
The environmental initiative most dear to my heart, the Environmental Action Group's Notebook Project, deserves elaboration. After seeing a similar project in California, I wanted to start a venture that would make notebooks out of re-used paper and cereal boxes. With the help of numerous students, and seed funding from the Student Government, we created a system of collection and production that ultimately led to the sale of over 400 notebooks within a year. The project excites me tremendously: it is sensible, positive, and economically self-sustaining. The challenge now is to pass the program's administration to a younger student so that I will leave college knowing I helped to make a lasting environmental impact.

Effective additional information example 2
The period from 1997 to 2003—a transition: Having questioned my desire to study journalism, I spent most of a year on a motorcycle, riding with a gang of tradesmen and war veterans. My mechanical aptitude (dormant at the university) found expression with this group. I took up work as a furnace technician, eventually settling down at a small organic farm. As my oil-stained thumb turned from black to green, I applied myself to the systems of permaculture. A Midwestern drought inspired respect for water. I research, designed and constructed a grey-water irrigation system and composting toilet for the farm. This synthesis of craftsmanship and environmentalism led me back to school. An education and a career in the environment will better ground me in how to live lightly on the land. My days twisting wrenches provided intimate knowledge of the inefficiencies and pollutants to target. My course was set!

E. Essay
In 800 words or less, discuss a significant public speech, legislative act, book, or public policy statement by Congressman Morris K. Udall or Secretary of Interior Stewart L. Udall and its impact on your field of study, interests, and career goals.
An excellent essay won't make up for an applicant who lacks "demonstrated commitment" but a poorly done essay can cost an otherwise solid applicant the scholarship. A good essay will do more than summarize a Udall speech or legislative act. The student will engage with it, fix on some aspect of it, and in doing so, demonstrate that he or she is well informed about past and/or present environmental or Native American issues, and familiar with Mo Udall or Stewart Udall's legacy. Relating the analysis to their goals and interests is one more way of engaging with the text of the speech or the intent and/or impact of the legislation.

Here are some common mistakes applicants make:

- Choosing a speech or legislative act that has no connection to the student's interests or goals; for example, Alaska Lands Act when goals relate to water conservation.
- Little to no mention of Udall; refers to speech/legislation once or twice before transitioning to a glorified personal statement
- Not doing more than "Udall said this . . . and then Udall said that . . . and I agree;" no evidence of critical engagement with topic
- Not integrating their analysis with their goals and interests
- "Senator" Udall
- Superficial understanding of environmental issues
- No sense that they have any concept of who Mo Udall or Stewart Udall was