Top Ten Mistakes

1. "Senator" Udall (a surprising number of recommenders make this mistake as well).

2. Not answering #7 (what additional information would you like to share with the Udall Scholarship Selection Committee?): Sure, it's optional, but what a wasted opportunity.

3. Using #7 to thank the committee for their time (shows good manners, but nothing else).

4. Using #7 to tell us how much you need the money (we feel for you, but it's not a factor in selection).

5. Using #7 to try to explain why you have no courses, activities, or work experience to support your "interest" in the environment or Native American issues.

6. Using #7 to inform the committee that your commitment is amply demonstrated by the fact that you are a vegan, you let the "yellow mellow," and to further conserve water, you have not bathed or washed your hair for a year. We want to see you at the Scholar Orientation in Tucson in August.

7. Unambitious career goals (I want to cut lawns in an environmentally friendly way).

8. Unrealistic and naïve career goals (I plan to end global warming in my 20s, run for Senate and then President of the United States, and open an organic, vegetarian restaurant).

9. Answering questions without any sense of excitement about what you're doing and where you're headed (if you're bored, the readers will be too).

10. Failing to convey WHY you have set yourself a certain career path, and what motivates you to keep going down it.