

# Gary Simon Memorial Award Selection Process



## Association for Teen-Age Diplomats

The Gary Simon Memorial Scholarship for Excellence was established in 1998 to honor Wilson Magnet School Administrator Gary Simon, who dedicated his life to the Rochester City School District and to the advancement of international understanding. The scholarship is awarded to a Rochester City School District student for a year or summer exchange to the country of his or her choice. It covers the ATAD program fee, including round trip travel from Rochester, ATAD pin, orientations, family living experience and cultural exchange, and support services in the US and abroad for the student and family. The runner-up to the award winner will be eligible for the award if the winner cannot participate in the exchange program; otherwise the runner-up receives \$500 toward his or her exchange program fee. The scholarship is funded through donations from the community.

### **Eligibility and Submissions:**

1. To be eligible to apply for the Gary Simon Memorial Award, a student must:
  - a. attend a Rochester City School District high school
  - b. be between the ages of 15½ and 18 on July 1<sup>st</sup> of the year of departure
  - c. have completed 10<sup>th</sup> grade prior to departure
  - d. have a minimum GPA for the last 2 years of B- or 81%
2. The student must submit, postmarked by 12/31, the:
  - a. completed *Americans Overseas Exchange Student Program Application (AOF1)*
  - b. four essay questions in the *Gary Simon Memorial Scholarship for Excellence Application (AOF4)*
3. The student must receive a rating of “Strongly Recommended” at the ATAD Regional Interviews.
4. The student must have been accepted by a Program Chair to a specific country.

### **Pre-Section Process:**

1. A Pre-Selection Committee will select the award semi-finalists prior to January 25th. The committee will include:
  - a. ATAD President
  - b. Americans Overseas Vice-President
  - c. Outreach Coordinator
  - d. at least one Program Chair

2. The committee will assure that all eligibility and submission requirements are met.
3. If there are more than 6 qualified applicants, the committee will select 6 semi-finalists based on:
  - a. strength of the applications (AOF1 and AOF4)
  - b. Regional Interview evaluation (AOF3)

**Final Interview Process: \***

1. The interview panel consists of 4-6 panelists, who will include:
    - a. members of the ATAD Board
    - b. Rochester City School District representatives
    - c. local community individuals
  2. Semi-finalists will be interviewed within one week of February 1<sup>st</sup>. The interview will consist of a 20 minute personal interview and a 20 minute discussion among all semi-finalists. Attached are example questions that could be used for the interview and group discussion.
    - a. Prior to the interview the panelists will select the questions they will ask. All semi-finalists must be asked the same questions. Interviewers are encouraged to make notes on the students' responses to the questions to help them remember the different students.
    - b. For the group discussion, all semi-finalists will be seated around a table and handed a sheet with the group discussion question. The panelists will observe the interaction of the group for the allotted amount of time, taking notes as appropriate.
  3. At the end of the individual interviews and group discussion, all panelists will confidentially rate each student using the attached "Rating Sheet". Selection of the award winner will be based upon the average of the results of all panel members' Rating Sheets. The categories to be rated are:
    - a. individual interview
    - b. group discussion, including interpersonal interactions
    - c. essay questions
    - d. AO application (teacher recommendations, activities, work, volunteer, etc.)
  4. In the event of a tied score, the panel will discuss the students who are tied and agree upon a winner and runner-up.
  5. The student with the second highest score will be the runner-up.
- \* **NOTE: Panel Orientation:** Before the interviews the Outreach Coordinator will give an overview to the interview panel on the selection process and evaluation criteria/method. This is important, as panelists will not necessarily be familiar with the award process and criteria.

**Instructions to Interview Panel:** Prior to the interview the panel will select the questions to ask the semi-finalists. All semi-finalists must be asked the same questions. Each interview should take approximately 20 minutes. The interviewers are encouraged to make notes on the students' responses to the questions to help them remember the different students.

At the end of the individual interview the student should be asked, "Is there is anything else you would like us to know about you that might be helpful in the scholarship selection process." The student should also be asked if he or she has any questions for the interview panel.

**Possible Questions for Individual Interview:**

1. Describe something you have done that has made you feel good about yourself.
2. Think of an older adult other than your parents who is important to you. Who is it and why is he or she important?
3. How would your best friend describe you?
4. Tell us about a time when you experienced conflict. How did you deal with it?
5. Tell us about a time when you were embarrassed. What embarrassed you and how did you react?
6. What is it that appeals to you most about becoming an exchange student?
7. Describe the relationship you would like to have with your host family. What would you like your host family to learn from you?
8. How would you describe the typical American family to your host family?
9. Your host parents say to you, "We have heard a lot about how easy your schools are. How can such a great nation have such a poor system of education?" What would you say?
10. You are asked why there is so much crime and drug use in America. How do you respond?
11. A friend says to you, "Americans are so self-centered. They won't learn foreign languages and they don't know anything about world events or politics." How do you react?
12. You are asked how you can talk so much about human rights when you have racial problems in the United States. What do you say?
13. Why should you be chosen for this scholarship?

**Instructions to Interview Panel:** For the group discussion, all semi-finalists will be seated around a table and handed a sheet with a group discussion question that will be selected by the interview panel. The panelists will observe the interaction of the group for 20 minutes, taking notes as appropriate. No presentation is expected to be made by the group. The purpose of this activity is to observe the interactions of each semi-finalist.

**Possible Questions for Group Discussion:**

1. You belong to a community youth group that is planning its public service project for the next year. Determine what the project will be and how you will go about organizing and funding it.
2. You belong to the Future American's Club at school. The club is to make a presentation on the hopes and challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Determine what points the group will present and how these points will be supported.
3. You are a member of a student club preparing for a club debate. As a group you are to discuss "It is the responsibility of the United States to intervene in foreign countries that are experiencing internal strife." Determine whether the group agrees or disagrees with this statement, what points the group will present, and how these points will be supported.

**Rating Sheet  
for the  
Gary Simon Memorial Scholarship for Excellence**

Student Name	Individual Interview	Group Discussion	Essay Questions	AO Application	Total Score

**NOTE:** The individual ratings are based on a scale of 1-5, with 5 being the highest rating.

When evaluating each student, look for the following qualities:

- |                 |                      |                |                            |
|-----------------|----------------------|----------------|----------------------------|
| Self motivation | Communicative        | Sense of humor | Positive expectations      |
| Ability to fail | Flexible/adaptable   | Curiosity      | Positive regard for others |
| Tolerance       | Strong sense of self | Open minded    | Acceptance of differences  |

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