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LAFCU awards \$20,000 in scholarships through annual essay contest

Write to Educate essays explored solutions to challenges facing Michigan communities

LANSING, Mich. — LAFCU, a Michigan-based credit union, is proud to announce the winners of its 2026 Write to Educate Essay Contest: Drew Coleman (Western Michigan Christian High School), Sebastian Madlangbayan (Forest Hills Northern High School), Lauren Richey (Haslett High School) and Matthew Wang (East Lansing High School).

The credit union is awarding \$5,000 college scholarships to each of the four winners, totaling \$20,000. Additionally, LAFCU is donating \$2,000 total to four charities selected by the winners.

Now in its 18th year, the annual contest reflects LAFCU's long-standing commitment to supporting Michigan youth in their pursuit of higher education. Including this year, LAFCU has donated more than \$140,000 to help over 40 students attend college and support causes that matter to them through the Write to Educate program.

"This contest encourages students to think critically about the issues impacting their communities and empowers them to become part of the solution," said Alyssa Troub, LAFCU's digital marketing and community engagement specialist. "Each year, we're inspired by the compassion, creativity and leadership reflected in these essays. Supporting students while also giving back to charities they care about allows the contest to create a meaningful impact far beyond the classroom."



(L to R) LAFCU's 2026 Write to Educate essay contest winners: Drew Coleman (Western Michigan Christian High School), Sebastian Madlangbayan (Forest Hills Northern High School), Lauren Richey (Haslett High School) and Matthew Wang (East Lansing High School).

This year's essay prompt asked students to: "Describe a problem facing your community and explain how you would help address or solve it. Discuss the impact your solution could have on others." Entrants were encouraged to reflect on real-world issues affecting their communities and propose thoughtful, actionable solutions.

The winners, their essay topics, chosen colleges, and selected charities are:

- **Drew Coleman, Western Michigan Christian High School (Norton Shores)**
 - **Essay topic:** Increasing diversity among educators through intentional recruitment, outreach and marketing efforts to help students feel represented and supported in the classroom.
 - **College:** Central Michigan University
 - **Charity:** HBCU Club of Muskegon
- **Sebastian Madlangbayan, Forest Hills Northern High School (Grand Rapids)**
 - **Essay topic:** Raising awareness about "greenwashing" in the health and wellness industry through a clean hydration startup focused on ingredient transparency and education.
 - **College:** University of Michigan Ross School of Business
 - **Charity:** Kids' Food Basket
- **Lauren Richey, Haslett High School (Haslett)**
 - **Essay topic:** Addressing food insecurity in her community through awareness campaigns, school food drives and the creation of a community garden partnership.
 - **College:** Grand Valley State University
 - **Charity:** Okemos Community Food Pantry
- **Matthew Wang, East Lansing High School (East Lansing)**
 - **Essay topic:** Combating food insecurity through year-round school food drives and a school-based pantry to support students and families in need.
 - **College:** Michigan State University
 - **Charity:** Greater Lansing Food Bank

"Being selected as a recipient of the Write to Educate Scholarship is truly an honor," said Lauren Richey. "This scholarship will help me focus on my educational and future goals while continuing to raise awareness about food insecurity in our communities."

The winning essays are published in the Lansing State Journal, a community sponsor of the contest. They are also available at lafcu.com/writetoeducate.

The annual LAFCU Write to Educate Essay Contest is open to all Michigan high school seniors. A LAFCU membership is not required. Scholarship winners must attend a Michigan college or university to receive the award. The next contest is expected to open winter 2027.

About LAFCU

Founded in 1936, LAFCU (pronounced laugh-cue) is a not-for-profit, member-owned credit union open to all who live, work, worship or attend school in Michigan, and to Michigan businesses. LAFCU serves more than 74,000 members and holds over \$1 billion in assets. With a particular focus on serving people of modest means, LAFCU is committed to enhancing its members' financial well-being and creating long-lasting positive change across generations. Awarded the prestigious Dora Maxwell Social Responsibility Community Service Award, LAFCU is known for its people-helping-people mission, which has led to award-winning financial literacy programs for all ages. A three-time honoree as a national 'Best Credit Union to Work For,' LAFCU has also been recognized as a Best Place to Work for Women and an Inclusive Workplace, and is recognized globally for its diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. Learn more at www.lafcu.com.

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