The Nelson and Marlene Cummings Scholarship
One $2,500 award, 2012-13 (non-renewable)

The Nelson and Marlene Cummings Scholarship was founded by Jeffrey Cummings, a 1984 Madison graduate, to honor his parents and their life-long commitment to public affairs, civic activities, and education. The purpose of the scholarship is to assist James Madison College in its effort to recruit and retain students whose presence will further the College's compelling interest in obtaining the educational benefits that flow from a racially and ethnically diverse student body. This essay competition is open to all incoming first year students who are planning to enroll at James Madison College of Michigan State University during the upcoming fall term. It is the donor's wish that each candidate answer one of the following essay questions. Preference shall be given to the student whose essay best reflects analytic thought, creativity, and personal experience.

Essay of 1000 words maximum; please select one of the following questions:

Option #1

Many American colleges and universities consider the presence of a student body that is racially, culturally, and socially diverse to be an educational value. To promote such diversity, some schools (including the University of Michigan) have in past years considered the race and ethnic background of their applicants when making admissions decisions. Many commentators, on the other hand, believe that the admissions process of universities should be colorblind and that no consideration should be given to race and ethnicity. In 2003, a sharply divided United States Supreme Court ruled that the University of Michigan's law school could give consideration to race in its admissions process to further its interest in obtaining a diverse student body.

In November 2006, a controversial statewide ballot initiative known as Proposition 2, which was designed to ban preferential treatment based on race, gender, color, ethnicity, and national origin in the operation of public employment, public education or public contracting, was presented to the voters of Michigan. Proposition 2 was approved in a racially polarized vote. According to a CNN exit poll, 64% of white voters wanted to end affirmative action as compared with only 14% of African American voters. Opponents of Proposition 2 have filed a federal lawsuit to challenge the legality of the proposition and the federal appeals court is currently reviewing the case. In the meantime, Proposition 2 has gone into effect and public universities in Michigan are now barred from granting preferential treatment on the basis of race, gender, color, ethnicity, and national origin when making admissions decisions.

Do you believe that issues concerning affirmative action and other civil rights matters should be decided by popular vote? Why or why not? Please consider the potential advantages and disadvantages of deciding public policy on civil rights issues through popular vote and explain your position in detail.

Option #2

In 1954, the United States Supreme Court issued a unanimous and historic ruling in Brown v. Board of Education which held that the doctrine of separate but equal has no place in the field of education and that separate educational facilities for different races are “inherently unequal.” Twenty years after the Brown decision, a divided Supreme Court (in a 5 to 4 vote) overturned a federal trial judge’s ruling that the remedy for proven unconstitutional racial segregation within the Detroit public schools was to provide African-American students in Detroit with the opportunity to attend public schools in the neighboring suburbs. In this case (Milliken v. Bradley), the five justice majority held that the remedy for
unlawful segregation within the Detroit school district had to be confined to that district because there was no proof that school segregation within the Detroit district caused segregation in the adjacent suburban districts or that the school district lines were drawn with the intent of separating the races. The four dissenting justices would have upheld the trial judge's decision on the grounds that a metropolitan based remedy was the only way to actually remedy the racial segregation of African-American students.

At present, the student bodies of the Detroit public schools are comprised overwhelmingly of African-American and Latino students. Moreover, the Detroit public school system is experiencing severe financial problems and the system is under the control of a state-appointed emergency financial manager. By contrast, the student bodies of the public schools in many of the neighboring suburbs are comprised overwhelmingly of white students and most suburban school districts enjoy far greater financial resources than are available in Detroit.

Would the implementation of a single metropolitan school district within the Detroit metropolitan area where students could attend schools within the metropolitan area without regard to municipal boundaries provide the best way to ensure equal educational opportunity for students of all races, eliminate racial segregation in the public schools, and provide fairness to all students who bear no responsibility for creating the current situation? Why or why not? Please explain in detail and outline the potential advantages and disadvantages of your position.

Students wishing to be considered for the following awards must submit a one page personal statement (no more than 400 words) detailing why they are pursuing studies in the area of public affairs. Students should also submit a one page resume.

**Alumni Endowed Scholarship - Two $1,000 awards, 2012-13 (non-renewable)**

Open to every admitted student in the first year class, this scholarship is designed to introduce students to the College's focus on interdisciplinary study in the social sciences and public affairs.

**Alumni Diversity Scholarship - Two $1,250 awards, 2012-13 (non-renewable)**

Open to every student admitted into the first year class, this scholarship is designed to emphasize the importance of ethnic, racial, and cultural diversity in the college.

**Freeman-Darling Scholarship - One $2,000 award, 2012-13 (non-renewable)**

Open to every student admitted to the James Madison College first-year class. This scholarship honors two accomplished and generous supporters of James Madison College, Michigan State University, and public affairs education. Ms. Marilyn Darling is a graduate of the college as well as a very active leader of Madison’s Board of Visitors. It is the donor’s hope that recipients of this award will feel an ethical obligation at a future date to support the college and actively participate in assisting future generations of Madison students.