

\$\$\$ SCHOLARSHIP HANDBOOK \$\$\$

WHAT ARE SCHOLARSHIPS?

Many colleges and universities can *seem* unaffordable due to their hefty price tags. But, whether you are considering a two-year or four-year college, there are several ways to minimize the impact of post-secondary schooling on your wallet. Scholarships are just one source of financial aid that can be used to pay for college. Other sources include grants, loans and work-study.

Think of scholarships as “free money.” Scholarships are awarded to students in amount that range anywhere from a hundred dollars to full tuition! Scholarships are used towards your college education and you do not have to pay them back.

Millions of dollars are set aside each year by colleges, private donors, corporations, foundations, and community organization in the form of scholarships. These organizations want to invest in your education! Every scholarship will be different because each sponsor outlines how their scholarship will be awarded. YOU can apply for scholarships if you fit the specific criteria, which can be academic merit, leadership, community service, writing and/or artistic ability, financial need or economic background, racial or ethnic background, major, college, etc.

DO I HAVE TO PAY FOR SCHOLARSHIPS?

NO!!! Scholarship applications will take *time* and *effort*; however your search should be FREE! All of the resources that you need throughout your scholarship search will be accessible at no cost to you. Again, scholarships are “free money” and you don’t pay to apply and you don’t pay them back. (Every once in a while, there may be a slight fee, particularly if it is a community based scholarship such as the one from the McLean Community Center). If you have any questions, please see Mrs. Rahn in the College Career Center.

WHERE DO I FIND SCHOLARSHIPS?

Starting a scholarship search can be hard if you do not know all of your resources. Luckily, many of the resources that you will need for your scholarship research are right in front of you! The following list is meant to guide you at both the local and national level. Many local scholarship opportunities will be open to a select small group of people. This could mean a smaller pool of applicants, which makes you more competitive! Resources for national scholarships are broader, but will allow you to access hundreds of opportunities.

Most colleges will review your application and financial aid application for scholarship eligibility. Always check the Financial Aid page on the college website for scholarship information.

START LOCALLY:

- ✚ Use the resources available through Fairfax County Public Schools – College Career Center, Family Connection, and Career Connections.
- ✚ Contact your employer or parents’ employer.
- ✚ Check with local businesses, religious organizations, volunteer groups, military branches, or other groups you are closely affiliated with to see what opportunities may be open to you. It doesn’t hurt to ask.

MOVE NATIONALLY:

- ✚ There are several online free scholarship databases. These sites will allow you to build a profile, explore the database, download applications, and have information sent to you by email.
- ✚ Look at the websites of national foundations and organizations that fit your interests or intended field of study.
- ✚ Some large corporations like Coca Cola, Target, Wal-Mart, and Burger King are example of corporations which offer scholarships. Explore their website for more information.

INTERNET RESOURCES

www.fastweb.com

www.scholarships.com

www.salliemaefund.org

www.collegeanswer.com (Sallie Mae)

www.collegeboard.com

www.collegenet.com/mach25/

www.collegefunds.net

www.college-scholarships.com

www.gmsp.org (Gates Millennium Scholars)

www.collegefund.org (Native American)

www.fastaid.com

www.scholarshipsforhispanics.org

www.hsf.net (Hispanic)

www.uncf.org (African American)

www.oceanational.org (Asian American)

www.review.com

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON FINANCIAL AID

www.finaid.org

www.studentaid.ed.gov

www.fafsa.ed.gov

HOW DO I APPLY FOR SCHOLARSHIPS?

- 1. Start Now** – Searching and applying for scholarships take time. Hearing back from scholarship sponsors also takes time (winners of many scholarships may not be notified for over eight weeks from the time they submit their application.) Don't be discouraged if you don't hear back from sponsors early. Knowing the timetable of your scholarships will help eliminate your frustrations or anxieties about it.
- 2. Set Realistic Goals** – You can do this! Do not overwhelm yourself. Decide how much time and effort you can put into actively pursuing scholarships and go for it. If you don't apply, you won't know if could have won.
- 3. Check Eligibility** – Scholarships will have different eligibility requirements listed on their applications. Save yourself time and make sure that you are eligible for scholarships *before* you start applying. (If you are planning on attending a two-year college, make sure the scholarship specifies that it can be applied to that college; underclassmen should be sure it is just not for seniors only; check citizenship requirement; make sure your major is appropriate for it).
- 4. Double-Check Application** – Always proofread and revise your essays. Be sure all your materials are in order and properly labeled. Make it easy for the people who will be reading your materials – after all, you're asking them for money.
- 5. Make Copies** – It is a good practice to keep a record of all of the materials involved in your application process. Besides having this material for your own reference, you

never know when a copy of this material will come in handy. It could be a huge time saver if a sponsor loses your application.

- 6. Adhere To All Deadlines** – Note all of your deadlines early. If your scholarship requires a recommendation letter or transcript, give your counselor/teacher sufficient time to do this for you.
- 7. Ask For Help** – If you're having trouble with any part of the process, ask for help. Come to the College Career Center. If you have specifics with specific aspects of the application, you can always contact the sponsor to find out more.
- 8. Write Thank You Notes** – Write a letter of thanks to the sponsor of each scholarship you receive.

BEWARE OF SCHOLARSHIP SCAMS

Unfortunately, there are several companies that will ask you for a financial investment in order to fulfill outlandish scholarship promises. Do not let these companies entice you into paying for resources that you can get for FREE! If you have a question about the legitimacy of a company, check its status with the Better Business Bureau www.bbb.com.

The following website offers the following advice to protect you from scholarship scams www.finaid.org/scholarships/scams.phtml

1. If you must pay money to get money, it might be a scam.
2. If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.
3. Spend the time, not the money.
4. Never invest more than a postage stamp to get information about scholarships.
5. Nobody can guarantee that you'll win a scholarship.
6. Legitimate scholarship foundations do not charge application fees. (However sometimes local community organizations do to defray administrative costs.)
7. If you're suspicious of an offer, it's usually with good reason.

Similarly, the Federal Trade Commission

www.ftc.gov/bcp/online/edcams/scholarship/ cautions you to beware of the following lines:

1. "The scholarship is guaranteed or your money back."
2. "You can't get this information anywhere else."
3. "I just need your credit card or bank account number to hold this scholarship."
4. "We'll do all the work."
5. "The scholarship will cost money."
6. "You've been selected by a 'national foundation' to receive a scholarship" or "You're a finalist" in a contest you never entered."

SCHOLARSHIP RESTRICTIONS AND REGULATIONS

Once a scholarship has been won, it is important to note all restrictions and regulations that should be followed in order to keep your scholarship. Some scholarships will require you to maintain a certain GPA, major, amount of volunteer hours, etc. Be sure to note all of these requirements so that you can *keep* the money you have won!

Many scholarships can be generally applied towards meeting your cost of attendance. However, some scholarships may be allotted to pay for a specific piece of your education. Note these restrictions when calculating your budget.