



December

## Scholarships

Scholarship opportunities are abundant, but the responsibility falls predominantly on a student's shoulders to research and apply for scholarships. Putting in the time and effort may reap financial benefits for students who actively work to seek them out.

### Types of Scholarships

Scholarships originate from a variety of sources. Listed below are the different types of scholarships available.

#### College-Specific Awards

Colleges often have scholarship money available that is used to develop the financial package offered to an applicant who has been granted admission. These scholarships are available under a variety of terms that may include maintaining a certain GPA, pursuing a specific major, etc.

- **Academic Awards** - These merit-based scholarships are awarded by colleges for academic achievement (typically GPA and ACT score). Inquire about these awards at a school's financial aid office, though one may not even have to apply for an academic award; they are often wrapped into the financial aid package offered by the college, based on the college application. One can typically view the criteria for these awards on a college's website.
- **Departmental Awards** - Specific departments may have scholarships available to attract or retain student in the department's field of study. If you son/daughter knows what his/her major will be, contact that department to inquire about scholarships or look on the department's website.
- **Athletic Scholarships** - Many athletes dream of going to college on an athletic scholarship. It's possible to achieve that dream, but these scholarships are highly competitive and very few students qualify. Students who are interested in earning an athletic scholarship need to carefully read the information at the National Collegiate Athletic Association's (NCAA) website to learn more about the steps needed to become eligible to participate. This website is <http://www.ncaa.org/playcollegesports>. NCAA Division 1 and 2 schools award athletic scholarships. Division III schools offer only academic scholarships. They do not offer athletic scholarships. The National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) also has specific eligibility requirements. More information is available at <http://www.playnaia.org>.

#### Private Organizations

There are thousands of private organizations that offer scholarship awards. Within the "private" category there are many types of organizations to consider.

- **Corporations** - Corporations offer scholarships to attract and retain employees, support the communities where the business is located and encourage entrants into the business' field of work. These are often the scholarships that go un-awarded for lack of applicants. Search for corporation scholarships by checking with parents' employers for possible programs, researching businesses in the region and searching newspaper's archives for award announcements.

Students may have a much greater chance of receiving a private corporation award because geographic, employment and other restrictions narrow the number of candidates.

- **Religious Organizations** - Religious organizations often award scholarships to help their members afford the cost of college. If your family is affiliated with a specific religious group, check with your local group about the availability of scholarships.
- **Community Foundation** – The Holland/Zeeland Community Foundation offers numerous scholarships to students in the community. The scholarships are possible thanks to the generosity of many local individuals, families, and businesses who have created permanent endowments at The Community Foundation to further others' education. The application materials generally become available in late winter. Information will be posted on the counseling office website (<http://counseling.zps.org>) and on the Foundation's site (<http://cfhz.org>) during the winter months. ***Please do not start working on applications for these scholarships until advertised by the Counseling Office, as what is posted on the Foundation's site may be last year's application. Additionally, students are required to submit their 7th semester GPA when they apply and that is not available until early February.***
- **Other Private Organizations** – The ubiquitous category “other” is really the mother lode of scholarship opportunities. There are thousand of scholarships available, given by organizations who wish to further their mission by supporting the education of students. This category of scholarships is the reason for using a web search engine to identify suitable opportunities. Two reputable, free scholarship search engines include <http://www.fastweb.com> and <http://bigfuture.collegeboard.org>.

### **The Military**

The military is a well-known source of college scholarships. For example, the Air Force ROTC program can pay up to full college tuition plus a stipend for books. Military scholarships are awarded in return for a tour of duty with the branch of the military supporting a student's education. Students must be prepared to fulfill the terms of the scholarship agreement (which typically requires a certain time of service in the military). If the prospect of military service fits with a student's goals, a military scholarship may be a good way to underwrite a college education. Contact a local military recruiter for more information.

*\*some information taken from [www.scholarshiphelp.org](http://www.scholarshiphelp.org)*

## **10 Scam Warning Signs**

There are MANY authentic scholarships out there for students to apply for. However, it is important to understand the warning signs to avoid being the victim of a scholarship scam.

**1. Fees:** Students shouldn't have to pay to search for or apply for scholarships. ***Zeeland lists all of the scholarships it receives information about in the Scholarship section of our Counseling Office website (<http://counseling.zps.org>).*** This website is updated regularly, so please be sure to check it frequently, especially during the winter and spring months. Additionally, there are some reliable scholarship search engines out there. For instance, <http://www.fastweb.com> and <http://bigfuture.collegeboard.org> are legitimate scholarship search engines.

**2. Credit card or bank account information needed:** Applicants should never have to give credit card or bank account information to award providers.

**3. Scholarship guarantee:** No one can guarantee that your student will win a scholarship because no one can control scholarship judges' decisions. Also, be wary of "high success rates"—they usually do not refer to actual award winners.

- 4. No work involved:** Students can't avoid putting in time to fill out a scholarship application.
- 5. No contact information:** Legitimate sponsors should provide contact information upon request. If the sponsor does not supply a valid e-mail address, phone number and mailing address (not a PO Box) after you've asked for one, this could be the sign of a scam.
- 6. Unsolicited scholarships:** If your son/daughter is called to receive an award for which he/she never applied, be alert—it's most likely a scam.
- 7. Pressure tactics:** Students should not allow themselves to be pressured into applying for a scholarship, especially if the sponsor is asking for money up front.
- 8. Claims of "exclusive" scholarships:** Sponsors don't make their scholarships available through only one service.
- 9. Sponsor goes out of their way to sound "official":** Scammers sometimes use official-sounding words like "national," "education" or "federal" or they display an official-looking seal to fool applicants into thinking they are legit. Check with the school if you question a scholarship provider's legitimacy.
- 10. Your questions aren't answered directly:** If you can't get a straight answer from a sponsor regarding their application, what will be done with your child's information or other questions, proceed with caution.

*\*information taken from FastWeb*

## **Scholarship Application Tips**

A surprising number of students fail to see that identifying scholarships can be one of the most important parts of a successful scholarship search. There are thousands and thousands of scholarships available to students through internet searches, but no one student will ever qualify for all of them. Even if one person were to qualify for all of them, most students probably would not have the time to apply for each and every one. For this reason, a well-defined scholarship search can be invaluable to students looking for some extra money to fund their education.

In addition to searching for scholarships on our counseling office website, the best way to run a scholarship search is to find a good, reliable scholarship search engine. The two sites listed above (Fastweb and College Board's Big Future) are some of the best search engines out there. Internet searches are free (do not ever pay a fee for scholarship searches), and can help you filter out awards for which you simply don't qualify. This means finding scholarships that are best suited to who the individual is, both as a student and as a person.

Also, be sure to meet the scholarship deadline. Someone may be the highest qualified student for a particular scholarship award, but if his/her application was submitted late, he/she most likely will not be considered as an eligible applicant. Know the application deadlines for each scholarship application that is being filed, and turn them in on time.

### **Application Materials**

Each scholarship has its own application. It is important to read the materials carefully and to understand what information is requested. Students should apply only for those scholarships for which they are eligible. It is highly doubtful that a student will be awarded if he/she is not eligible for a scholarship.

Make sure to take the necessary steps to ensure the application gets where it needs to go. Keep a copy of application materials on file, so in the event you have to refer back to it or resubmit it if you had trouble the first time around, it can always be reproduced quickly.

### **Activities and Honors**

List all relevant activities and honors but be selective. If an applicant has more activities than can fit in the space provided do not include the ones that are not significant.

Read the criteria for selection carefully to understand what the reviewers are looking for. For instance, a scholarship may look for applicants who can show "leadership experience with an outstanding extracurricular record," so include volunteer and community service activities, emphasizing those in which the student took a leadership role.

Most importantly, activities should represent a student's varied talents and passions outside the classroom. The reviewers are trying to get a sense of who a student is and what he/she believes in. Make sure activities reflect that.

### **Letters of Recommendation**

Some scholarships require students to submit letters of recommendation with the application. Listed below are some helpful tips for writing letters of recommendation.

#### *Choosing recommenders*

These letters are extremely important. Choose recommenders carefully. Think of the letters as an integral part of a package that will present an accurate and complete picture of a student and his/her qualifications. While maybe one letter of recommendation should be from an academic source, one should address leadership abilities and commitment to the community.

#### *The ideal letter of recommendation*

Letters of recommendations should come from teachers or academic advisors who are familiar not only with a student's academic abilities, but with his/her personal interests and background and how those relate to his/her ability to carry out the program of study the student wishes to pursue. If the teacher or academic advisor is familiar with one's extracurricular activities and leadership abilities, he/she should also incorporate that into the letter. The letters should address the qualifications sought. Recommenders should address only those elements of an application on which they can comment confidently.

#### *How to ask for a letter of recommendation*

Start early. Students should discuss their plans with recommenders weeks before the application is due, letting them know what they would like to study and why they want to apply for the scholarship. Recommenders should be given a written description of the scholarship and an autobiography or resume highlighting activities and honors. Be sure to also give them plenty of time to write the letter. Students should not wait until the last minute. The Counseling Office has a "Letter of Recommendation Request Form" available to students to use as a template for providing information about themselves. Please contact your counselor for more information.

Students may also want to remind the recommender that the letter should include the applicant's full name. You would be surprised how many include only the first name of the student within the body of the letter

*\*information taken from FastWeb*