

**SCHOLARSHIP
PACKET**

What is a scholarship? Scholarships are a type of aid that helps students pay for their education. Like grants, they do not have to be repaid. Awards are available for students who are interested in particular fields of study, who are members of underrepresented groups, who live in certain areas, or who demonstrate financial need and/or academic achievement.

How to find scholarships and grants:

There are many ways to find scholarships and grants.

- Private organizations offer many of these you can find them by researching local businesses and looking in the newspaper.
- Religious organizations also offer many, if you or your family is affiliated with a specific group start there.
- Unions are a great source for educational funding. The AFL-CIO website offers a search service related to union-sponsored scholarships.
- Local chamber of commerce

¹Only apply for a scholarship if you are qualified, but apply to as many as possible. The more scholarships you apply for, the greater chance you have of receiving one. Don't just focus on the big ones, either. Often the easiest scholarships to get are small local ones. If you win a few, they really add up.

Each scholarship's application process is different. Follow deadlines and instructions closely. Make sure the information about the scholarship is up-to-date before you apply by contacting the scholarship committee or organization. You'll have to apply to each one individually, as each one may require different information by different deadlines. This can get confusing, so organize your applications in folders, and make a timeline or checklist to stay on track.

It's never too early to start working towards winning a scholarship. If you are interested in an academic scholarship, you need to earn excellent grades. If you are going to apply for a scholarship with a particular organization, stay involved! The hard work you put in now will pay off when it comes time to apply. Start working on your scholarship applications several months before they are due. Essays written at the last minute are rarely as good as those that have been thoroughly reviewed!

Scholarship applications usually require:

- Official transcripts
- SAT/ACT scores (needed if student will be under 21 by the time they will be starting college)
- Financial aid forms, such as the FAFSA
- Financial information, including tax returns
- One or more essays
- Letters of recommendation
- Proof of eligibility (such as membership credentials)

¹ Information retrieved from Idaho Career Information Systems website

SCAMS..... BE CAREFUL:

There are many scholarship search agencies. Some are free, while others charge hundreds of dollars. Some provide good information; others do not. Many search companies will not refund you if you are dissatisfied with their services. Be sure to check out refund policies before you pay any enrollment fees.

Most scams are easy to spot if you know what to watch for:

- You have to pay money before or after you receive money.
- The matching service guarantees success.
- Financial aid “seminars” turn out to be sales pitches.
- You are a “finalist” in a contest you never entered or “selected” by a national foundation for a scholarship you did not apply for.
- The scholarship offer requires you to give a credit card or bank account number
- The "scholarships" are actually loans.

If the offer is too good to be true... it probably is.

Foundation Scholarships at local colleges

There are many scholarships at **College of Western Idaho** that are administered by the CWI Foundation. You can apply for these scholarships online. There is a single scholarship application that allows students to be considered for several scholarships.

<http://cwidaho.cc/current-students/foundation-scholarship-online-application>

CWI Foundation Scholarship Application Deadlines:

- April– scholarships applications open
- May – scholarship applications due
- June –scholarship recipients notified of selection

There are many scholarships at **Treasure Valley Community College** that are administered by the TVCC Foundation. There is a single scholarship application that allows students to be considered for several scholarships. This application can be printed from their website or students can obtain a hard copy from either TVCC location. Make sure to submit the application to the location you plan to attend.

http://www.tvcc.cc/about/foundation/foundation_scholarship_apply.cfm

TVCC Foundation Scholarship Application Deadlines:

- December – scholarships applications open
- March – scholarship applications due
- June – scholarship recipients notified of selection

There are many scholarships at **Boise State University** that are administered by the BSU foundation. You can apply for these online. There is a single application that allows students to be considered for several available scholarships.

BSU Foundation Scholarship Application Deadlines:

- December – scholarships applications open
- March – scholarship applications due
- June – scholarship recipients notified of selection

<http://boisestatefoundation.org/scholarships/apply/>

Tips on Completing the Scholarship Application²

- **High Demand Materials**

Obtain or create a number of copies of materials that will be requested over and over again. Frequently requested documents might include transcripts, financial aid forms, copies of tax returns, resumes, letters of recommendation, or photographs. Your efficiency in preparing scholarship packages will be astronomically enhanced by being able to simply pluck the requested documents from the document holders filed in your scholarship three-ring binder.

- **Multitasking**

In most cases, applying for a scholarship means writing an essay. Look for opportunities to use those scholarship essays to fulfill other requirements as well, at school or work.

- **The Scholarship Cover Letter**

The application cover letter conveys the package from you to the funding organization. It is one more opportunity to demonstrate professionalism and knowledge of appropriate business etiquette.

If possible, make a determination to whom the letter should be addressed. Be sure you have that individual's name and title spelled correctly. Avoid using either "Dear Sir" or "Dear Madam."

In the body of the letter, express your pleasure at the opportunity to submit your application for the specific award you are seeking. It's always useful to add a sentence praising the work or the mission of the funding organization.

Close the letter by expressing your enthusiasm for participating in the process and always thank the recipient for their time and consideration.

- **Forms and Documents**

The scholarship application form introduces you to the judges. You need to make that introduction as crisp and business-like as possible.

Make copies of the application form so that you can create a working draft. Use that draft to complete the final application form.

Type the application form if at all possible. Don't use fancy fonts; stick with standard business fonts like Times New Roman or Arial. Legibility and neatness are extremely important. Your application can be eliminated if it cannot be easily read. Put your name on every page of the application. Many funds prefer that applications be free of staples so they are easier to photocopy or distribute. That means there is the potential for parts of your application to become lost. Placing your name on every page gives your application a fighting chance of being reconstituted if a page or two gets waylaid during the process.

Answer every question. If you don't believe that a question applies to you, don't leave it blank - it could be judged incomplete. Don't mark the question N/A (not applicable). The evaluators may have a different point of view on its applicability and can disqualify you for failing to complete the form. Instead, answer the question if you can. If the question is truly not applicable, write a sentence that describes your situation. For example, if the question is "What is your military history?" it is preferable to write "I have never served in the military" rather than leave it blank or write N/A.

² Information retrieved from www.scholarshiphelp.org

Check, check, and recheck for typos. Enlist help in this review. It is very hard to proofread your own material. Inevitably, your mind's eye reads what you thought you wrote, not what actually made it onto the page. A fresh reader will catch the words that you missed and find the spelling problems.

If there is one thing we learned from speaking with funders, it is that simple errors on scholarship applications will remove you from the competition much more quickly than listing too few club activities. Even if you are not class valedictorian or community volunteer of the year or a survivor of some horrific circumstances with a heroic story to tell, you can still be in the finalist round by being sure you spelled the name of the scholarship fund correctly and attending to all of the other minor details that will make your application perfectly correct and therefore worthy of consideration.

Place the requested documents in the package in the order that they are requested. This consistency makes it easier for evaluators to locate information. It also makes it easier for you to check the documents against the list of requirements.

Do not add documents that have not been requested. There are many scholarship guides in the press that encourage you to add additional materials as a way for you to show your creativity and make your application unique. Judging by the available data, if you create an error-free, neat, and timely application package, you will have already distinguished your application as unique. Additional materials give the impression that you think the funders don't really know what they need and can disqualify you in some competitions. It also makes your application more difficult to manage and consequently more likely to be eliminated.

Do not staple documents together unless directed to do so. It is always reasonable to use paper clips to keep materials tidy. Do not place the application in a special folder unless directed to do so. The place to be creative and innovative is in the preparation of your essay. When preparing the applications, just follow the directions you are given.

Make a complete copy of the application before you send it. Don't skip the transcript or the financial aid statement because you know those are included; it is always important to have a complete record of everything you send the funder in exactly the form it was received by the funder.

Use an envelope that will hold your application without folding it. As a matter of presentation, the application will look better without creases. Send the application "return receipt requested" or use a delivery service like FedEx that allows you to track the package's path and verify who signed for it. In this way, you will have proof that the application was received by the organization. If you do not receive verification within the appropriate length of time, follow up. You won't have a chance at the scholarship if the application never makes it to the inbox.

- **The Bottom Line**

The scholarship application is a paper model of you. Make sure your application is professional and compelling.

Focus on being Complete, Concise, Coherent, and Courteous. Your Content should be Clear and Concrete.

How to Write the Scholarship Essay³

Is it alright to use the first person?

Yes. The essay is about you and what you think about yourself and the field you want to study.

How far back should I go in tracing my background?

Chose the details that you want to highlight to best answer the question they asked you. Provide what information the application asks for. Stories about how you became interested in your field of study may go very far back which is appropriate. More recent accomplishments are best otherwise.

How long should the essay or statement be?

Never exceed the limit that is given. If there isn't a limit make it no longer than two pages.

How much of the information in my application should I repeat?

Reviewers may not read every detail of your application so highlight information from the application that you really want noted but do not just list things. Use items that are relevant and show how they are relevant.

Should I include negative things such as a low GPA?

Yes, if asked for, and adding an explanation can help. Discussing a negative experience that taught you something or helped you can be a good way to give the reviewer an insight into your character and professional goals.

How personal should I be?

These essays are personal in nature. If they are asking for a personal narrative, give it. If they ask more about educational and professional experience, focus there. Always connect your experiences with your goals and the requirements of the program you are applying to. Let the essay instructions be the guide for your content.

Regardless of the theme of the scholarship essay, the essay is really about you. More than anything else, the judges want to know about you – your thoughts, your beliefs, and your ideas.

Many students say they don't know how to start the college scholarship essay. Guess what? Getting started is sometimes the most difficult part of writing for professional writers as well. However, never start writing without doing a couple of things first to understand the purpose of the writing and the motivation of the askers.

- **Analyze the question or topic:**

Write down the essay question. How many parts does it have? Does the question suggest a structure or order, such as first describe your role in ... then tell why it had the following effect...and what you learned from it.

Do you have to do research first, or is this a question that is strictly about you that will come from an analysis of yourself? Why have the judges asked this question or posed this topic? Recognizing that all essays are about you, how are the judges planning to get to know you through this essay?

- **Analyze the Organization:**

What is this scholarship about? Who founded it? What is the mission of the organization? Why are they providing scholarship money? Who are the judges? What special points of view do they bring to the judging? Usually, you can find a great deal of background from the scholarship website or the printed material provided by the scholarship group. Dottie Theriaque of The Community Foundation suggests that if you have a question about purpose or anything else, call and ask. Funders are eager to help applicants; that's what they are all about.

³ Information retrieved from www.scholarshiphelp.org

Josh Barsch, founder of the Dale Fridell scholarship, notes that once you leave school, the only person who will care about your GPA is you. Your success will be based on what kind of person you are, how you approach challenges, and your work ethic. Your GPA may be some indicator of your potential, but you will have to figure out how to reach that potential, and it's that process that will set you apart.

- **Create goals for the writing:**

For example, your goal in responding to an essay might be to demonstrate personal traits in yourself that are similar to the personal traits of the person for whom the scholarship is named. (The Brower Youth Award is given in honor of David Brower, to "honor his lifetime of bold action, inspiring mentorship, and principled effectiveness, which helped give birth to the modern environmental movement.") Use present tense and optimistic phrases to show that you are an active, vibrant, can-do person. Show how your strong family support contributes to your success. Emphasize your sense of balance in academics and family life.

Or, depending on the award and your personal circumstances, a goal of the scholarship essay might be to demonstrate a commitment to succeed despite unstable family circumstances, such as living in a variety of foster homes. A third approach might describe your conscious choice to forego balance between academics and family life to pursue a passion for learning about gene mapping to search for a cure for the multiple sclerosis that has made a family member an invalid.

- **Develop a Theme:**

Some may argue that you should develop a theme for your essay and then write goals. We believe that the opposite is true. When you read an essay question, it may be immediately apparent to you that the theme, or the message that you want to convey, has to do with your commitment to the healing profession as an extension of your desire to better people's circumstances. Wonderful! However, if the theme of your essay is not immediately clear, break down the work by establishing a set of goals based upon your understanding of the essay's intent and the mission of the funding organization. These goals may lead you to one or more themes for your essay. In the set of goals above, the theme that may be emerging from the goals is an appreciation for the family or the team as a cornerstone to individual and group success. You can use your experience as a club leader in developing a team approach, and your decision to ask members of your family to be on your college team to proofread, edit, and search for opportunities as ways to show that you value working relationships and your leadership style will be successful in inspiring group success.

No matter which approach you take, goals first or theme development first, the important takeaway is to establish a theme and goals and to be sure that the theme and goals relate you as a person to the subject you are writing about.

- **Outline Your Response:**

Many people write by beginning anywhere with a free flow of ideas that they then mold into an appropriate order. Yes, that can work - you can occasionally start a project by writing down random thoughts. However, we recommend that you try very hard to approach your essay by writing an outline of what you want to say. The outline will assure that you have the right order and that you will cover all of the points you want to cover. Outlining does not necessarily mean that your essay goes into a required chronologic order, for instance. Some stories are best told by starting in the middle, then describing how you got there and how you are going to go forward. The outline will make it easier for you to move around the timing of various parts of the story to get the most dramatic effect.

There is a downside to the outline, we think. Sometimes it is difficult to make the transition from one section of the outline to the next, making the essay sound like explanatory words hung on a frame, very skeletal in effect. That's why later in this chapter, we will pay special attention to transitions so that your essay flows well.

- **It's Time to Write**

Now it's time to fill in that outline and tell your story. You already have the basics - a theme in mind, a set of goals to meet, and an outline to work from.

- **It's Time to Rewrite**

Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo made dozens of sketches before embarking on their masterpieces. Read the biography of any writer and discover that everyone - yes, everyone - needs to rewrite. You must do so because this is not an e-mail or a last-minute book report, it's a ticket to money if you do it right.

- **Show, don't tell**

Go back through your essay. In every sentence where you have told the judges something, is there a way to show by example? Consider the following... "My family does not have a lot of money. I worked my way through high school at Wal-Mart."

This is a good piece of information to share. However, the message can be made more vivid by sharing more detail. "My family does not have a lot of money. I worked at the local Wal-Mart most evenings and did my homework on the bus ride home or after work."

Much better. Now the judges know that you were very busy and can feel the squeeze of needing to earn money and still get your schoolwork done. One more time. "My family does not have a lot of money. We work together on a schedule so I can earn money for college and stay on top of my schoolwork. Most weekdays after school, I attend one of my club meetings then catch the late bus home. I usually finish my math homework on the ride. I get home in time to grab supper ahead of time (Mom always has something ready on the stove) then work on other homework until Dad drives in at about 5:35 pm. We pass each other in the driveway, transferring keys and information. ("I aced the math test"; "It needs gas on the way home.") The fifteen-minute drive gets me to Wal-Mart in time to punch in for the 6 pm to closing shift. On nights that the family needs the car, Dad drives me both ways. I'm home again by 9:30 pm, in time to chat with my folks and watch thirty minutes of ESPN before going to bed."

Now this is a cool guy in a great family. Everybody participates, everybody cooperates. You can feel the close timing involved in making this situation work. You can hear the easy interaction of people who like one another.

- **Present Tense, if Possible**

The present tense allows people to live the information with you. It's not always possible, but it's a great strategy when it can work. The above paragraph could have been written in past tense, e.g., "Dad drove me both ways." It's still a powerful sentence, but it's already over. When Dad "drives," we're right there in the car.

- **Kill the Adjectives and Adverbs**

In Noah Lukeman's marvelous book about writing, *The First Five Pages*, he suggests that you go through your first page of writing (your whole essay, in this case) and circle every adjective and adverb. Then see if you can use a more descriptive noun or verb to make your writing crisper. He uses examples like substituting "he was a tyrant" for "he was a brutal man" or "he was sprinting" for "he was running quickly." Try it. Your writing will be immediately refreshed by using fewer words to do the job efficiently.

- **Make the Introduction Inviting**

The introduction invites your reader to keep going. This is not the place to summarize - why read the rest if you get the picture in the first paragraph? Instead, tantalize and encourage the next step. How? Use emotion, raise a question, and create surprise with a surprising fact.

Here is a possible opening for a discussion of a student's work with a literacy program.

I am a literacy volunteer. I did not decide to do this work because studies report that 21 percent of adults (over 40 million) in this country are functionally illiterate or because 43 percent of people with reading deficiencies live in poverty or even because 70 percent of people with reading deficiencies have no job or only a part-time job. My reason for becoming a literacy volunteer was much simpler. My Dad couldn't read.

Okay, I'm hooked. I didn't really know how bad the literacy problem is, but, even more, now I need to know if this person was able to teach her Dad to read, and how this person, with an illiterate parent, made it to the point of applying for a scholarship and heading for college.

- **Create Workable Transitions:**

The trick with transitions is to show your reader where they are going next and why it's a logical next step. Try not to use standard transitional phrases like "Secondly" or "As a consequence." Try repeating the prior thought and connecting to the next task. For example, "Once I learned how to scale rocks on the artificial rock face, I needed to try out my skills on a real mountain."

- **A Compelling Conclusion:**

As in the introduction, don't summarize. Essays are too short to need a review at the conclusion. Instead, reemphasize the main point or circle back to the beginning and tie the loop. Consider the literacy introduction. The body of the essay should have been about the student, her efforts as a volunteer, her feelings about the difficulties faced by those who can't read, her recognition of the gift that reading is, and her decision to pursue a teaching career as a result of her experience. This story begs for a conclusion that answers the question, "Did her Dad learn to read?"

Some possibilities:

"Dad may never read Dostoyevsky, but we are both thrilled that he can now read his sister's letters from his hometown in Romania and doesn't have to pretend to read the newspaper anymore."

"Dad never did learn to read. But through his struggle, I learned that I want to give the gift of literacy to others, the gift that no one has been able to give to my Dad."

Very different endings, but in each, we hear the effect that the experience has had on the writer. That's the point. We gained insight into this woman's life through her writing.

- **Take a Breather:**

After you write and revise your essay, you need to take a break from it so that you can return with a fresh set of eyes. It's amazing how the sparkling prose you thought you wrote turns out to need a lot more work once you've gotten a little distance. Even more amazing is the realization that some of your writing is actually much better than you expected, now that you've followed some very standard writing rules.

- **Use Outside Readers:**

Ask people to read your essay and help you with honest feedback. Ask them what they liked most and least. Ask if the essay is written in a logical fashion with reasoning that is supported by examples or other proof. Ask your readers to correct typos and grammar. Every new pair of eyes helps.

- **I'm Not That Interesting!:**

You don't need to have an illiterate father or wage a battle against cancer to write an interesting essay. The guy who is working at Wal-Mart probably feels that he doesn't have time to be interesting - he's too busy working! Everybody's life has interest, and every essay topic can be made compelling by looking at how that topic affects the human condition and how you fit into that human condition.

- **Congratulate Yourself:**

The scholarship essay is by far the most difficult part of the application. You have overcome the biggest obstacle to applying for a scholarship.

How To Win Scholarships⁴

- **Flexibility**

You must be able to write about a variety of topics that may or may not be exciting to you, in a fluid and thoughtful way, demonstrating that you are a scholar or would like to be a scholar. This may be the most difficult part about becoming a successful scholarship winner but you can do it.

- **Confidence**

You must understand yourself well enough to create a compelling portrait of who you are. You must understand your audience well enough to be able to position your skills and strengths as deserving of their support.

Knowing yourself takes more work than writing down a list of extracurricular activities. You need to find the "method behind the madness" of your life and present it in a winning way because scholarship committees award funding to candidates they can understand and relate to and who distinguish themselves from other candidates by their ability to communicate their specialness.

- **Keep going and don't give up!**

Beyond the obvious fact that every extra dollar can help you and your family, the scholarship process is also a way to develop the winning skills that will serve you well in whatever you do in your life. The ability to organize, prioritize, write well, match message to audience and most of all, know yourself, are gifts you should give yourself as soon as possible. College scholarships are the ideal form of student aid, as they're basically gifts that never have to be repaid.

Scholarship Don'ts

- **Vaguely address the topic**

Don't go off topic trying to get your point across if it doesn't match the theme. Be careful when trying to reuse material from another essay.

- **Use clichéd examples**

If you get to select your topic, it is important to choose a memorable and unique topic so that you will stand out. If you choose a topic that is personal to you, your passion will come through.

- **Lack voice**

Make sure your personal voice comes through so the judges can hear you, in your own words.

- **Fail to give details**

Don't be too broad; give examples of what you have done.

- **Forget the Basics**

Pay attention to spelling and grammar, this is very distracting to a judge.

⁴ Information retrieved from www.scholarshiphelp.org

Tips on Letters of Recommendation⁵

Scholarship letters of recommendation show that people in your life respect your skills and accomplishments and are willing to say so in writing and sign their names.

- **Who Should You Ask?**

First of all, the person who writes a recommendation for you should be someone who knows you relatively well. That doesn't mean that only long-time associates qualify. It does mean that the recommender has had enough interaction with you to give a genuine assessment of your skills and achievements.

The people you choose to write recommendations must have the ability to write well. These letters are very influential in your case for a scholarship, and you need to be sure that your recommenders can translate their thoughts about you into writing. It may not always be possible to know how well people can write but, to the extent that you do know or can find out, try to select the best writers available to you.

It is also very important that your recommenders can be relied upon to produce the necessary letters in the right time frame. Again, there is no way to be sure on this point, but it's sensible to avoid people who have the reputation of missing deadlines or being procrastinators.

Where do you find people to write scholarship letters of recommendation for you? Consider teachers in classes where you did well, athletic coaches, club advisors, volunteer work supervisors, employers, religious leaders, or friends of the family who are familiar with you and hold a position that lends credibility to the recommendation, such as the family's attorney, your doctor, or a local businessman.

- **Analyze Your Need for Letters**

Once you know which scholarships you will be applying for, review any directions for the letters of recommendation. Some applications will ask that the letters of recommendation address specific topics; others will simply ask for letters. The goal of your review is to determine where you may be able to use the same letter of recommendation for multiple applications.

In some cases, you may be able to combine the requirements of various scholarships to develop a slightly more overall letter of recommendation outline. Clearly, you have to be sure that you do not attempt to create a laundry list letter outline that serves no purpose well. However, it is very helpful to reduce the number of individual, specifically targeted letters of recommendation required.

If you are able to combine letter requirements, you will have the opportunity to ask one person to write a recommendation letter that will be sent to multiple scholarship funds.

However, be sure that each letter of recommendation is addressed to a specific individual or at least to a specific scholarship fund. Your letter writer may be willing to allow you to reproduce and personalize his or her response then provide those letters back to the writer on plain paper. The writer can then copy the letters onto letterhead and sign them. In that way, you have met many scholarship requirements simply and effectively with the least inconvenience to your letter writer.

- **Requesting a Letter of Recommendation**

First and foremost, please recognize that writing a letter of recommendation is not a simple task. You will be asking someone to work hard on a good letter that will represent you well. Approach your potential letter writers with a degree of humility and acknowledge upfront the commitment you are requesting and your appreciation for their help. Offer to make the job as easy as possible for them by doing some or all of the following things.

⁵ Information retrieved from www.scholarshiphelp.org

- Provide all the information your letter writer will need. Make sure that he or she has a written explanation of the topics to be covered in the application.
- Provide a list of your extracurricular activities.
- Provide a copy of one of your college essays so the writer has a sense of your approach to the college application process and gains a bit more insight into your life.
- Provide them with a recommendation letter template.

Give your letter writers as much lead time as possible. It is very likely that some of your letter writers have been asked to provide recommendations for others as well. Asking and providing materials early gives you the best chance of getting your recommendation letter on time. Plus, if your letter writer subscribes to the "first in-first out" inventory system, you may get your letter even more quickly.

Check in with your letter writer at some point in the process to be sure he or she has everything needed. This check is both a supportive touch and also allows you to politely jog the writer's memory and be sure your letter is in the works. Be sure to ask that the writer use official letterhead if possible.

After you receive the letter, write a note of appreciation. Writers of letters of recommendation agree to do so out of their own enthusiasm for students going on to college and their admirable interest in being supportive. Let your letter writers know that you appreciate their help.

- **Evaluating Your Letters of Recommendation**

Review each letter you receive. Does the letter address the topics it needs to? Does the letter show strong support for you? Does the writer sound professional and well informed? Great! But what if...

What if the letter does not address all of the necessary topics? This is tricky. If you know the letter writer well, you may be able to approach them, point out the problem, and ask them to add some content on that topic. If you are uncomfortable with asking for a revision, you need to seriously think about whether the letter is usable. Your decision may depend upon whether you have alternative letter writers that you can ask and how much time is left before the application needs to be submitted. In a pinch, send the letter. It would be far worse to fail to submit the correct number of recommendation letters.

What if there is some other problem with the letter? The support is lukewarm or the letter is not well written. Weigh the facts. If the letter is not supportive of you, look for another writer. If the contents won't win a Pulitzer Prize, but the message of your worthiness for the scholarship comes across, it's probably okay.

- **Preservation**

Treat those signed scholarship letters of recommendation like the treasures that they are. Place them immediately into plastic covers and attach them into your three-ring binder. That way you know where they are, and they have multiple forms of protection.

Common Essay Questions

Your Field of Specialization and Academic Plans

Some scholarship applications will ask you to write about your major or field of study. These questions are used to determine how well you know your area of specialization and why you're interested in it.

Samples:

- How will your study of _____ contribute to your immediate or long range career plans?
- Why do you want to be a _____?
- Explain the importance of (your major) in today's society.
- What do you think the industry of _____ will be like in the next 10 years?
- What are the most important issues your field is facing today?

Current Events and Social Issues

To test your skills at problem-solving and check how up to date you are on current issues, many scholarship applications include questions about problems and issues facing society.

Samples:

- What do you consider to be the single most important societal problem? Why?
- If you had the authority to change your school in a positive way, what specific changes would you make?
- Pick a controversial problem on college campuses and suggest a solution.
- What do you see as the greatest threat to the environment today?

Personal Achievements

Scholarships exist to reward and encourage achievement. So you shouldn't be surprised to find essay topics that ask you to brag a little.

Samples:

- Describe how you have demonstrated leadership ability both in and out of school.
- Discuss a special attribute or accomplishment that sets you apart.
- Describe your most meaningful achievements and how they relate to your field of study and your future goals.
- Why are you a good candidate to receive this award?

Background and Influences

Who you are is closely tied to where you've been and who you've known. To learn more about you, some scholarship committees will ask you to write about your background and major influences.

Samples:

- Pick an experience from your own life and explain how it has influenced your development.
- Who in your life has been your biggest influence and why?
- How has your family background affected the way you see the world?
- How has your education contributed to who you are today?

Future Plans and Goals

Scholarship sponsors look for applicants with vision and motivation, so they might ask about your goals and aspirations.

Samples:

- Briefly describe your long- and short-term goals.
- Where do you see yourself 10 years from now?
- Why do you want to get a college education?

Financial Need

Many scholarship providers have a charitable goal: They want to provide money for students who are going to

have trouble paying for college. In addition to asking for information about your financial situation, these committees may want a more detailed and personal account of your financial need.

Samples:

- From a financial standpoint, what impact would this scholarship have on your education?
- State any special personal or family circumstances affecting your need for financial assistance.
- How have you been financing your college education?

Random Topics

Some essay questions don't seem directly related to your education, but committees use them to test your creativity and get a more well-rounded sense of your personality.

Samples:

- Choose a person or persons you admire and explain why.
- Choose a book or books and that have affected you deeply and explain why.

Recommended Scholarship websites/search engines

Search for scholarships through FAFSA: www.fafsa.ed.gov

- Search for scholarships in general by clicking on *search for scholarships*. This is a large and comprehensive list.

or

- Search for scholarships based on your personal information by clicking on *scholarship matching wizard*. You will need to create an account and enter your preferences.

Search for scholarships for the state of Idaho:

https://www.boardofed.idaho.gov/scholarship/scholarship_jump.asp

Search for scholarships through Idaho Career Information System: <http://idcis.intocareers.org>

click on guest or create an account

WEBSITES:

FastWeb: www.fastweb.com

FinAid: The Smart Students Guide to Financial Aid: www.finaid.org

Hispanic College Fund Scholarships: www.hispanicfund.org

Coca-Cola Two Year College Scholarships: www.coca-colascholars.org

Presidential Freedom Scholarships: www.nationalservice.org

Scholarship America: www.scholarshipamerica.org

CollegeNet Scholarship Database: www.collegenet.com

Scholarship help from Black Excel, minority scholarships: www.blackexcel.org

Students Re-entering College: www.back2college.com

Internships with INROADS: www.inroads.org

Minority scholarships: www.instituteforbrandleadership.org

Gates Millennium Scholarships: www.gmsp.org

Scholarship search: www.findtuition.com and www.scholarships.com

Search engine that lists hundreds of nursing and health care related scholarships: www.campusrn.com

Sallie Mae: www.salliemae.com

Definition of Terms

Application - The document that students review and fill out in order to apply for a scholarship. It consists of general demographic information about the student.

Award Date - The date the scholarship is scheduled to be dispersed or completed. Typically, scholarship checks are cut on this day.

Awards - The monetary value of the scholarship. Typically can be used for tuition, fees, room and board, food and books.

Criteria - The guidelines for students to follow in order to be eligible for a scholarship. These can include GPA, being in a certain degree program, being at a certain level within the program etc.

Deadline Date - The date when applications must be received by the organization, in their office. Typically, no applications are accepted after this date.

Donor - The organization or individuals who contribute money to establish the scholarship fund.

FAFSA - The applications for all federal financial aid. Is a source of loans, grants and scholarships. www.fafsa.ed.gov

Financial Aid - A term used to describe all monetary assistance that a student receives to assist with college expenses. Including loans, grants, tuition reimbursement and scholarships.

Funds - The sum of money that is disbursed to the student.

Grants - Similar to scholarships in that they do not have to be paid back. Usually these funds are automatically received by the student when they apply for financial aid.

GPA - Grade Point Average. This is based on your class level, grade and classes completed.

Internship - an opportunity to integrate career related experience into your education, by participating in planned supervised work.

Letters of Recommendation - Letters which are often required for scholarship applications. Typically these should be written by a teacher, supervisor or someone other than a family member.

Merit Based Scholarship - these awards are based on a student's academic, artistic, athletic or other abilities, and often factor in an applicant's extracurricular activities and community service record.

Need Based Scholarship - these awards are based on the student and family's financial record.

Pell Grant - form of financial aid that is issued through the federal government and is based on financial need. Does not have to be repaid.

Post-Secondary - any education after high school or GED level.

Scholarship Committee - A group of individuals affiliated with an organization, which are qualified to determine the recipients of a scholarship. Each organization had different members.

Scholarship Essay - The formal written paper that many organizations require to evaluate each potential applicant to determine which will get the scholarship.

Scholarship Organization - Can be a company, non-profit, or group of individuals that are formed to give scholarships.

Student Loans - The sum of money that is borrowed that must be paid back to pay for college expenses. May be through the federal government or a private lender.

Work Study - a form of financial aid, this is applied for through the FAFSA, is based on need, does not have to be paid back, is not a grant or a loan. Usually is paid jobs on campus.