



# Scholarship Workday – enabling Idaho youth to continue their education

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## AT A GLANCE

**Youth gain knowledge to economically continue their education, to increase their earning potential and strengthen Idaho communities.**

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### The Situation

With the rising cost of higher education and the recovering economy, more students and families are looking for ways to continue their education with less debt. The interest rate for a federal education loan varies from 3.86% to 7.21%; this can add a significant amount of debt to a family. As a result, many students are searching for private or non-profit support to fund their continued education.

The Idaho Department of Labor reports the average Idahoan with a two-year degree earns a 57% higher wage than the Idahoan who has not continued their education past high school. Families and students realize the value of education, however the reality of paying for that education is a burden.

### Our Response

UI Scholarship Workday is a University of Idaho Extension program designed to guide youth and their families through the process of finding and applying for scholarships. The goal is to enable Idaho's youth to continue their education, assuring higher earning potential in their lifetimes and strengthening Idaho communities.

In 2012, two UI Extension Educators in Southern Idaho offered a program for students and families to learn how to find, plan for and write high quality scholarship, financial aid and grant or gift applications. This program was requested by interested

parties and a larger effort was coordinated in 2014 by six UI Educators to reach across the state of Idaho. Educators from Bingham, Camas/Gooding, Minidoka, Twin Falls and Benewah counties joined with the State 4-H Youth Development office and the University of Idaho Financial Aid & Scholarships office to arrange for delivery of this information in technology classrooms across the state. High school students and families from each area were invited to participate in the state wide Scholarship Workday.

A format in which a student learns, at least in part, through online delivery of content and instruction was used. In addition, there was a facilitator/presenter at each of the six sites and UI 4-H Youth Development used Adobe Connect to broadcast the webinar. Using this technology increased the number of participants attending, reaching youth in rural and urban communities across Idaho at the same time.

The program led youth and their families through the following topics:

- Why Higher Education?
- What is Financial Aid?
- Where do You Find Scholarships?
- Essentials for Success
- Following Scholarship Application Requirements
- Tips for Writing Essays and Using Action Words

Those in attendance received numerous handouts and other tools to increase their opportunity of finding and successfully applying for scholarships, grants and awards. Following the online training, students and families participated in face-to-face discussion with other participants and the site facilitators.

## **Program Outcomes**

A survey (Survey Monkey) was developed and distributed to all youth and adult participants following the event. Of the 125 people in attendance, 60 completed the online survey.

Of those responding, 77% had plans to attend some form of higher education and 65% learned that there is a benefit from receiving higher education. Some high schools offer this type of program for their students, so it was no surprise to learn that 82% of the youth had some knowledge of this information prior to attending the program. However, 50% reported that they now have an increased awareness of where to find financial aid and 57% now have more knowledge of where to find scholarships. Of those responding, 74% now also understand the importance of filling out scholarship applications correctly.

In addition, 44% have a better understanding of college options and feel they are better prepared to apply for financial aid, 39% feel they will be able to write more effective scholarship essays, 43% will be able to keep more accurate and useful records and 52% learned at least one new time management principle.

Finally, 59% were not currently active in 4-H programs in their area. This result shows that UI Educators reached a whole new demographic and demonstrated to these individuals the value of UI Extension programs.

## **The Future**

There is a continuing need for this information in Idaho communities. The webinar could be improved by utilizing other technologies for delivery and by scheduling the event earlier in the school year. This would allow families additional time to research and complete financial aid and scholarship applications before major deadlines. Also, offering this information in a pre-recorded format would allow sites to choose the best time for their communities to participate in this program. There could also be an additional focus of improved employment access skills for students not planning to attend higher education or for those needing employment to add to their scholarship and financial aid support. These skills could include employment resume development, interview skills and desirable employee traits such as punctuality, speaking with supervisors and working with co-workers.

The information gathered using Survey Monkey from the 2014 Scholarship Workday participants will guide development of future workdays as well as open opportunities for other UI Extension programs to use a combination of online instruction and classroom facilitator-led discussion. The planning committee is considering other online delivery systems and additional sites in 2015.

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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