



# SCHOLARSHIPS

## Navigating the Process

A frequent misconception about scholarships is that they are only available to the highest ranking academically. The average and above average student often don't apply because they don't think they will qualify. While academic ranking and grades are important, that is only one part of your student's credentials.

Most students and parents are not fully informed about scholarship opportunities available to them. There are many sources for scholarships. Some examples are:

- All universities that the student is considering attending
- County Community Foundations
- Veteran's Organizations
- Clubs
- Associations related to field of study

Scholarships generally have a variety of criteria that have to be met by the recipient. *Criteria* is what the donor (may be a person, group, company or organization) determines are important points regarding the student(s) they want to assist. Universities and organizations are interested in finding the applicant(s) who best fit the criteria for a scholarship award.

Common university and organization scholarship criteria may include any or a combination of:

- Resident area (state, city, county, portion of county, school corporation)
- Grade point average (GPA) (may be as much as a 3.5 or a minimum of 2.0 that must be maintained at all times)
- Class Ranking
- Student status – Full time or Part time (typical full time is 12 credit hours or more, part time is 6-11 credit hours)
- Major of study
- Family affiliation with or membership in an organization
- Leadership qualities
- Talent in an area related to major
- Financial need

### **DO:**

- Research
  - Newspapers: clip information on scholarships distributed within the community that your student meets the qualifications for.
  - Online: university websites (ex: [vinu.edu](http://vinu.edu)) many websites have information about the scholarships they offer.
  - Online: FREE websites: [scholarships.com](http://scholarships.com), [fastweb.com](http://fastweb.com), [getreadyforcollege.org](http://getreadyforcollege.org) and many others offer tips and resources for scholarship searches.
  - School guidance office/Senior Counselor(s): one of the best resources for local scholarships.
  - Pay attention to deadlines and application requirements.

To successfully qualify for scholarships, students need to begin working right away on "setting themselves apart" from the other applicants.

### **DO:**

- Improve grades and study habits.
- Track extra-curricular activities (community, school, church, athletics, job) Consider leadership positions if the student is able to do so without adversely affecting grades. Make note of awards received, offices held, responsibilities, etc.
- Request letters of recommendation from those who are directly related to the activities.
- Start building the student's "resume".
- Take the SAT or ACT more than once if needed, to improve scores.



## READY TO APPLY?

Once your student has determined what college(s) he or she wants to consider attending, identify the policies of the scholarship office for each university. **Do they require a separate application for each scholarship? Does one application work for all of the scholarships they have available?**

Each university may have different requirements. At Vincennes University, we have one general application that covers all but a very few scholarships. Our office selects the recipients that best meet the criteria of each particular scholarship. This academic year, VU will process approximately 750 awards for a total of nearly \$ 1.5 million.

### DO:

- Apply for any/all scholarships to every university that you are considering. They want you to apply – scholarships are also an incentive that universities utilize to entice students to enroll.
- Complete each application **fully and legibly**, including any requested items. You may be able to use copies of recommendation letters and other information for more than one application.
- Keep a copy of all applications. Keep the original of all letters of recommendation and other documents. Scan them in to your computer and keep a master file if possible.
- Plan to turn all applications in **no later than one week before the deadline**. Sooner if possible. Thousands of scholarship dollars are forfeited because of late applications. Most students apply to universities and for scholarships the first semester of the senior year.
- File the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) by March 10 of the calendar year your student will start college. Use estimated information or previous year's tax information if necessary. File it every year. *Even if you don't think you will qualify for free financial aid (grants), **FILE ANYWAY**, you may be surprised. Middle income families will often qualify for some assistance and the laws regarding financial aid change often. Many scholarships require filing of the FAFSA to determine financial status of applicants.*
- Follow Up – the student needs to follow up with the scholarship office to make sure the application was received and inquire when notification of awards will be made.
- If three weeks have passed after when notification was indicated – inquire again. Email is usually the preferred method of communication.

Many students determine where they will attend college based on the “scholarship package” they are offered. At Vincennes University, a scholarship award is not an agreement to enroll. If you receive a scholarship offer (s), make sure you understand the *Criteria* of the scholarship before accepting it. However, it's ok to go ahead and **accept it** – even if you are not certain you will attend VU. Be sure to accept it **by the deadline given**, or you will lose the opportunity. If you decide not to enroll, notify the scholarship office that you will not be attending. It will be awarded to another student. Make sure you understand the policies of the university before accepting an award.

If you receive an award, don't assume that it is a renewable scholarship and that you will receive it every year. Most scholarships are not automatically renewable. A new application must be submitted each academic year.

### PARENTS DON'T:

- Allow or encourage your students to be involved in so many activities for the purpose of resume building that their grades suffer or that they have no free time. While preparing them for their future is important, high school is still supposed to be an enjoyable time in a young person's life.
- Don't rely solely on your student's high school guidance counselor. Your student is your top priority. They have many students in need of attention.
- Do not fill out the application for them or take on the responsibility of applying for the scholarships on their behalf. It is the student's responsibility. Help them prepare, help research opportunities, encourage their progress, proof-read – but don't do it for them. An application not prepared by a student is very obvious.
- Don't be a “Helicopter” (don't hover)... If you have need to contact the university, do so professionally, courteously and only when absolutely necessary. Many parents do not make a favorable impression on behalf of their student. We need and want to work with your student and that is part of the process of helping them be successful in college.