

Scholarship Checklist (Expanded Version)

© by the Brazos Education Foundation

Name: _____

For the most successful outcome, consider the college application and financial aid search process as a partnership between the parent and the student. Few students have the skills, experience, and time to manage this alone without parental assistance.

Planning Activities

- ☐ Identify your college major, many high schools offer resources for assisting you in selecting a career. Check with your high school counselor on resources available to you. The Department of Labor also has a website that provides career information at <http://www.mynextmove.org/>.
- ☐ Research the job opportunities in your career to determine how successful you will be in securing a job after you finish college. The Bureau of Labor Statistics offers a section on their website to help you with this review (<http://www.bls.gov/ooh/>).
- ☐ Review your college major to determine if your major will directly lead you to a job. For example, if you have identified History as a major, you need to examine what types of jobs that are directly related to this job. Those jobs include: teaching history at the high school level (which includes some classes in education), and teaching history in college which require a Master's and preferably a Doctorate Degree.
- ☐ Evaluate your scholarship potential. How are your grades, SAT or ACT test scores, extracurricular activities or community service involvement? If you are not in the top 20% of your graduating class; or have above average test scores, or if you have not been actively involved in extracurricular activities or community service, your chances of securing a scholarship fall dramatically. In some cases, if you write an awesome scholarship essay, you can make up for shortfalls in your grades and test scores.
- ☐ Identify and apply for colleges that you are interested in that have your major.
- ☐ Consider studying for and/or enrolling in a test preparation course for the SAT and ACT. You may find that by raising your score a few points can mean thousands of dollars in aid. Check each specific college website for details on scholarships based on test scores and GPA.

Scholarship Research

- ☐ Check your local library to see if they offer books that provide a list of scholarships. For example, the Publisher Peterson's has a book with about 300,000 scholarships that is cross referenced with scholarship by college major, state of residence, religious affiliation and many other categories. The book is titled Scholarships, Grants and Prizes and a new version is issued each year. Similar resources include: College Board Scholarship Handbook; The Ultimate Scholarship Book: Billions of Dollars in Scholarships, Grants and Prizes ; Peterson's; How to Go to College for Almost Free
- ☐ Review scholarship opportunities in your state to determine if there are state specific scholarships that you might qualify for. For example, the State of Texas has several scholarships that students might qualify for and you can find this list of scholarships at: <http://www.collegeforalltexans.com/index.cfm?ObjectID=699A998A-E7F3-1DCC-3F460F26136EEA05>
- ☐ Identify local scholarship opportunities including ones offered by your high school (Check with your Counselor), local bank or credit union, the agency your parents use to insure your home or automobile, newspaper, local service organizations (Kiwanis, Rotary, others), your parents employer, other organizations that your parents belong to (teacher association, union, others) might provide a scholarship.
- ☐ Sign up for one or more of the scholarship search engines. The search engine asks the student to answer approximately 20 questions and then the search engine matches scholarships according to the student's responses. The most powerful search engine can be found at www.fastweb.com . Fastweb will provide you with a lot of scholarship opportunities and a lot of email unrelated to scholarships. The scholarship search engine with no junk email can be found at: <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/pay-for-college/grants-scholarships> .
- ☐ Beware of scholarship scams. If you are asked to send in money for the scholarship, you should walk away. If it is too good to be true – it might be a scam.
- ☐ Research the scholarships you find to determine if they fit your strengths. For example, the scholarship might focus on community service. If you have not had the opportunity to participate in many community service activities, you might not want to apply for a scholarship which focuses on community service.
- ☐ Categorize your list of scholarships in one of these categories - local, state, federal, others. Determine which scholarships you will apply for. Try to find at least 10 scholarships that you can apply for (more if possible). Consider applying for scholarships which have the least amount of competition. Local scholarships typically have the fewest numbers of applicants. However, if you have high test scores, high GPA, a high class rank, a large amount of community service, or heavy involvement in a club or organization offering a scholarship, do not be afraid of competing for national scholarships.

- ☐ Check with your high school counselor, home school organization (if applicable) and college website to see if they have a list of scholarships. Virtually all colleges offer merit based scholarships (given for outstanding test scores and GPA) and need based scholarships. Many of these college scholarships have deadlines early in the calendar year and must be submitted on-line.

Get Organized

- ☐ Once you have identified which scholarships you will apply for, establish some type of filing system for each scholarship you will apply for. This system might include manila folders for each scholarship.
- ☐ Create a spreadsheet or some other method to track the due dates and items needed for each scholarship. For example, the spreadsheet might include the name of the scholarship, a column for each item required (i.e. picture, letters of reference, and essay topics) and the date the scholarship is due.

Community Service

- ☐ Track your community Service (See Attachment A for a Sample Tracking Form)
- ☐ Seek community service activities at your high school, in your church, in your community or initiate your own community service activity.

Extracurricular Activities

- ☐ Track your extracurricular activities (See Attachment A for a Sample Tracking Form)
- ☐ Seek opportunities to add extracurricular activities

Honors and Awards

- ☐ Track your honors and awards (See Attachment A for a Sample Tracking Form)

Employment

- ☐ Track the jobs you have had and be sure to include self employment (See Attachment A for a Sample Tracking Form)

Essay

- ☐ Review the article on the Brazos Education Foundation Website on “Tips on writing the successful college scholarship essay” (<http://www.brazosfoundation.org/resources/>).
- ☐ Get help in writing the scholarship essay. Check the library to find books on writing the successful scholarship essay. Do you know any students who received a scholarship? Ask these students for tips on writing the successful essay.
- ☐ Be sure you follow the essay requirements set forth in the scholarship. Many scholarships have limits on the length of the essay.

Recommendation Letters

- ☐ Request multiple copies of a letter of recommendation from two individuals familiar with your academic record (teacher, principal) and/or athletic record (coach). Seek the letters well in advance of any deadline to submit the scholarship application. If the person will email you the letter to use, that can be helpful. Make sure the letter of recommendation is generic and not specific to any one scholarship. Make sure you get multiple copies of the letters of recommendation.
- ☐ Request a letter of recommendation from a person in the community if needed for your scholarship application.
- ☐ Thank the person who provided you with the letter of recommendation.

Transcripts

- ☐ Request multiple copies of your transcript from your high school counselor. Scholarships will require a wide variety of methods of submitting your transcript such as 1) submitting a photocopy of your transcript 2) submitting an original transcript in a sealed envelope from the high school 3) submitting an original transcript from the high school in a sealed envelope with the Counselors signature across the seal. Be sure you get enough transcripts to meet your scholarship needs.

Scholarship Applications

- ☐ Always type applications – neatness counts! If the scholarship application is not available electronically and you have the ability to scan the document into an Adobe PDF format you should scan the document and store it electronically. The most current version of Adobe Reader allows you to type information on the scholarship application using the Tools bar and selecting the Content within Adobe Reader.
- ☐ Double check applications to make sure that all requested information is supplied and that supporting documents are included.

- ☐ Keep copies of all completed scholarship applications.
- ☐ Consider mailing all scholarship applications with tracking or receipt requested.
- ☐ Promptly send thank you note if awarded a scholarship.

FAFSA (Free Application for Financial Student Aid)

- ☐ One Parent needs to apply for a PIN (Personal Identification Number) from the federal government at www.pin.ed.gov . If you have other children that have attended college, you may already have a PIN number. Once you receive your PIN, please keep this number in a place where you can find it again. You and your child will need your PIN to complete the FAFSA each year in college.
- ☐ The student will need to apply for a PIN (Personal Identification Number) from the federal government at www.pin.ed.gov .
- ☐ Send FAFSA to all colleges that you have applied to
- ☐ Once you receive your award letters from potential colleges, compare them. You may use comparable school award letters to negotiate a higher award at your first choice college.
- ☐ Complete the FAFSA at <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/> . You are encouraged to complete the FAFSA in January of your child's senior year in high school and each year in college. Practically speaking, you typically will not receive the wage data from your employer until the end of January and so you typically cannot file your FAFSA until after this time unless you estimate this wage information. You are encouraged to file your FAFSA as soon as possible because financial aid is awarded on a first come, first to receive basis and there is a limited amount of financial aid. You will need a copy of your income taxes or be able to estimate your income. In addition, you are encouraged to download your tax data into the FAFSA (if you have it completed when you file the FAFSA).

In some cases, parents do not file the FAFSA because they think they make too much money to qualify for financial aid. However, there may be state specific scholarship programs that are merit based which means that the scholarships are not tied to income. For example, the State of Texas has a Top 10% scholarship program. Students graduating in the Top 10% of their graduating class are eligible for a scholarship as long as they have financial need* and they file the FAFSA on a timely basis. Colleges or Universities may also have merit based financial aid awards but require the student to complete the FAFSA in order to receive these awards. Therefore, you should always file a FAFSA.

- * If the Expected Family Contribution (EFC) exceeds the Cost of Attendance (COA) once the FAFSA is filed, there is not financial need. However, you must have a very high income to generate an EFC that is higher than the COA of the college. The EFC is calculated once you file your FAFSA.

Attachment A

Sample Tracking Form

[illegible]

Employment, Internships, Summer Activity				
Job Title	Employer	Hrs. per week	From:	To: