



COMMUNITY COLLEGE OF
DENVER

SCHOLARSHIP GUIDE

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WELCOME TO THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE OF DENVER SCHOLARSHIP GUIDE

Introduction

Finding financial resources to cover the cost of college is a daily concern for most students, and finding a scholarship can seem like an overwhelming task. However, there are many scholarships right in our backyard and beyond, and many opportunities for students to ease their financial concerns. We have put together an easy-to-use guide to help you research scholarships, organize your research, and have given you simple steps to put your research to work for you. This Scholarship guide will help you get started and give you additional scholarship search engine websites.

This Scholarship Booklet will give you a brief overview of:

- **The College Opportunity Fund**
- **Different types of financial aid**
- **FAFSA**
- **Organizing scholarships searches**
- **Scholarship facts and myths**
- **Preparing a solid essay**
- **Scholarship search engines**
- **Tips for scholarship searches**

Remember that it is never too early to begin your search. Scholarship application deadlines occur throughout the year, and the sooner you begin to prepare to submit your applications, the easier it will be!

FUNDING YOUR EDUCATION

The College Opportunity Fund (COF)

An act of the Colorado State Legislature in May, 2004 established a new way for the state to provide state tax dollar support for higher education at the resident undergraduate level. The state is no longer appropriating monies to institutions for these students, but is providing direct funding to these students through the “College Opportunity Fund” or “COF.” These funds are also known as “vouchers” or “stipends.”

Do I have to qualify for financial aid in order to apply to COF and get a COF voucher?

No. COF is totally separate from financial aid. You do not have to complete a financial aid application to qualify for COF.

Am I eligible for vouchers as long as I am an undergraduate in Colorado?

No. COF vouchers will be capped at 145 cumulative attempted semester credit hours, with some exceptions. Students classified as undergraduate students, taking additional undergraduate work after receipt of a bachelor’s degree may have 30 more undergraduate hours added to their limits. The Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE) will track each student’s hours across all Colorado institutions. The cap does not include AP or IB credit earned while in high school.

What happens if I take some COF eligible hours at another Colorado public institution and those COF hours do not transfer?

If you take COF eligible course at any Colorado Institution participating in COF, those hours are reported as part of your COF hours used and count toward your 145 COF hour limit.

The COF Application Process through Colorado Student Loan Program

You will be required to apply for the Colorado Opportunity Fund voucher program through the Colorado Student Loan Program. This application needs to be completed only once in your lifetime. The link to the Colorado Student Loan Program (CSLP) application is: <http://cofweb.cslp.org/cofapp/>. The application process is quick and requires only your name, social security number, and your date of birth. The Colorado Student Loan Program application needs to be completed before your school can get information on your COF eligible hours, and before your school can credit your tuition with a voucher.

If you do not apply for the COF voucher program and authorize the funds, you will be responsible for paying your full tuition, including the portion that would have been covered by the College Opportunity Fund. In addition, you need to authorize your COF every semester at the Institution you are attending.

FUNDING YOUR EDUCATION

Three Types of Financial Aid

1. Scholarships and Grants

This is the BEST type of aid because it is FREE money. It does not have to be paid back. Scholarship sources include colleges, the government and private organizations. This aid is based on many factors such as merit, need, ability, talent, special qualities or a combination of factors. Sometimes scholarships consider financial need, but not always. Like scholarships, grants are a wonderful way to finance your college education, because unlike loans they do not have to be paid back. Students can receive grants from a variety of sources, including private organizations, educational institutions, professional associations, and federal and state governments. Grants may be awarded based on a student's financial need, ethnicity, religious affiliation, record of achievement, association, or special interests. Federal grants include the Pell Grant, which is awarded to students in need.

2. Work-Study Program

Federal and State Work-Study programs provide money for part-time jobs for CCD students. This allows students to earn money at a job on campus or off campus to pay for educational expenses such as rent, food, and books. Work-Study is one of the most requested funds so it is awarded to those who apply early and indicate on their FAFSA that they would want work-study funds. CCD's Financial Aid Office recommends work-study as a great way to pay for educational expenses.

3. Loans

Federal loans are student loans and the least desirable type of financial aid. Loans must be repaid after a student graduates, takes fewer than 6 credit hours, or drops out of school. They must be repaid with interest. The federal government sets the interest rates on these loans. These loans cannot be forgiven through bankruptcy. The government can take your tax returns and garnish your wages if you do not pay the loans back. Before borrowing a loan an Entrance Interview (information about the loan) and a Promissory Note (promising you will pay the loan back) must be completed. CCD's Financial Aid Office recommends that students borrow as little as possible to reduce debt the student will have upon graduating from college.

FUNDING YOUR EDUCATION

Fill Out Your FAFSA

What is a FAFSA?

A FAFSA is a Free Application for Federal Student Aid. It is one of the most important forms you will fill out in your career as a college student. All students who wish to be considered for financial aid must complete a FAFSA. The federal government uses this form to determine your eligibility for financial aid, which includes: Grants, Work-Study, Scholarships and Loans. You MUST file a new FAFSA every year in order to be considered for financial aid. Apply as early as possible after January 1st for the following academic year, which begins with the fall semester.

Why should I complete a FAFSA?

A FAFSA is used to determine how much aid you are eligible for. Many scholarships require that applicants be eligible for financial aid by their schools.

Checklist of Documents Needed

You will need records of income earned in the year prior to when you will start school. **You may also need records of your parents' income information if you are a dependent student** (see next page). Keep these records! You may need them again. Do not mail your records with your signature page. Information you will need to refer to:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Your Social Security Card
<input type="checkbox"/>	Your driver's license (if any)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Your most recent W-2 Forms and other records of money earned
	Your (and your spouse's, if you are married) most recent Federal Income Tax Return
<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ IRS Form 1040, 1040A, 1040EZ- need to be signed▪ Foreign tax return, or▪ Tax return for Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the U.S. Virgin Islands, the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, or Palau
<input type="checkbox"/>	Your parents' most recent Federal Income Tax Return (if you are a dependent student)
	Your most recent untaxed income records
<input type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Social Security▪ Temporary Assistance to Needy Families▪ Welfare, or▪ Veterans benefits records
<input type="checkbox"/>	Your current bank statements
<input type="checkbox"/>	Your current business and investment mortgage information, business and farm records, stock, bond, and other investment records
<input type="checkbox"/>	Your alien registration or permanent residence card (if you are not a U.S. citizen)

Keep copies of these records, you may need them again.

FUNDING YOUR EDUCATION

Fill Out Your FAFSA (Cont.)

Before completing your FAFSA online, you must obtain a PIN number at www.pin.ed.gov. A PIN allows you to sign your FAFSA electronically. If you are a dependent student, your parents will also need to obtain a PIN in order to electronically sign your FAFSA. Once you have obtained your PIN, you may proceed to www.fafsa.ed.gov to begin your FAFSA.

When you complete your FAFSA, there is an area for you to select the types of financial aid in which you are interested, including work-study and loans. If you have any interest in these, indicate so on your FAFSA.

Finally, after completing all steps of the FAFSA application make sure to:

- Print the confirmation page
- Print the electronic signature page to mail in (do not mail your records with your signature page).
- **Keep copies of these records, you may need them again.**

What happens next?

Within a few weeks you will receive a Student Aid Report (SAR), which lists all the information you provided on the application. Your school will also receive this report. Review your SAR. If you find errors you can make corrections at www.fafsa.ed.gov. If you don't receive your SAR in 3-4 weeks, call 1800-433-3243 (1-800-4-FED-AID).

SCHOLARSHIP BASICS

What does the application process involve?

The application process for each scholarship is different. A typical application consists of a one-to-two page form requesting general biographical information and an essay. Essay topics also vary. The essay is a critical part of the application because it is often the only information the selection committee will have about each candidate.

When are scholarship applications available?

Scholarship applications are usually available four to eight weeks prior to the application deadline. If the deadline for application is in early May, the form should be available by late February or early March. The application process usually takes place a semester prior to the semester that you receive the money. You are responsible to obtain the application form either from the campus scholarship office or directly from the organization offering the scholarship.

How much money should I expect?

Scholarship awards vary in amount from \$50 to thousands of dollars. The most common scholarship amount is about \$500 on a one-time basis. You should have other financial resources lined up to help pay for your education. You are allowed to receive more than one scholarship at a time.

Types of Scholarships

Internal to the College or University

These scholarships are often awarded based on merit. They are sometimes specific to a degree or program in which a student is involved. There are often also general scholarships available to all students who meet the specific eligibility criteria. Application processes vary by college or university. Some schools may require multiple scholarship applications while others may only require one. It is important to check with the school in order to optimize scholarship opportunities.

Local/Regional

These scholarships are generally easier to win than national awards. They are sometimes offered by local organizations, such as credit unions, churches, and other organizations in which students or parents are involved. Other times, scholarships are offered by regional and state-wide organizations, such as labor unions, associations, and non-profit groups. It can be very effective to apply for smaller, local scholarships because there is generally less competition for these funds. Smaller, local scholarships may have fewer than a dozen applicants and are at times begging for students to apply.

National

Eligibility criteria vary greatly and are usually based on the values or goals of the group offering the scholarship. Some of the more common criteria include grade point average, financial need, sex, age, race, ethnic identity, religious affiliation, major or minor, geographic location, talent, athletic ability, community activism, hobbies, and/or membership or involvement in a particular organization.

SCHOLARSHIP BASICS

Scholarship Myths

Many deserving students may not win scholarships because they do not know the truth behind these myths.

Myth 1: “Only ‘straight-A’ students win scholarships.”

The Truth: Of course, good grades are important, and for some merit-based scholarships, they are essential. However, many scholarship committees consider more than grades. There are other scholarships that focus on factors such as:

Community Service	Minority Students	First Generation
Athletics	Gender	High School Attended
A Health Challenge	Ethnicity	Transfer Student
Writing and Public Speaking	Family Affiliations	Single Parent
The Arts and Music	Physical Characteristics	Child of Foster Care
Intended College Major	Place of Origin	Foster Care Provider
Religious Affiliation	Non-Traditional Student	Obstacles Overcome
Disability	Military Experience	Extracurricular Interests/Activities
Low Income	Bilingual Students	Parents Employment Affiliation
Non-Resident Students	Sexual Orientation	

Myth 2: “There is so much ‘free money’ out there that scholarships are easy to win.”

The Truth: This myth is partially true. There are billions of dollars available to help students pay for college. Unfortunately, it is not “free money.” Students have to put forth considerable effort to win scholarships. The application process takes time and energy. Students must find an appropriate scholarship, get the application materials, put together a quality application package, and submit it by the deadline.

Myth 3: “Students should work hard on only a few scholarships to give themselves the best chance to win,” OR, “Students should enter as many scholarships as possible to give themselves the best chance to win.”

The Truth: The truth is that students should enter as many scholarships for which they are eligible, and for which they can prepare a quality application.

Myth 4: “There are only scholarships that go directly to the institution and none that give money to subsidize the cost of living in order to continue school.”

The Truth: There are many scholarships which send award checks to the recipient, aware that academic retention must include meeting both personal and educational commitments in order for student success.

SCHOLARSHIP BASICS

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the difference between a lottery scholarship and a merit scholarship?

Most scholarships are awarded on the basis of merit; thus, students distinguished by academic excellence, participation in extracurricular activities, and involvement in community service have the best chance at receiving one of these rewards. Lottery scholarships, on the other hand, though not uncommon are chosen at random. This means that every student who applies for a chance at receiving a scholarship has an equal chance of winning.

What are my chances of receiving a scholarship?

This depends largely upon the scholarship, how well you meet qualifications, and the level of effort that you exert in your search. Typically, if you can find scholarships that are limited to students within a state, city, sport, or academic study, you have a better chance of winning. The more applicants there are for a particular offer, the less chance you have of winning. Choose scholarships that give you an opportunity to exercise your skills in an area of interest to you—this should increase your chance of winning. Also, keep in mind that to find money for college, you have to create your own success by committing the time and brain power necessary to achieve your goal.

How does community service increase my chances for receiving a scholarship?

Not only is community service experience a common essay topic, but your involvement in community service can distinguish you from other applicants. Scholarship providers often look for this quality because they are looking to assist in funding the education of someone who gives back to their community and values making contributions of time and service for its benefit.

Who should I ask to write my letter of recommendation?

Start by asking a teacher, employer, or mentor. Do not ask a friend or family member. A letter of recommendation is similar to a professional reference; choose someone who can articulate your strengths and praise your accomplishments.

If the required G.P.A. is 3.8 and I have a 3.7 should I still apply?

No. If you don't meet the criteria exactly you shouldn't apply. Scholarship offers typically receive thousands of applications. Anyone who doesn't meet the requirements is typically disqualified.

How quickly will I be notified?

You will typically be notified within a few weeks of the deadline, though this varies with each scholarship provider.

How does the scholarship provider choose a winner?

Each scholarship provider is looking for different skills or interests. A winner must meet all of the standard criteria required for the scholarship, but also distinguish himself from the rest of the applicants. Read about the scholarship and try to determine what exactly the scholarship provider is looking for so that you can emphasize your related qualities in your essay or cover letter.

Does the amount I receive in scholarships affect my eligibility for financial aid?

Yes. Often the scholarship provider gives your award to the college you are attending as credit towards your tuition. If this happens, the school adjusts your unmet financial need accordingly.

ORGANIZING A SCHOLARSHIP SEARCH

There are many steps that may be required when preparing a scholarship application. While not all of these items are always necessary, it is a good idea to have things in order before you begin applying so that the process is as smooth as possible.

1. Develop a list of your best scholarship prospects.
2. Make a timeline with the deadlines for each scholarship and post it where you'll see it everyday.
3. Request or download copies of each application.
4. Make a checklist of requirements for each.
5. Order academic transcripts now.
6. Complete your income taxes.
7. Organize your financial records.
8. Ask early for letters of reference.
9. Write an essay.
10. Apply for as many scholarships for which you are eligible.
11. Build on your portfolio of good prospects semester by semester, year by year.
12. Attend a scholarship workshop.

Organizing Your Materials

Buy an accordion file folder. Use the dividers to organize your scholarship application materials. Listed below is an example of how to organize your files and what documents to include.

Documents File

- Most recent tax return
- Financial records you will need to explain your financial circumstances, for example: utility bills, child care bills, medical expenses
- Your resume
- Academic transcripts
- Financial aid and award notices
- Student Aid Report
- Copy of your FAFSA

Application File

- A checklist of your scholarship search
- A copy of every application you have obtained and completed
- Timeline for your scholarship search with every deadline record clearly recorded

Essay File

- Drafts of your general scholarship essay
- Drafts of essays tailored for specific scholarships
- Back-up disk of your essay(s)

Letter of Reference File

- Accurate contact information for every person writing on your behalf
- A list of the dates you contacted them to ask for a letter (so you'll know when to contact them again)
- Copies of all letters received
- Copies of your personal profile

ORGANIZING A SCHOLARSHIP SEARCH

Starting Your Search

When is the best time to run a search?

Deadline dates for private aid applications typically range between October and March the year before you will need the scholarships, though there are some scholarship programs with deadlines scattered throughout the entire calendar year. The best time to begin looking for financial aid is at least one year before you actually need it, and then every year thereafter while you are still a student.

Where can I find scholarships?

At Your School

A good place to start is the financial aid office at your school. If you are a CCD student, contact the Office of Financial Aid in South Classroom 135 (303-556-2420). If you are a UCD student, go to the Scholarship/Resource Office at 1250 14th Street, Suite 120 in the CU Denver building (303-352-3608 or scholarships@cudenver.edu). These offices can often provide information about scholarships that are offered within the school, as well as outside resources.

In the Community

Scholarships may also be offered by charitable foundations, businesses, professional associations, labor unions, women's groups, ethnic and faith-based groups, special interest groups, the state and federal governments, and college academic departments. In your community, ask people about local organizations and groups that may be offering scholarships. You can also consider an advocacy group or professional association with which you are affiliated. Remember also to ask your own employer or union. In some cases it may also be worthwhile to ask parents about their own employers, professional affiliations, unions, military service, as you might qualify for a scholarship based on being a family member.

Online

Many free on-line databases have been developed to help you. Build your personal profile and follow up on all leads. The more complete your profile, the more responses you will receive. You may also use search engines to search by degree, interest, or professional organization in your field of study.

These databases are a good place to start your on-line search:

<http://www.fastweb.com>

<http://www.finaid.com>

<http://www.collegenet.com>

<http://www.collegboard.com>

<http://www.brokescholar.com>

<http://www.wiredscholar.com>

<http://4scholarships.4anything.com>

ORGANIZING A SCHOLARSHIP SEARCH

Interests and Attributes List

The following checklist offers prompts that may help you consider what interests and attributes you have that will help you sort through the many scholarships that are available. Think of anything about you or any activity that you are (or have been) involved in that will make your application appealing and unique. Remember to consider both the present and the past.

Ethnic Background	Religion	Parents' employers
Hobbies/Special Interests	Volunteer Work	Parents' Organizational Affiliations
Extracurricular Clubs, Groups	Special Courses of Study	Career Interests
Leadership Positions	Awards/Recognition	Planned Fields of Study
Jobs You Have Held	Sports	Other

WRITING YOUR SCHOLARSHIP ESSAY

Many scholarship applications require an essay. Scholarship essays should captivate readers and encourage them to care about the writer. Writing a good essay is not always easy. It takes time to put words on paper and finesse each sentence to convey the correct meaning. While there is no right or wrong way to write one, a good scholarship essay has a main point, is original, tells a story, and gives a vision of the future. It states clearly why the writer deserves to win, is honest, and doesn't exaggerate. A good scholarship essay focuses on the writer's eligibility for the scholarship. It avoids meaningless information and provides only what is requested.

Getting Started

Brainstorm

Get out a pencil and paper and go to town thinking about your subject. This means you should write down everything that comes to mind. Even ideas that seem disconnected should be jotted down somewhere so that you can refer to them later if you discover a logical way to use them. When you brainstorm, brilliance shines through. Too often, by censoring ourselves, we toss out our best ideas. Think critically; don't be critical of your thoughts.

Organize

When you are done brainstorming, organize your ideas into the most logical order. From these, you should be able to see an outline for your essay.

Research

You've established which brilliant ideas have made the cut, so support them. Textual support from noted authors or literary texts is always helpful. Use their ideas to add commentary to your own. Just be sure to cite your sources.

Write

Be Enthusiastic: Your interest in the topic you are writing about will shine through. If your writing says, "my mom made me write this essay and my hand hurts," it will not distinguish you. If you don't know your subject, involve yourself in it by doing research.

Share Information: When you write, you give the reader access to your thought life. For many people this is why writing is so intimidating. If you can get past the intimidation, however, and be entirely honest with your audience, something magical happens- your voice and thoughts become something of interest to another human being.

Teach Your Audience: By sharing with your audience, you create an opportunity to teach them. You've got their attention; after all, they believe you are a credible individual with interesting insight. Now they can learn. And guess what that makes you? Their teacher.

And Remember: Stay within your required word count.

WRITING YOUR SCHOLARSHIP ESSAY

Formatting Your Essay

One of the easiest ways to write a good essay is to follow the five paragraph essay format.

Introduction

Decide on your answer to the question asked of you. This is your basic thesis. Include your thesis as one or two sentences at the beginning of your introduction. Follow this with three pieces of evidence or support you will use to prove your thesis.

Body

Each of your three supporting points will be one paragraph in your essay. In each paragraph, begin with the connection between this point and your thesis. Then support your point with evidence that you discovered while brainstorming or researching. The final sentence of each paragraph within the body should transition the reader into the subject of the next paragraph.

Conclusion

Begin your concluding paragraph by restating your thesis. Include the three points you have used to prove your thesis. End your concluding paragraph with a statement of extension which will (hopefully) cause the reader to look beyond what you have written.

When your essay is completed, make sure to **proofread for grammar and spelling mistakes**. Typos and mistakes lose scholarships. Have someone else proofread your essay as well, and have them **point out any unclear passages**. Above all, ask yourself if the essay convinces you that you deserve the scholarship.

WRITING YOUR SCHOLARSHIP ESSAY

Other Essay Writing Tips:

- Hook readers early, making them care about you
- Address every question asked
- Tell a compelling story
 - What makes you unique?
 - Why do you qualify for this particular scholarship?
 - What makes you a good investment?
 - What obstacles have you overcome?
 - What is your family history?
 - Are you the first generation in your family to go to college?
 - What are you doing with your life?
 - What are your educational plans and goals?
 - What are your career goals?
 - How will this scholarship help?
- Put yourself in the scholarship committee's shoes
 - What do you want them to know about you?
 - Be creative
 - Be honest
 - Make your strengths shine
- Write your essay very carefully
 - Answer the question carefully
 - Follow guidelines for length very carefully
 - Use standard font size, margins, and spacing
 - Use active verb form and descriptive language
 - Be specific
 - Keep your essay within the required word count
 - **Proofread, proofread, proofread-** don't rely on spell-check

CREATING YOUR RESUME

Many scholarship applications require including a resume. If you don't already have one, here are some easy steps to develop an effective resume. You will want to layout your resume differently depending on the amount of overall work experience you have, as well as your level of experience in the field for which you are applying or in which you have interest. If you don't have much experience in a specific career field, it's best to detail your past work experience and include the skills acquired in your previous work experience.

I. The Header

The header should contain your full name and all necessary contact information, including your address and at least one phone number. If you have an e-mail address, include it, as well.

II. Education

In this section, include your current school and the degree you are working toward, as well as the years that you have attended the school. If you have attended other colleges, list those as well. If you are a recent high school graduate, you may also include your high school. Make sure to list any degrees or awards you received. Always list the most recent school first. If you've taken any training classes for previous jobs, include them in this section.

III. Work Experience

Always include your most recent work experience at the top, and include all relevant experience. Incorporate your job title, the years worked at each job, and your responsibilities in each position. In this section, you should also include volunteer experience as well as any internships

IV. Skills

It is important to include as many of the skills you have learned in previous education and work experience as possible. This can include computer skills, customer service skills, and other specific skills that will help you appear valuable and unique to potential employers (and scholarship foundations).

To give you a better idea of how this looks, see the basic sample resume on the next page. Remember to make your resume your own by formatting it to fit the information you are providing. Make sure that your spelling and grammar are proper, as your resume is often a first impression you are giving to the reader.

CREATING YOUR RESUME (SAMPLE)

Barbara Crystal

123456 Brownlow Blvd

Greenbay, CA 11222

(312)555-3492

BCrystal@brownlow.edu

EDUCATION

Brownlow University, Greenbay, CA

Bachelor of Arts in Sociology expected in 2008. Dean's list.

Winslow High School, Winslow, AZ

Cum Laude, June 2004

EXPERIENCE

Residential Counselor

Talent Identification Center Summer Programs at Whipton College

Whipton, Missouri. June-August, 2005-2006.

- Supervised counseling groups of 15 junior high school-aged students
- Acted as liaison between program administrators and parents
- Assisted instructors during supervised study sessions

Account Assistant

Greenbay Savings and Loan

Greenbay, CA. September 2004- June 2005.

- Managed weekend processing of account payments for corporate clients
- Produced quarterly reports detailing account growth

Office Assistant/Salesperson

B & R Plumbing Supplies

Winslow, AZ. June 2003- August 2003.

- Finalized sales, managed customer and inventory files
- Duties also included typing and accounting, greeting customers and answering phones

ADDITIONAL SKILLS

Experience with Windows XP, Mac OS, Microsoft Office, Internet Explorer, Outlook Express, and database applications.

Fluent in Spanish.

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION/ REFERENCE

A recommender is like a star witness who will testify about your achievements and character. Choose individuals who can write about you as a student and as a person. Applications usually require just two or three letters of recommendation. Ask people who know your strengths to write your letters of recommendation.

Teachers and counselors are usually the best choices. Employers or community leaders can also be good options if they know you well and can emphasize your best qualities and achievements.

Ask for recommendations early so there is enough time to get them in comfortably before the deadline. Be considerate and smart- waiting until the last minute may not give your recommenders enough time to do you justice and will cause you both unnecessary stress.

Provide information to your recommenders about the kind of letter you need and the specific questions to be addressed in the letter. If possible, provide a copy of the scholarship application. You can also give your recommenders a personal profile which would remind them about your relationship with them and your future plans and goals. Giving them this information will help them write a more personal letter about you.

Additional Tips for Requesting Recommendations

Give your recommender a deadline, allowing him or her at least four weeks to complete the letter.

Ask the recommender to get you the letter at least two weeks before your scholarship deadline.

Provide the recommender with a stamped envelope addressed to the school

Offer a list of your activities and awards to help the writing process.

Send thank you notes to everyone who provided you a recommendation along with updates on your college plans.

Keep copies of your letters of recommendation.

TOP TEN TIPS

As you begin the process of applying for scholarships, remember these tips to help you be successful!

- 1. Do not spend money to get money.**
You can find out about and apply for scholarships and financial aid for free. Never pay for a customized scholarship search. You can conduct your own free search on many websites. The most you should pay to find out about a scholarship is the cost of a postage stamp.
- 2. Apply only if you are eligible.**
Read all of the scholarship requirements and directions carefully to make sure you're eligible before you send in your application. Your application will not be considered if you're not eligible.
- 3. Complete the application in full.**
If a question doesn't apply to you, note that on the application. Never leave it blank.
- 4. Follow directions and ask for help if you need it.**
Provide everything that is required, but don't send things that aren't requested- you could be disqualified. If you have problems with the application, call the funding organization and ask questions.
- 5. Neatness counts.**
Make several photocopies of all the forms you receive. Use the copies as working drafts to develop your application packet. Try to always type your application or complete an application online. If you must print, do so neatly and legibly.
- 6. Be prepared for essay questions and recommendation letters.**
Have an early idea of who would be willing and best to write you a recommendation letter. Be familiar with the types of essay questions that are frequently asked on scholarships.
- 7. Make sure your essay makes an impression.**
The key to writing a strong essay is to be personal and specific. Include concrete details to make your experiences come alive: who, what, where and when. Include activities that are community service oriented.
- 8. Watch out for deadlines.**
To help stay on track, impose a deadline on yourself that is at least two weeks before the stated deadline. Use this time to proofread your application before you send it off.
- 9. Make copies before sending (and make sure you send it to the correct address!)**
Prior to sending your application, make extra hardcopies of the entire packet as well as electronic copies to a disc/floppy or by sending it to your e-mail. This will eliminate having to start from the beginning on other scholarship applications by using copy and paste. Make sure your name appears on each page of your application to ensure that nothing is lost.
- 10. Give it a final look-over.**
Proofread the entire application carefully. Be on the lookout for misspelled words or grammatical errors. Ask a friend, teacher, or parent to proofread it as well. Check off each section required. Make sure you have enough postage required.