

# Exploring Scholarship Opportunities

A Presentation For  
SUNY New Paltz Students



# Goals of the Presentation

- What is a Scholarship?
- Benefits of Scholarship Awards
- Types of Scholarships
- Exploring Scholarship Opportunities
- Why Should You Be Awarded A Scholarship?
- Be Prepared To Be Prepared!
- Eight Common Mistakes on Scholarship Applications
- Tips For Writing Your Scholarship Essay
- Private Scholarship Search Tips and Scams
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# What is a Scholarship?

- A scholarship is a grant of financial aid awarded to a student, as for the purpose of attending a college.
- A scholarship is a type of financial aid, in the form of a grant that does not have to be repaid by the recipient. Scholarships are most often given to students for one of two reasons: achievement (academics or other areas) or financial need.
- Scholarships must be included as a resource in a student's financial aid package.
- Scholarships can only have an impact on loan aid. Scholarships do not affect grant aid.



# Benefits of Scholarship Awards

- As tuition costs continue to escalate, scholarships allow students to attain an education that may otherwise not be affordable due to financial constraints. Scholarships also enable students and parents to accrue less loan debt to pay for college.
- Scholarships lessen a student's financial worries, allowing the student to focus on what college is really about - academics.
- Scholarships recognize a student's academic accomplishments, and students who excel and have a passion for excellence.



# Types of Scholarships

- Scholarships for Current SUNY New Paltz Students:
  - A new scholarship catalog is published every March listing all the available scholarships for the upcoming academic year.
  - The catalog is available at: [newpaltz.academicworks.com](http://newpaltz.academicworks.com).
- Private Scholarships

# The Common Link

- There is a common link among all scholarship winners - THEY APPLY!!!
- This may be a lot of work, which, however, can be shortened by rethinking and tailoring one application so that it can be used over and over again for other applications.
- There is a learning curve to applying for scholarships. Talk to past winners. You can learn from emulating someone who has applied successfully.

# Exploring Scholarship Opportunities

- Finding out about and applying for scholarships can be a time consuming and complex activity. Students may want to consider the process of finding scholarship sources as a research paper. The benefits of this project are identifying sources of monetary assistance that is considered gift aid as a resource for paying for college.
- Scholarships are not only for geniuses, so do not be dissuaded from applying because your grades may not be tops. Other criteria for scholarships include community service, leadership, hobbies, program of study, and pure luck.



# Show Me The Money!



- A lot of scholarship information is sent directly to colleges, and can be made available to those who request it. Also tap the resources of other colleges, which may have different information.
- Some approaches worth trying include:
  - Check the SUNY New Paltz Financial Aid website for private scholarship opportunities.
  - Quiz your parents and your friends for potential sources.
  - Check all college catalogues for scholarship information.
  - Use the internet sources.

# Why Should You Be Awarded A Scholarship?

- What do you have to offer the donor: are they making an investment in a successful, contributing member of society? Will you be a good example or role model to others in your community?
- How will you use the scholarship? Assume that all applicants need the money or they would not be applying. Rather than saying, "I need the scholarship because I need the money," tell the donor how it will be used. For example, "I will use this scholarship to purchase extra supplies needed especially for my major".

# Be Prepared To Be Prepared!

- Students must be prepared to do a bit of writing and need to follow through on all requests:
  - Write to the scholarship source requesting an application (or one may be able to apply online or print out an application). If the application is to be mailed out, be sure to enclose a cover letter that includes a brief description of why the student is applying, where the information to apply was found, and the importance of the scholarship.

# Be Prepared To Be Prepared!

- o If the student receives a “reject” letter, the student must write a thank you letter for the opportunity to apply. If the student can apply again in a future year, be sure to include a request to be put on a mailing list, if it is available.
- o If the student receives the scholarship, the student must send a thank you letter immediately. Be sure to include a description of how the scholarship will positively impact the pursuit of a college education.

# Eight Common Mistakes on Scholarship Applications

- 1) Forgetting to include your name and/or address! You would be surprised how many students do not include their name or address on an application.
- 2) Submit an incomplete application. Make sure you include all required references, photos, transcripts, and essays.
- 3) Do not be rude in your essay.
- 4) Submit a dirty application. Use a plate for your lunch, not your application.

# Eight Common Mistakes on Scholarship Applications (continued)

- 5) Apply when you do not meet their minimum requirements. If they require a minimum 3.0 Grade Point Average (GPA) and you have a 1.2 GPA, don't waste your time!
- 6) No one can read your application. The use of fancy, hard-to-read script typefaces on your essay should be avoided.
- 7) Spelling errors! Even one spelling error can doom your application! Remember, if you do not take the time to spell-check your application, the committee won't take the time to read it!
- 8) Forgetting to sign the application.

# Tips For Writing Your Scholarship Essay

- The intent of the autobiographical or personal essay is to allow the scholarship committee to know you better. Consider these three pointers:
  - 1) **DO NOT** start with your name, date, and place of birth, and the names of your parents. Try to avoid repeating information that can be found elsewhere on your application form or transcript.
  - 2) **DO** consider starting with a familiar saying that guides you, or a quotation that is particularly meaningful to you. This will help you focus on what is important to you about you.
  - 3) **DO** talk about what is important to you and your goals, past achievements, past failures and what you learned from them, activities that you are or were deeply involved in and committed to, and relationships that guided you in your development.

# Tips For Writing Your Scholarship Essay (continued)

- Start with an outline and then begin to write paragraphs about each point. Write about your dreams, goals, achievements, activities at home or school. Here is a sample outline:
  - I. Who are you?
  - II. Personal Characteristics (strengths, weaknesses, obstacles overcome or currently confronting, important involvement/activities)
  - III. What Are They
  - IV. Why Are They Important
  - V. How are You Involved
  - VI. Leadership (where you show your leadership such as at home, at work, in organizations, or with friends.)

# Private Scholarship Search Tips

- File a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) every year online at [studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa](https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa). Many scholarships as well as other types of financial aid depend on this information, and you have the right to accept or decline any financial aid offered.
- Look early. Start looking for scholarships a year before you anticipate needing and/or qualifying for them.
- Apply for as many scholarships as you can possibly manage.
- Be prepared to meet the deadlines for letters of recommendation, transcripts, essays, etc.

# Private Scholarship Search Tips (continued)

- Evaluate yourself in relation to the requirements:
  - What career do you hope to pursue?
  - How do your goals and ambitions relate to the implied goals of the scholarship?
  - How do your qualifications compare to the requirements of the scholarship?
  - What are your past successes, achievements, honors received and positions of leadership held?
  - What are your abilities and potential?
  - Where do you want to see yourself in five years? Ten Years?
  - For what accomplishments and in what way would you like to be remembered?

# Private Scholarship Scams

Seven common signs a scholarship is a scam:

1. Application or processing fees.
2. Loan fees or fees that are charged for listings or “exclusive” information.
3. Guaranteed winnings of a scholarship of your money back.
4. “Everybody is eligible” – each scholarship is geared towards selective criteria.
5. Unclaimed aid myth – “Billions of dollars of scholarships go unclaimed every year” and lastly,
6. “We will apply on your behalf”.
7. Services that ask for a credit card number or say you are a “finalist” in a contest that you did not enter.

Being cautious of scams prevents you from giving away money instead of obtaining it. Never give out your social security number, credit card number, or bank information.

# Scholarship Deadlines



- Scholarship opportunities always have deadlines. They can start in January and extend throughout the year (a good reason for starting early).
- A calendar spreadsheet should be started that will clearly identify the deadline date, as well as the requirements for the scholarship, which could be as easy as completing the application form or having to write an essay and obtaining letters of recommendation. If the scholarship is based on certain criteria, be prepared to provide documentation.

# Ten Tips For Success

- 1) Apply for a scholarship only if you are eligible. Read all of the scholarship requirements and directions carefully to make sure that you are eligible before you send in your application. Your application cannot win if you are not eligible for the scholarship.
- 2) Complete the application in full. If a question does not apply, note that on the application. Do not just leave it blank.
- 3) Follow directions. Provide everything that is required, but do not supply items that are not requested. You could be disqualified.

# Ten Tips For Success (continued)

- 4) Neatness counts. Make several photocopies of all the forms you receive. Use the copies as working drafts to develop your application packet. Always type your application. If you must print, do so neatly.
- 5) Make sure that your essay makes an impression. The key to writing a strong essay is to be personal and specific. Include concrete details to make your experience come alive: who, what, where and when.
- 6) Pay attention to the deadlines.

# Ten Tips For Success (continued)

- 7) Make copies before sending. Before sending your application, make a copy of the entire packet and keep it on file in case your application goes astray. Make sure your name (and social security number if applicable) appears on each page of your application to ensure that nothing is lost.
- 8) Give the application a final check. 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.

# Ten Tips For Success (continued)

- 9) Ask for help if you need it. If you have any problems with the application, call the funding organization and ask questions.
- 10) Remember, your application represents you! Your ability to submit a neat, timely, complete application reflects on you. It is your face to this organization. Take pride in yourself by submitting your best application.

# Expectations of Being a Scholarship Recipient

- 1) Acceptance of the award.
- 2) Agreeing to continue to meet the requirements of the scholarship.
- 3) Submitting a thank you letter to the donor(s).
- 4) If the scholarship is a SUNY New Paltz Foundation Scholarship, attendance to the annual scholarship reception is mandatory.



# Scholarship Thank You Letter Tips

## ■ Content suggestions:

- Tell the donor a bit about yourself, such as your hometown, family background, high school and other experiences that led you to study at SUNY New Paltz.
- Describe your current situation such as your major, area of study, your year at SUNY New Paltz, the things you enjoy doing, and the organizations in which you participate.
- Discuss your future plans including what your goals are while at SUNY New Paltz and what your career plans are.
- How has the scholarship helped you? Do not mention the amount of your scholarship award.

# Scholarship Thank You Letter Tips (continued)

## ■ Style Guidelines:

- Address the thank you letter to the fund donor, if it is a named fund. For an organization or general scholarship award, you can address it to "Dear Friend."
- **Letters must be typed.** The thank you letter won't work well if the donor can't read what you have written! A one page letter is fine. Please print your letter on regular white paper or light colored stationary.
- Proofread your letter. You communicate your intelligence through correct spelling and grammar. You can always ask someone else who has good proofreading skills to read your letter.
- Always put your name, with return address on the letter. You may want to include your email or phone number so the donor can contact you if he or she wants

# Helpful Websites

- <http://www.newpaltz.edu/financialaid/scholarships.html>
- <https://newpaltz.academicworks.com/>
- <http://www.fastweb.com/>
- <http://www.collegeboard.com/>
- <https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa>
- <http://www.collegenet.com/>