

SCHOLARSHIP RESEARCH GUIDE

WHERE ARE SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE?

- **COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES:** Contact the post-secondary schools you are interested in attending or check out their website. Almost all schools offer scholarships to future students. These may be based on a student's merit (GPA & test scores, etc.), financial need, or their intended college major.
- **STATE AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENT:** The state of West Virginia and the U.S. federal government offer scholarships and financial aid. Check out CFWV.com for state scholarships, such as the Promise Scholarship. Most federal financial aid is acquired by completing the FAFSA on www.fafsa.gov by March 1.
- **PRIVATE SCHOLARSHIPS:** Private businesses and donors offer many scholarships across the U.S. Many local businesses and employers have scholarships available for local students only. Scholarships that are sent to Musselman High School will be posted on the "Scholarships" page of the counseling website. Links to common scholarship search tools are also available for assistance in finding scholarships from across the nation.

HOW DO I APPLY FOR A SCHOLARSHIP?

- Scholarship applications will be available either online or as a paper application. Local scholarships available on the counseling website can be turned into the counseling office prior to the deadline to be mailed with a student's transcript.
- College and university-based scholarships may be applied automatically to a student's account, but some may require a separate application. Contact the school you plan to attend for directions on how to apply for these scholarships.
- Many private scholarships may still require an applicant to submit the FAFSA on www.fafsa.gov. Make sure to complete the FAFSA by March 1.

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HOW ARE SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS SELECTED?

- **MERIT-BASED SCHOLARSHIPS** are those that are awarded based on an applicant's academic merit. This is evaluated primarily by looking at an applicant's GPA and ACT or SAT scores, but may also include factors such as volunteer and extracurricular activities.
- **NEED-BASED SCHOLARSHIPS** are those that are awarded based on an applicant's financial need. Some scholarships in this category may have an income cutoff, but many depend on the pool of applicants for each scholarship. Do not assume that you make too much money for a particular scholarship.
- **LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION** are required for most scholarships. You should have three letters of recommendation to include with a scholarship application. These should be completed by a teacher, coach, employer, or leader of a service organization. When asking for a letter of recommendation, provide this person with an update resume and give them at least two weeks' notice so that they have time to write a well-crafted letter.
- **ESSAY OR AUTOBIOGRAPHY** is required for most scholarships. A scholarship may provide you with a specific prompt, but many simply ask for an autobiographical essay. Your autobiography should include information about your career and college goals and any unique personal or family circumstances, such as medical issues or financial hardships.
- **DEADLINES** are very important with scholarships. If you miss a scholarship deadline, even by one day, you will not be considered for the scholarship. Most scholarship deadlines are in late winter, typically in February or March, but every scholarship may have a different deadline.
- **ORGANIZATION AND TIDINESS** are important in earning a scholarship. Type or print in blue or black ink when completing a scholarship application. Be sure to include every document required by the application and make sure the application is organized correctly. Scholarship committees can easily spot an application that was rushed or incomplete and this will greatly hurt your chances of being selected.