

THE SCHOLARSHIP BLUEPRINT

Scholarships Don't Grow on Trees.

It's that time of year again – when students and parents call, e-mail, or schedule an appointment to ask for scholarships. By “ask,” they mean handpick scholarship applications as if there were a scholarship tree blooming in the counseling office.

So, like the good little educator I am, I teach. The first lesson is ... scholarships don't grow on trees. Now, I typically don't say what I mean quite that way, but the jest of the message is this – scholarships are earned, not gifted; so if you want one, go get it. That means *you* go get it. It will not find you. Think of the process in terms of part-time employment. It's your job to research, find, secure, and apply for any scholarships you wish to pursue. Therefore, you need a committed scholarship colleague or coach – a parent, guardian, big sister, grandfather, or any adult – willing to work alongside you on your quest for the scholarship gold.

Gearing Up.

Ready...Set...Go! The scholarship season runs from about October to May. Develop a system to organize the many applications you will touch during scholarship season. Visit the counseling office to determine what's needed from your counselor in order to produce a letter of recommendation. Decide which teachers you will ask to write letters of recommendations, and talk to them. Ask at least three to four teachers, because you want to have as many options as possible. If the letter can't be a strong one, then move on. Remember to give your teachers and counselor a three-week window to complete your letter of recommendation.

The Scholarship Colleague.

The scholarship application process works really well when there is someone to partner with the student, such as a parent. If you want to make a serious run for the scholarship pot of gold, know that it takes at least two people working diligently to complete an application. Here are my recommendations:

1. Parents -- complete the application
2. Students -- secure the recommendation letters and write the essays
3. Parents and students -- share the responsibility of putting together the completed packet



My daughter and I followed this blueprint exactly, and at the end of the year, our efforts yielded \$28K in scholarships.

The Blueprint.

1. Start a notebook to keep track of the following:
 - Student Resume
 - Number of hours spent in extracurricular activities, community service, and any jobs (no matter how small or large)
 - Copies of essays (prepare for topics such as “Why are you deserving of this scholarship?” and “How will a college degree benefit you?”)
 - SAT and/or ACT scores
 - An Excel spreadsheet that details deadlines and documents for each scholarship application
2. Complete the Harrison College and Career Center Information form, check the scholarship blog, and check the scholarship drawer for paper applications.
3. Check the scholarship web pages at the colleges you would like to attend.
4. Check the webpage of the department of your intended major.
5. Apply for any and all of the local scholarships that come in the counseling office (i.e. HHS PTSA, Georgia PTSA, Tippens, Cobb Schools Foundation, and local alumni fraternity and sorority chapters).
6. Make Google your best friend (search for professional organizations in your field of interest to determine if they offer scholarships).
7. Keep a copy of all completed and submitted applications.
8. Grow a thick skin. Even top students can win less than 30% of the scholarships to which they apply. So, you can't take it personally.
9. Apply, apply and apply!