

Track Down Awards From Individual Colleges

Here's the good news: Most colleges and universities offer some type of merit-based scholarship program. In fact, many schools offer a wide range of such scholarship opportunities.

Did you realize, for instance, that 7,000 merit scholarships (totaling a whopping \$15.3 million per year!) are awarded by the University of Texas at Austin?

Did you know that the University of California at Davis awards over 200 scholarships from individual academic departments?

Or that elite universities like Duke, Cal Tech, and the University of Chicago award scholarships that can cover the entire cost of tuition?

Unlike portable scholarships (awards given by private organizations that can be used at any school), these school-specific scholarships can only be used upon enrollment at the particular institution. If you choose not to attend the school offering the scholarship, you can't claim the award.

Furthermore, these funds are not typically paid to you directly (unless a personal stipend or research funds are included as part of the award). Rather than send you a check, schools usually deduct the scholarship amount from the total amount you need to pay. In this way, you can think of these awards as an automatic deduction from the school's "sticker price."



ATTENTION STUDENTS AND PARENTS: This article is designed to work together with Ben Kaplan's *Scholarship Starter Kit* CD. If you haven't received a CD, contact your college planner or counselor, or let us know at www.ScholarshipCoach.com/needkit

I should point out that scholarships offered by colleges and universities themselves can range from a few hundred dollars, to the entire cost of tuition, books, fees, room, and board.

Furthermore, some colleges offer additional perks to scholarship winners such as laptop computers, stipends for living expenses, priority on-campus housing, special seminar opportunities, and even summer learning experiences and travel abroad.

Types of Awards

If you've spent much time applying for scholarships from private organizations, foundations, corporations, associations, and community groups, you know that merit scholarships are awarded according to an endless and ever-changing list of judging criteria.

Some scholarships target students with specific hobbies. Other programs reward students from particular backgrounds and life circumstances.

Some are simply essay contests. Others require that applicants demonstrate such personal qualities as character, creativity, determination,

or compassion.

When it comes to scholarships offered by specific colleges and universities, however, award opportunities commonly fall into one of seven main categories.

1. OVERALL ADMISSIONS APPLICATION

Scholarships in this category are generally awarded based on the strength of a student's overall college admissions application.

Typically, a school's admissions office will rank applicants according to their entire application (including transcripts, activity lists, and essays), and award merit scholarships to those applicants they deem to be the strongest candidates.

2. EXCELLENCE IN A DISCIPLINE

Many universities, particularly those that award scholarships from individual academic departments, define merit in terms of a student's demonstrated ability in a given field.

This could include such fields as mathematics, engineering, foreign language, journalism, debate, music, or dance—to name just a few. In general, such fields typically include academic, artistic, and extracurricular endeavors.

3. GPAs AND TEST SCORES

Some schools choose to award scholarships solely on the basis of quantitative measurements—namely, GPAs and SAT (or ACT) scores. Colleges often define cutoffs for such scholarships in terms of how a student fared compared to other applicants. Students placing in the top 25, 10, or five percent of the applicant pool, for instance, would receive an award.

4. PRIOR CREDENTIALS

Some schools award merit scholarships to students who have achieved specific honors and accolades prior to college. Many colleges and universities, for instance, award scholarships to students who are selected as National Merit finalists. Others set aside scholarship awards to students who have participated in programs such as America's Junior Miss and the Hugh O'Brian Youth (HOBY) leadership program.

5. PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

Some colleges and universities earmark merit scholarships for students with specific ethnic backgrounds, organizational affiliations, gender, geographic residency, and prior schooling (such as awards for transfer students or adults returning to school).

6. ACADEMIC RESEARCH

Many colleges, including those that don't award other types of merit scholarships, provide research grants to worthy undergraduate and graduate students.

Such grants encourage independent research projects, such as those leading to a thesis or dissertation. Such funds often cover the cost of

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research-related expenses, materials, and travel.

7. COMMUNITY SERVICE AND ACTIVISM

Some colleges and universities set aside merit scholarships for students who have strong community service records or are involved in civic causes that benefit society (such as student efforts on behalf of improving the environment).

Where to Look

Even among scholarships awarded by a single college, there can be several different entities that administer and fund the various scholarship awards.

Start out by contacting both the admissions office and the financial aid office at schools you are considering attending. The greatest number of school-specific scholarships are offered by the college's admissions or financial aid offices—which use the awards as an incentive to attract desirable students to enroll. Such scholarships are often awarded on the basis of a student's college admissions application (no additional forms are needed).

As a result, savvy scholarship seekers spend more time on their college applications not only because they want to get admitted, but also because they want to get selected for the various scholarship prizes that

are available.

Some colleges even offer matching scholarships in which they provide you with an additional scholarship if you can bring in a comparable outside award.

Expand your search by targeting individual academic departments at your prospect schools. Contact the heads of these departments directly for any academic disciplines you are interested in pursuing.

Some departmental scholarships could be earmarked to attract incoming freshmen who have already exhibited potential in an academic field, but others are designed for sophomores, juniors, and seniors at the college who have already formally declared their academic majors. In some instances, the college's admissions and financial aid offices aren't even aware of many of these departmental scholarship programs!

You should also contact any specific offices at the school relating to special personal characteristics that you possess. Minority students, for instance, should contact the college office responsible for minority affairs; they may be aware of specific college-sponsored scholarships for minority students at the school.

The offices for international students, adult returning students, and students with disabilities are other

examples of good starting points for students who possess those particular characteristics.

Additionally, it is worth contacting independent foundations and alumni groups with ties to a given college—many of which offer lucrative scholarship programs on their own.

While the University of Notre Dame, for instance, does not offer merit scholarships itself, more than 130 Notre Dame alumni clubs across the U.S. offer scholarships to students from their respective geographic regions.

Likewise, students interested in attending the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill can receive prestigious and lucrative scholarships from the John Motley Morehead Foundation.

Finally, at some colleges, even extracurricular activity groups can get into the scholarship award action. One college student I interviewed earns about \$3,600 in scholarships per year because she is an active member of her school's speech and debate team. Another past winner had the cost of textbooks paid for her simply by being a dance team member.

As you target all of these different campus entities, here is the key question to ask: Who else at the college might know of specific scholarships that would be right for me? Once you ask this question a few times, you'll have a strong sense of the various scholarship opportunities offered by your favorite schools.

The author of this article, Ben Kaplan, is the publisher of ScholarshipCoach.com and the winner of more than two dozen scholarships worth \$90,000—enough to cover virtually the entire cost of his Harvard education.

ASK THE COACH

What are some top school-specific scholarships for incoming freshmen?



Although Ivy League schools (along with schools like Stanford University and MIT) don't award any merit scholarships, other top colleges do offer excellent merit-based funding opportunities. The following are six of the most prestigious, lucrative, and sought-after school-specific scholarships for incoming freshmen:

California Institute of Technology: Freshman Merit Awards

The Freshman Admissions Committee chooses a limited number of admitted freshmen for these merit scholarships, which range up to full tuition. Selected students are notified at the time of admission.

University of Chicago: College Honor Scholarships

The University of Chicago awards scholarships to "distinguished scholars who are also leaders" and who exhibit "curiosity and passion for the life of the mind." Several hundred scholarships, ranging up to full tuition, are awarded each year.

Duke University: Angier B. Duke Memorial Scholarships

The scholarships provide free tuition at Duke, funding for a summer program in England at Oxford University, and further financial assistance for those demonstrating additional financial need. Approximately 15 recipients are chosen each year.

Emory University: Emory Scholars Program

Each year, Emory University awards about 70 students scholarships that range from full tuition to full tuition plus expenses.

Johns Hopkins University: Hodson Scholarships

The university awards 15 freshmen with scholarships that are worth up to \$18,500 per year. The scholarships are renewable each year, and awards are based on academic and personal achievement and leadership.

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill: The Morehead Awards

The Morehead Awards provide merit scholarships to approximately 60 lucky recipients each year. The scholarship covers the entire cost of four years at the university and funds a four-year summer enrichment program. Students must be nominated by a participating high school (all those in North Carolina and Canada, as well as 140 high schools throughout the U.S. and 32 in Great Britain).

College-Specific Awards Worksheet

The purpose of this worksheet is to help you locate scholarships offered by specific colleges that you are considering attending. Follow the steps below to determine the types of scholarships being awarded by your favorite schools.

Name of School: _____

Website Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

E-mail Address: _____

Contact Person #1: _____

Contact Person #2: _____

TASK #1: Visit the admissions office and financial aid office websites for the college, and determine what general scholarship programs they have available. List these programs below.

| Name of Scholarship Program | Description |
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TASK #2: Sometimes you won't find a scholarship that is right for you unless you specifically ask for it. Shown below is a checklist of different types of merit scholarship awards that are most common at colleges across the nation. For any of the items that match your personal profile, call or e-mail the college's admissions and financial aid offices and ask if they have such programs.

- ☐ **Minority students**
(For students who are members of an ethnic minority)
- ☐ **Women in under-represented fields**
(For female students pursuing disciplines with lower female enrollment)
- ☐ **Adult/Non-Traditional students**
(For students over the age of 25)
- ☐ **First-generation students**
(For students who are the first in their family to attend college)
- ☐ **Children/grandchildren of alumni**
(For students whose parents or grandparents are alumni of the same college)
- ☐ **Valedictorians**
(For students who were valedictorians of their graduating class)
- ☐ **National Merit Scholars**
(For students who achieved recognition in the National Merit program)
- ☐ **Siblings of current students**
(For students who have one or more siblings attending the same college)
- ☐ **International students**
(For students from foreign countries)
- ☐ **Community service**
(For students who demonstrate exceptional community service commitment)
- ☐ **Extracurricular activities**
(For students who are active in specific extracurricular groups)
- ☐ **Regional affiliation**
(For students from certain geographic regions)
- ☐ **State residents**
(For students who are residents of the state in which they attend college)
- ☐ **Athletes (varsity or club level)**
(For students who are interested in playing college sports)

TASK #5: Finally, contact alumni groups and independent foundations that have close ties to the college. If you aren't sure what groups exist, contact the alumni relations office at the college and ask. List below the alumni groups and independent foundations you will contact:

After contacting these groups (including local chapters), list any scholarships you have located:

| Name of Scholarship Program | Description |
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