



COLLEGE PATH ADVISING

LLC

ESTD 2017

Scholarships & Financial Aid Workshop

Discover proven strategies to find, filter, and win real scholarship money for college. This workshop will equip you with practical tools to navigate the scholarship landscape with confidence.

Who Am I

- Worked in Higher Education for 17 yrs
- Director of Admissions for 8 yrs at two different schools (John F. Kennedy University & Meredith College)
- Student Affairs: Housing, Student Activities & International Students
- Former Associate Dean of Students at the California College of the Arts
- BA in English from University of Southern Cal and MA in Student Personnel Administration in Higher Education from New York University
- Currently – College Path Advising (8+ years)
- Associate Member Independent Educational Consultant Association



What We'll Cover Today

01

Types of Scholarships

Understanding the four main categories and where they come from

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3 Filtering & Fit

How to quickly identify which scholarships are worth your time

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5 Avoiding Mistakes

Common pitfalls that waste time and reduce your chances

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2 Finding Opportunities

The best places to discover scholarships that match your profile

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4 Staying Organized

Systems and tools to manage deadlines and requirements

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6 Essential Resources

Databases, websites, and tools you'll use throughout your search

Understanding the Four Main Categories

Not all scholarships work the same way. Knowing these categories helps you strategize your search and application approach effectively.



Institutional Merit Aid

Offered directly by colleges based on your Common App, transcript, test scores, activities, and essays. **Most require no separate application** — you're automatically considered when you apply for admission.



Special Named Scholarships

Higher-value awards from colleges that typically require additional essays, interviews, or participation in scholarship weekends. **Students are often invited to apply** after demonstrating exceptional qualifications.



Departmental Scholarships

Funded by specific academic departments like music, engineering, or business. These often appear **inside your student portal after acceptance** and are especially common at NC public universities.



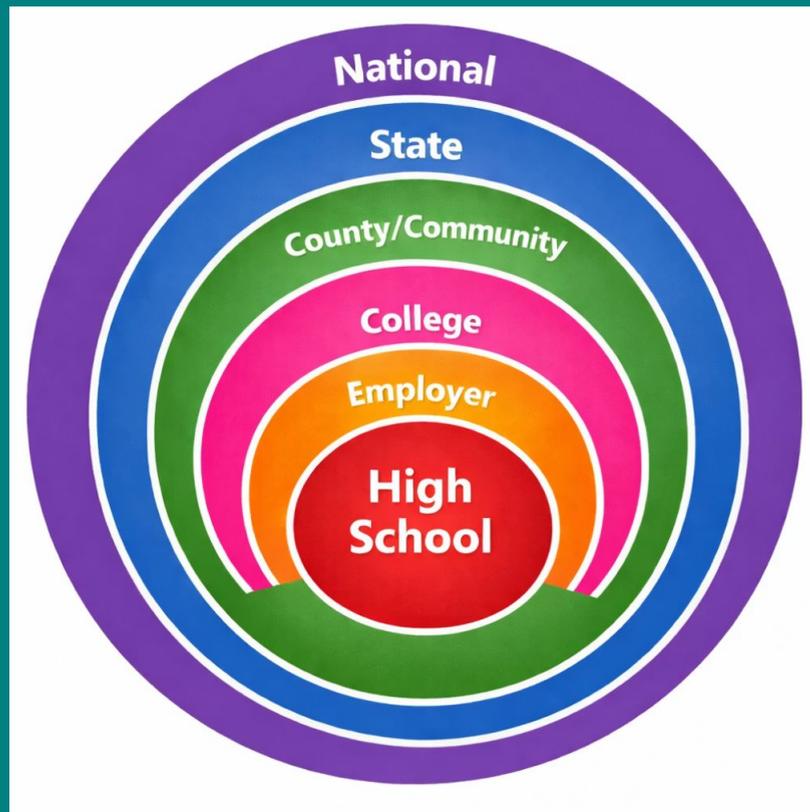
Outside Scholarships

Not tied to any college — these come from high schools, counties, towns, employers, foundations, and community organizations. You can use these funds at any college you attend.

Where Students Actually Win

Money Scholarship Search Priority

Focus your energy where you have the **highest probability of winning**. Local scholarships have dramatically smaller applicant pools, which means better odds for you.



Why Local Matters

Smaller applicant pools mean **higher odds** of winning

Organizations often award **multiple scholarships** each year

- Many repeat annually, so you can apply again as a college student
- Local committees understand your community context

Selection Criteria

- Relevant Experience
- Technical Skills
- Cultural Fit
- Communication Skills
- Problem-Solving
- Leadership Solving
- Leadership Potential
- Education & Certifications
- References Verified

How Scholarships Are Awarded

Merit-Based

Awards based on academic achievement, test scores, leadership, talents, or other accomplishments. **No financial need required.**

- GPA thresholds
- Test score minimums
- Athletic or artistic achievement
- Leadership roles

Need-Based

Awards that consider your family's financial situation. Often require FAFSA data or tax returns to determine eligibility.

- Student Aid Index (SAI)
- Household income
- Family size
- Special circumstances

Combination

Many scholarships consider **both merit and need**. Meeting academic standards is required, but financial need may influence final selection.

Important: Every scholarship sets its own rules. Don't assume — always read the full eligibility criteria before investing time in an application.

Essential Questions to Ask

Missing even one requirement means **automatic rejection**. Save yourself time and frustration by thoroughly vetting each opportunity before you start.

What's the deadline?

Mark it in your calendar with a buffer for recommendations and document gathering. Many deadlines are in **February through April**.

Am I eligible?

Check grade level, residency requirements, citizenship status, and any demographic restrictions carefully.

What materials are required?

Essays, transcripts, recommendation letters, portfolios, tax returns — **list everything** and note how long each will take.

Are there interviews or events?

Some scholarships require in-person interviews, scholarship weekends, or project presentations. Can you commit to these?

Are there college restrictions?

Verify whether the scholarship can be used at any college or only at specific institutions or for certain majors.

Is it renewable?

Some scholarships provide funding for multiple years if you maintain requirements — this significantly increases the value.

How to Tell If a Scholarship Fits

You

Before spending hours on an application, use this quick filtering process to determine if a scholarship is truly a good match for your profile.



Geographic Requirements

Is it specific to your school, town, county, or state? These restrictions significantly narrow the competition.



Demographic

Criteria gender-specific requirements, ethnicity, religious affiliation, or membership in particular organizations. **Don't assume based on the scholarship name alone** — always read the full description.



Financial Need

If it's need-based, do you meet their definition? Requirements vary widely between organizations.



Academic Standards

Verify GPA minimums, class rank requirements, or specific course prerequisites that might disqualify you.



Intended Major or Career

Some scholarships target specific fields like STEM, education, healthcare, or trades. Others are open to any major.



Organizational

Mission **Read about the foundation or donor. Do your values, experiences, or goals align with their mission?** This fit often matters more than you think.

Understanding Financial Need

General Guidelines

The **Student Aid Index (SAI)** from your FAFSA is the primary indicator colleges and many scholarships use to assess financial need.

SAI under ~6,000

Pell Grant eligible

You'll likely qualify for most need-based scholarships and maximum federal aid.

SAI ~6,000–10,000

Moderate need

You may qualify for some need-based scholarships and partial federal aid.

SAI over ~10,000–16,000

Limited need qualification

Many need-based scholarships won't apply, but some may still consider you.

Local Scholarships Are Different

Many local community scholarships define "need" more loosely than federal programs or colleges do.

Always check the specific requirements — you might qualify even if your SAI seems too high for federal aid.

Some consider:

- Number of siblings in college
- Recent job loss or medical expenses
- Single-parent households
- Other special circumstances

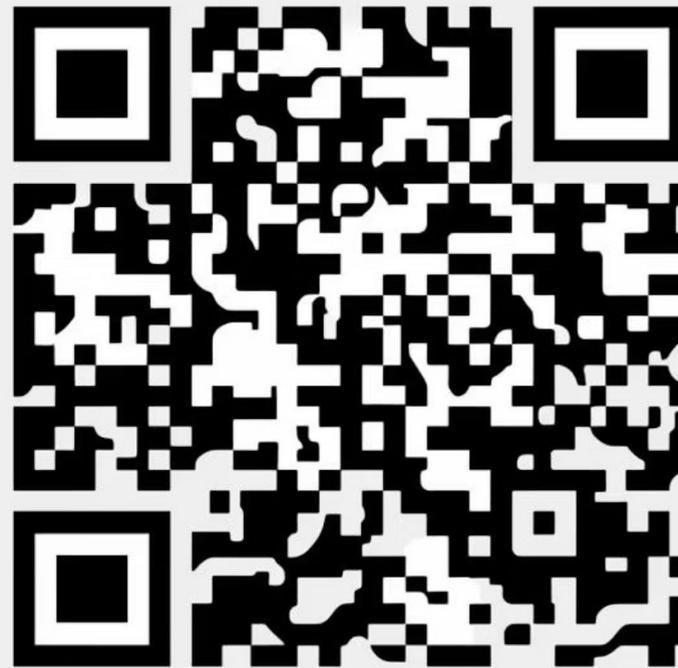


FAFSA SAI Estimator

Calculate Your True College Cost

Use Niche's True Cost Calculator to estimate what you'll actually pay at different colleges after scholarships and financial aid. This tool helps you compare real costs across schools and make informed decisions about where to apply.

mpcmt-/truecost



o1w1w.niche.com/truecost/

Using the WCPSS Scholarship List

The Wake County Public School System maintains one of the most comprehensive local scholarship databases in North Carolina. It's **updated regularly throughout the year** and should be your primary resource.

What Makes It Valuable

Local scholarships appear in red for easy identification

- Regularly updated as new opportunities become available
- Includes deadlines, amounts, and eligibility criteria
- Searchable and sortable by multiple criteria
- Free access for all WCPSS students

Additional Resources

Don't stop with the WCPSS list. **Your individual high school** maintains its own scholarship list with school-specific opportunities not found elsewhere.

Check with your counselor regularly — new scholarships are added throughout the school year.

[Access WCPSS Scholarship List](#)

Local High School Scholarship Lists

Your high school maintains its own scholarship list with school-specific opportunities. Check these pages regularly throughout the year for updates.



Holly Springs High School

The school maintains a scholarship list through Student Services that includes opportunities relevant to HSHS seniors and local awards. These lists include local, regional, and nominee-based scholarships that are updated through the school year.

Scholarship page:



<https://sites.google.com/wcpss.net/wcpss-student-services/college-planning/scholarships>



Apex High School

Apex HS maintains an updated scholarship list for each school year via Student Services. Includes both the WCPSS scholarship list and school-specific opportunities. Scholarship list & resources:



<https://nc01911451.schoolwires.net/Page/51763>

Notable school-specific award:

- Charles Harrison Smith, III Scholarship — available to graduating Apex seniors planning to major in Engineering, Business, or Math (administered via Triangle Community Foundation)



Apex Friendship High School

Apex Friendship works with Student Services to provide scholarship resources tied to WCPSS and external awards. The official "Scholarship Resources" page includes links to WCPSS lists and guidance for students. Apex

Scholarship resources:



<https://nc01911451.schoolwires.net/Page/53892>

School-related external awards (e.g., Apex Lions Club scholarships) are also locally available and often shared with AFHS students via counseling offices or community partners.

 **Tip for Families**

These school pages are live documents — updated throughout the year with deadlines, local donors, and exclusive opportunities not listed on national search engines.

Essential Scholarship Tips



Use a Calendar System

Set deadline reminders **two weeks early** to account for recommendation requests and unexpected delays. Include scholarships for next year so you don't forget.



Research the Mission

Read about the organization offering the scholarship. Tailor your essays to show how your goals align with **their values and purpose**.



Beware of Scams

Avoid sites that only ask for "name + email" (except Niche). **Never pay to apply** for scholarships. Legitimate scholarships don't charge application fees.



Local Is Your Best Bet

Local and college scholarships are easiest to win because of smaller applicant pools. **Focus 70% of your energy here** for maximum return.



Request Recommendations Early

Teachers and counselors receive dozens of requests. Ask at least **three weeks before** your earliest deadline and provide all necessary information upfront.



Gather Financial Documents

Some scholarships require tax returns, W-2s, or detailed financial information. **Start collecting these early** — don't wait until the night before.



Expect Real Time Investment

Quality applications take time. Plan for **2-4 hours per scholarship** for thoughtful essays and thorough completion. It's worth it.



Apply After Starting College

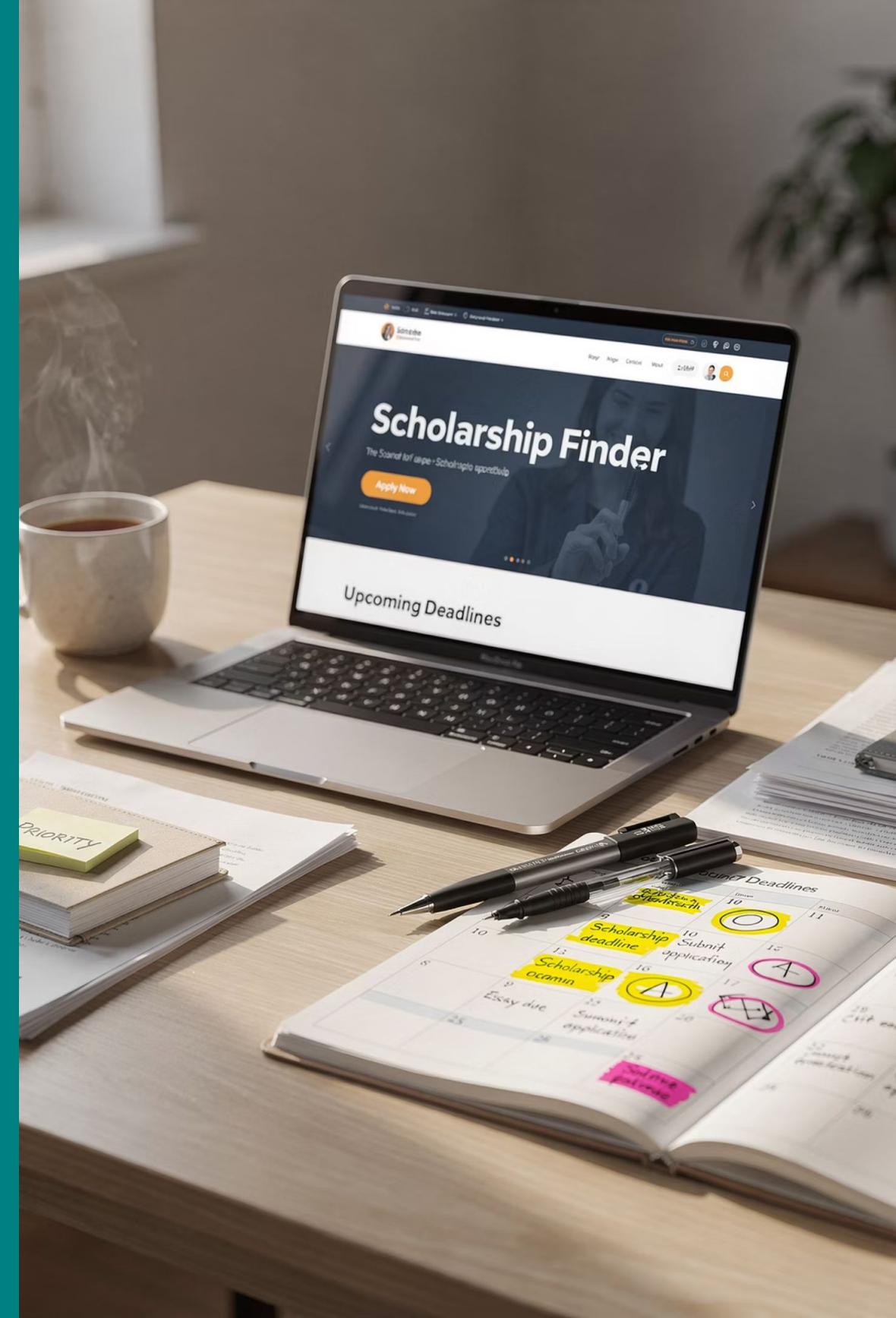
Many scholarships accept applications from current college students. **Don't stop searching** just because you're already enrolled — opportunities continue.

The Real Reason Students Don't Win They don't apply.

It's that simple. The vast majority of available scholarship money goes unclaimed every year because students don't submit applications. **The competition isn't as fierce as you think** – most scholarships receive far fewer applications than you'd expect.

Your biggest competitor is procrastination, not other students.

- ❏ Studies show that students who apply to 10-15 scholarships typically win at least one. Those who apply to 25+ often win multiple awards. **Volume matters.** Treat scholarship applications like a part-time job during senior year.



Scholarship Search Databases

These vetted databases help you discover scholarships beyond your local community. Create profiles on multiple sites to maximize opportunities.

Priority Searches

CFNC (College Foundation of NC) cfnc.org/scholarship-search North Carolina specific opportunities

College Board BigFuture bigfuture.collegeboard.org Comprehensive national database

BrokeScholar brokescholar.com Easy-to-use interface with smart filtering

NC Community Foundation nccommunityfoundation.org Local foundation scholarships by county

Additional Resources

Triangle Community Foundation trianglecf.org/students Wake, Durham, Orange County awards

Peterson's Scholarship Search petersons.com Extensive database with detailed profiles

Scholarships.com scholarships.com One of the largest national databases

 **Pro tip:** Set aside 30 minutes per week to check these databases for new opportunities. Many scholarships with rolling deadlines are added throughout the year.

Your Action Plan

Success with scholarships comes down to four simple principles. Follow these consistently from fall through spring of senior year.



Start Local

Begin with your high school, county, and community scholarships.

These offer your best odds because of smaller applicant pools and deeper connections to the community.



Stay Organized

Use a spreadsheet to track deadlines, requirements, and application status. **Organization prevents missed opportunities** and reduces stress during busy senior spring.



Apply Early

Don't wait until deadlines approach. Early applications allow time for revisions, recommendation follow-ups, and handling unexpected issues that arise.



Apply Often

The more applications you submit, the better your chances. **Treat this like a part-time job** — consistent effort over months pays off significantly.

Common Mistakes to

Avoid

Waiting Until Spring

Many scholarships have deadlines in **January through March**. Starting your search in April means missing most opportunities. Begin in the fall.

Only Applying to Big

~~Awards~~ \$1,000 scholarships are exciting, **winning five \$1,000 awards is just as valuable** and often more realistic. Don't overlook smaller amounts.

Generic Essays

Scholarship committees can spot copy-paste applications instantly. **Tailor each essay** to the specific organization's mission and values.

Ignoring Local Opportunities

Students often chase prestigious national scholarships while ignoring local awards with **dramatically better odds**. Local should be your priority.

Not Following Instructions

Missing one requirement = automatic disqualification. **Read instructions twice** and create a checklist for each application before starting.

Giving Up After Rejection

Most students apply to only 3-5 scholarships and quit after rejections. **Persistence is essential** – keep applying throughout the year.

Questions & Next Steps

Ready to Get Started?

Your journey to scholarship success begins with a single application. Here's what to do this week:

Visit the High School Web Pages and explore available opportunities

Create your tracking spreadsheet and add scholarships that match your profile

Mark 3-5 upcoming deadlines in your calendar with two-week advance reminders

Draft a master scholarship essay about your goals and background that you can adapt

Ask 2-3 teachers if they'd be willing to write recommendations throughout the year

Need Help?

Talk to your school counselor, who can guide you toward scholarships that match your specific profile and help with application questions.



Your Future Starts Now

Thousands of dollars in scholarship money are waiting for students who are willing to invest the time and effort. **You have everything you need to succeed** – the resources, the strategies, and the opportunities.

The only question is: **Will you take action?**

Start Today

Don't wait for the "perfect" time. Begin your scholarship search this week.

Stay Consistent

Set aside dedicated time each week for applications and research.

Believe in Yourself

You are worthy of these opportunities. Tell your story with confidence.

Remember: Real families win real money through scholarships every single year. There's no reason you can't be one of them.

Jen Miller-Hogg



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