

GET MORE MONEY FOR COLLEGE

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College costs are on the rise, but it doesn't have to be a barrier to getting an education. There are some practical ways to increase your chances of getting more money for college. First and foremost you must be diligent and organized. You should have a record of your activities, community service, organizations, awards and achievements from the 9th grade to present. Personal information about your parents/caregivers will also be requested. This information is typically related to the household income and the family's educational background. Income figures will be particularly vital when completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). January 1 of the year in which you will start college in the fall is the first day that the application can and should be filed. When dealing with the government, it is always on a first come first serve basis; when the money is allocated for that year, it is gone. The FAFSA application can be completed online at www.fafsa.ed.gov.

There are thousands of scholarship opportunities available, but just as many students vying for them. The scholarship committee has the task of weeding through thousands of applicants to select the best candidate. Lots of students will have great GPAs and extracurricular activities, but what will set you apart? Essays are often used as a way to put your best foot forward. The following are a few topics that are commonly used:

1. What are your future goals?
2. What is your most important activity and why?
3. If we could only admit one more student why should it be you?
4. Who inspires you and how has this person influenced your goals?
5. What is your most significant contribution/endeavor?

These topics can be used over and over by simply adjusting the word count and tweaking your response according to the



requirements of the scholarship application. Start early, proofread, and get feedback from qualified individuals such as an English teacher, Academic Advisor, or Parent.

When applying for scholarships, you should start in July of the year before you need funding. The very first place you should start is with your school counselor and the second should be the internet. There are a wide range of scholarships from all across the world regarding your race, sex, religion and so forth.

Websites recommended in finding scholarships:

- ▶ www.fastweb.com
- ▶ www.scholarship-page.com
- ▶ www.scholarship.com
- ▶ www.uncf.org
- ▶ www.hispanicfund.org
- ▶ www.collegeboard.com

It's never too early to start getting money for college. Many students just don't want to put in the time and work to make their dreams become a reality. We challenge you to be different. Take a break from the Wii, Myspace, TV, or whatever activity that occupies your time and spend a few minutes working on an essay or browsing scholarship sites. It may not seem "cool" right now, but it's very likely you won't regret getting a free education.