

How to Win a Scholarship!

Helpful Tips and Advice for Students and Mentors/Advisors

The Arizona Community Foundation application is online and easy to use. By applying early, students are putting their names in the hat for up to 75 unique scholarships with just one application. There are always areas in which applicants can improve their submissions. Here are some tips on how to be successful with ACF Scholarships.

Do not wait until the last minute.

- It happens all the time. Students wait until the deadline date, and then do not have time to request letters of recommendation or are missing a piece of required information.
- The online system allows students to request a reference online by email. This does not guarantee that the reference will submit the information in time for review, ESPECIALLY if they request was submitted on the deadline date. While the student may have sent the request, their application is deemed incomplete without at least two submitted references.

References

- In the application, students are asked to submit the name and email address for at least two people from whom they would like to receive references. Once they answer this question, the application deems the reference requirement completed. While it is true that the student has answered the question in their application, if at least 2 references do not SUBMIT on the student's behalf, the application is incomplete.
- Applicants should contact their references prior to adding them to their scholarship application. A reference who knows that a request is forthcoming is more likely to submit on the student's behalf in a timely manner.
- Don't ask your Mom to be your reference. She loves you – we know! A reviewer will not give you many points for having a family member submit a reference on your behalf. Acceptable references are teachers, employers, references from community service experiences, coaches, mentors or school counselors.

Read each question, and answer every question.

- Sounds easy right? Many students miss out on scholarship opportunities because they do not read the questions or answer them appropriately.
- Don't apply for awards that you are not eligible for. This actually gives the administrator pause about awarding you any awards. If you apply for a scholarship that you're a clearly not a candidate – we don't know if you are being honest about the other responses in your application.
- Answer the required and non required questions. All information is helpful to us in qualifying you for awards.
- Be honest! Don't inflate your GPA or click a box that does not apply to you.

Submit for FAFSA as early as possible.

- This way you can have the SAR report ready to submit for all scholarship applications with spring deadlines.
- The EFC score (estimated financial contribution) found on the SAR report is needed for about 90% of ACF scholarships and many others.

Use proper capitalization and grammar.

- Students often do not capitalize their names and other fields. Reviewers see the information exactly as a student inputs it.
- Do not use texting abbreviations or slang. “i need 2 hve schols for college cuz i have no \$. LOL” is not acceptable!

Follow up to make sure you application is complete.

- We encourage *students* to call or email us to make sure their applications are complete. We will check to see if we have their references submitted, a transcript, and the SAR report attached to the application. We will also scan their essay and give them input if it needs to be longer/edited.
- While we are happy to answer questions for parents and mentors – we require that the application be completed by the student and that the email address for the student be provided.

THE ESSAY!

- The most important part of the application is the essay. This is the only significant way a student can stand out on a scholarship application. The reviewer only knows what the student shares in that essay. Most awards are won or lost with the essay. Make sure it is at least 500 words, even though our minimum is 350 words. We recommend having someone (mentor/parent) read and edit the essay before you submit.

Do not pick Undecided.

- If you do not yet know what school you will attend, it is far better to select a school that you are leaning towards. If you select undecided, you will not be considered for awards that are only for specific schools. Many of our awards have a preference for students attend an in-state school, and it doesn't matter which one. But if you are undecided, we don't know that you will attend an instate school.
- The same applies for the major/field of study.

Contact information for questions:

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