



College Preparation Toolkit

Developing Your Scholarship Game Plan

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To mount an effective and efficient scholarship campaign the first thing you need is a winning game plan, a plan of attack that maximizes your chances of accumulating substantial scholarship money, while minimizing your necessary investment of time and energy. What are some of the key components of this game plan? To begin with, implement the following four key action strategies.

1. Plan to Apply for as Many Scholarships as Possible

Some students make the mistake of thinking they maximize their chances of winning by pouring all of their energy into one or two scholarships. Such a strategy, however, is exactly what you don't want to do. Applying for scholarships is partially a numbers game. A variety of factors outside of your control can affect the outcome of any given award. Only by applying for large numbers of scholarships can you minimize such factors, and maximize your chances of winning. In my own scholarship quest, I ended up applying for about three dozen awards.

2. Develop a Suite of Generic Reusable Materials

When applying for large numbers of scholarships creating a suite of generic reusable materials saves a great deal of time and energy. By having this suite to draw from, you will be able to focus less on just completing application requirements, and more time on customizing and fine-tuning the material you've already prepared.

More than just a reduction in your workload, reusing and rethinking old materials can mean vast improvements as you repeatedly refine and edit the same work. By employing this strategy, you gain the opportunity to fine-tune your materials with every submission. And take it from me – your tenth draft will be far better than your first.

To create this suite of generic materials, first seek to develop standard essay responses to perennial scholarship application themes: such old favorites as college plans, career goals, and future contributions to society.

3. Leverage Schoolwork and Class Time

If you have to do the schoolwork anyway, why not make it count toward your scholarship quest? For example, if you're asked to write an essay on a book of your choosing, you may want to select *The Fountainhead* by Ayn Rand. This way, you'll have a submission ready to go for the annual essay contest on this famous novel. If you're assigned a self-reflective essay, pick a personal topic that fits in well with scholarship applications you're pursuing. Moreover, teachers can serve as a helpful source of early feedback for these potential scholarship submissions.

4. Learn From Past Scholarship Winners

In playing the scholarship game, it's extremely useful to have a roadmap of what it takes to win. To obtain this roadmap, make a point of reviewing past winning applications, essays, and other materials. Many times, you can request sample winning entries from the organization administering the scholarship program. The best way to master the scholarship game is to learn from those who have played it well.