

SCHOLARSHIPS 101

Hello parents of seniors!

Right about now in the school year, your senior has maybe decided which school to attend next fall. Or, maybe your student hasn't heard yet but does have a first choice. Is anyone starting to get nervous about financing this plan? Are you wondering what else might be out there to help? While we do tell all of our seniors in the fall about scholarships and how to find them, I'm not sure that they are always conveying that information to you. So, here's our best advice:

1. Have you completed the FAFSA form yet? While many families may not qualify for federal or state aid, it's a free form, so why not fill it out? It can also help to make your student eligible for the federal work study program on campus, which is a way to ensure a guaranteed job on campus. Money earned can go straight to the financial aid office, too, to be used toward tuition. See <https://fafsa.ed.gov/>.

2. Secondly, most colleges have merit awards. These are scholarships for which students are automatically eligible just based on applying before the college's set deadline. They typically are based on a combination of grade point average and test scores. Colleges will notify students directly if they are eligible for these. The Woodbridge N. Ferris Scholarship at FSU is an example of this. Visit <https://ferris.edu/admissions/financialaid/scholarship/incoming/incoming-freshmen.htm> Applying to an Honors College within a university can sometimes make your student eligible for more money, too.

3. Often overlooked are departmental awards or private scholarships from colleges. These will have separate applications and, likely, different deadlines. An example is The Hosford Family Excellence in Academics and Athletics Award at GVSU <https://gvsu.academicworks.com/opportunities/9319>

4. Scholarship databases are another great way to search for scholarships. Websites like fastweb.com ask you to complete a questionnaire about yourself. Once completed, you'll be given a list of scholarships for which you qualify. There are too many scholarship databases to count. Our advice is to choose one and cross reference your results with a second database. Some results may be the same. www.fastweb.com

5. RHS has a list that is available on our website. This list changes periodically throughout the year. Keep checking it. Once a new list is published, it also gets sent to parents and seniors via Family Access.

6. The Rockford Scholarship Application will be available on our website in December. Once a Rockford senior completes this application, the student could potentially be eligible for nearly twenty different local scholarships. The only eligible students would be RHS seniors. On average, there are about 100 applicants per year. Winners of awards from the RHS Scholarship Application will be recognized and honored at the Honors Convocation in May. We do our best to have as many of our students recognized that evening as possible.

7. Lastly, one great place to look is the Grand Rapids Community Foundation. The website is <https://www.grfoundation.org/apply-for-scholarships>. There are so many awards offered from this wonderful organization. I hope this information helps to give you a start in the right direction. Good luck as you prepare for next fall, wherever your student is heading.

RHS Counselors