

SCHOLARSHIP SEARCH SERVICES

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One good piece of "homework" for students starting their senior year in the Fall is to become familiar with the websites that help locate private scholarships. In addition to governmental sources of financial aid from the federal and state governments, there are a very large number of private grants and scholarships. These require an application separate from the FAFSA.

There are several websites to assist students in locating private grants or scholarships. Students should check as many sources as possible. Scholarship deadlines are generally in the Spring preceding the award year, but some are earlier. Students may want to consider registering for a service prior to entering their senior year.

Many scholarships require a written essay to apply. Developing a college scholarship essay can be intimidating but there is no rule that says you cannot use the same essay or a variation thereof for multiple scholarship applications. Students who produce exceptional essays for class assignments should retain the text for use, if possible, for scholarship essays.

FastWeb is one of the best sources for national, local and college-specific scholarships with over 1.3 million scholarship listings totaling over \$3 billion. The student completes a survey that asks all about the student. This information is confidential and is not shared with third parties. From the profile that is completed, the student is then sent contact information for scholarships that fit their profile.

There are also for-profit companies that offer scholarship search services for a fee. These companies charge for services that are available free. Generally, it is suggested that students thoroughly investigate any for-profit company before submitting any fees to them. Over the years, many scholarship scams have tried to extract money from students and parents to locate scholarships. Although some for-profit services are entirely legitimate, scholarship scams do occur and students should carefully consider any service charging a fee.

For additional information and resources, refer to the information located at FinAid, <http://www.finaid.org/>. This website contains comprehensive information pertaining to possible scholarship scams.