

*YOUR GUIDE TO*

# **FINANCIAL AID & SCHOLARSHIPS**



## Archbold High School Guidance Department

### FINANCIAL AID ALPHABET SOUP

**FSA** = Federal Student Aid  
**FAFSA** = Free Application for Federal Student Aid  
**EFC** = Expected Family Contribution

**SAR** = Student Aid Report  
**DRN** = Data Release Number  
**COA** = Cost of Attendance

### THE FINANCIAL AID PROCESS: STEP-BY-STEP

#### Step 1: Apply for your FSA ID <https://fsaid.ed.gov/>

- The FSA ID is a username and password you create to access and electronically sign your FAFSA.
- You and your parent/guardian must each have an FSA ID.
- Be sure to set this up using a **PERSONAL** email account (do not use your high school account). Your account must also have a different email than your parents. It is important that you set up the account and know your login credentials. Do not let your parents do this for you.

#### Step 2: Complete the FAFSA <https://fafsa.ed.gov/>

- The FAFSA is your application to get approved for student aid. You will verify your contact information, establish your dependency status and input your personal and parent/guardian financial information.
- Whose income do I have to report?
  - If you live with biological mom and dad and they are married, you report both parents.
  - If you live with biological mom and dad and they are not married, you report both parents.
  - If mom and dad are divorced/widowed and not remarried, you report the parent who you live with the majority of the time.
  - If mom and dad are divorced/widowed and remarried, you report the parent who you live with the majority of the time and the step-parent.
  - See your counselor if you have a situation other than what is listed above.
  - FAFSA is NOT determined by which parent claims you on their taxes.
- The FAFSA opens online beginning October 1 and you will use your prior-prior year taxes that are already filed. You can begin your FAFSA and save your progress and go back at any time. Please note that your FAFSA is not completed until you submit the final document and electronically sign it through your FSA ID. Saving the FAFSA when done does not finalize the process.
- Students and parents are strongly encouraged to use the IRS Data Retrieval tool. This will ensure your FAFSA is accurate and reduce the chances for delays. Please note that when you use this tool, the name and address information you submit must match exactly what is on your tax return.
- You will be able to link up to 10 colleges to your FAFSA. You should think ahead and link to the schools you plan to apply. Each school will process your FAFSA and issue you a student aid package.
- **BUYER BEWARE:** The FAFSA is free. You should never pay an individual or an online service to process your FAFSA.



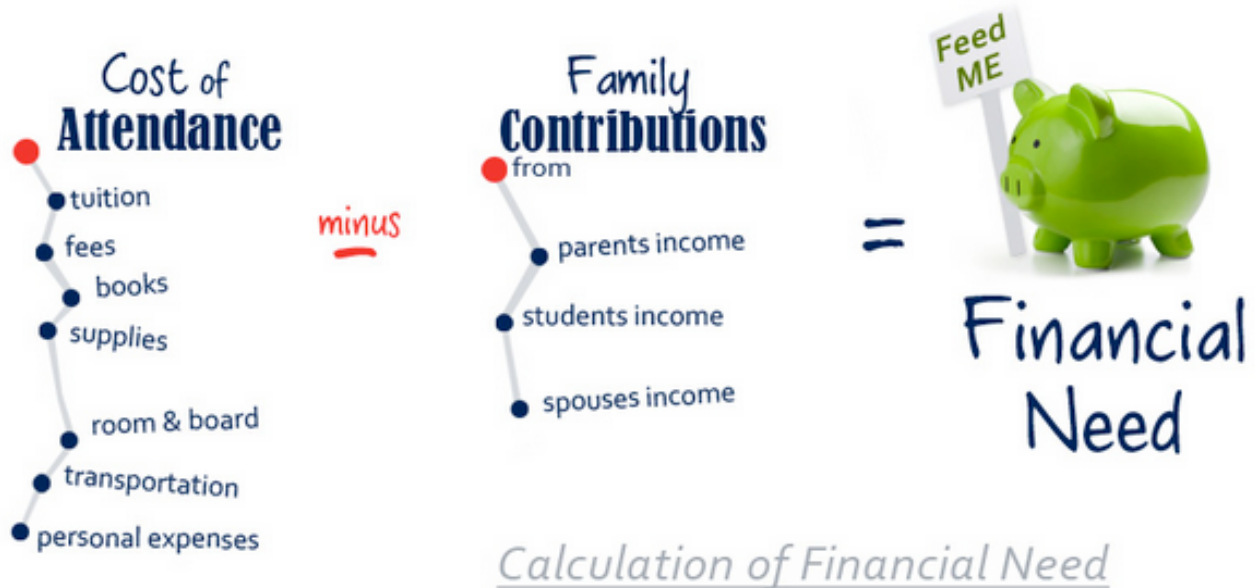
#### Step 3: Review Your Student Aid Report (SAR)

- This is an electronic or paper document that gives basic information about your financial aid eligibility. It will include your Expected Family Contribution (or EFC).
- Upon receiving your SAR, you need to review the document and make sure it is accurate. If everything is good, then there is nothing you need to do. If there are errors or no EFC, you need to access your FAFSA and correct those and resubmit.
- The EFC is the dollar amount the federal government believes your family should be able to contribute to your college education. The lower the EFC, the greater chances you have of receiving grants versus loans. This number is NOT the actual amount you will pay for college.
- The SAR also has your Data Release Number (DRN). You will need this number if you ever choose to allow your college to change certain information on your FAFSA for you.

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### Step 4: Review Your Financial Aid Award Letters

- Each college you linked your FAFSA to will at some point, process a reward letter that list your eligible federal and state student loans, grants, work study, and institutional scholarships. They will compare your EFC to the Cost of Attendance (COA) to determine your financial need.
- Your job will be to review this letter and then accept all or parts of the package.



### WHAT IS VERIFICATION?

Students may be randomly selected (or selected by the college) for verification. This is like having your taxes audited. There are a variety of reasons why a student may get selected for verification, including inaccurate information on the FAFSA, declaring yourself as independent status, discrepancy between tax report and parent information reported, etc.

If you are selected for verification, you will need to work with your college to supply to them the requested documents needed to complete that process. Colleges will NOT disburse any financial aid until students have satisfied the verification process.

If chosen for verification, you often will have to request a tax transcript from the IRS (they will not take copies of your tax forms) or have to request a non-filing letter from the IRS indicating that you had no income and did not file taxes yourself.

### FAFSA PRIORITY DEADLINES

Every college has a priority deadline in which they want students to submit their FAFSA by. It is important that students know and meet these deadlines to ensure they receive the maximum amount of aid possible. Colleges typically will limit any institutional dollars to students who submit before the priority deadline.

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### TYPES OF FINANCIAL AID

**Direct Loans:** This is money you have to pay back! Federal student loans typically have competitive interest rates (typically 3-4%) and do not have to be paid back until 6 months after you graduate college.

- **Subsized Loans** – These loans are need based and do not start drawing interest until 6 months after you graduate from college.
- **Unsubsidized Loans** – These loans start drawing interest the minute they are disbursed.
- The maximum amount of Direct Loans a dependent student can accept for their undergrad career is only \$31,000. It increases to \$57,500 if you are an independent student or parents are denied a Parent Plus Loan.

**Parent Plus Loan:** This is an additional student loan your parents can take out on your behalf. The loan is under your parents' name and is their responsibility to pay off, not yours.

**Federal Pell Grants:** This is FREE money. Think of it as a scholarship from the government. Grants are typically awarded to students with the lowest EFC's.

- For 2016-2017, the maximum Pell award was \$5,815 for an EFC of zero. The maximum EFC for Pell eligibility was \$5234 (Pell awards decrease as the EFC increases).

**Teach Grant:** This is a grant program for students who intend to go into education and commit to working in a low-income school for 5 years after graduation.

- Awards up to \$3724 per year. If you do not teach at all or teach in a non-low income school, the grant turns into an unsubsidized loan that will have back interest calculated on.

**Work Study:** This is a program that allows students to obtain on or off campus employment and earn a paycheck. This paycheck can either be applied to one's tuition or used for living expenses.

**Institutional Aid:** Every college receives funds that they can disburse out through institutional aid. These moneys are typically limited in amount and whom they are available to.

**State Aid:** Ohio offers several aid programs as well. Several of these programs require separate applications apart from the FAFSA.

- **Ohio College Opportunity Grant:** Awarded to students who file a FAFSA, are an Ohio resident and attend an Ohio public or private college. Students must have an EFC of 0-2190 and a max household income of \$75,000.
- **Ohio War Orphans:** For children who have a parent who is veteran who is deceased or severely disabled during a time of active war (Pays 88% of tuition at public colleges and \$5,112 for private)
- **Ohio National Guard Scholarship:** Full-time tuition at public (or equivalent at private) for students participating in the Ohio National Guard.
- **Safety Officers Memorial Scholarship:** Pays full tuition (or \$8115 for private) to students who have lost a parent who is a safety officer in the line of duty.
- **Nurse Education Assistance Loan Program:** Offers loans for those who go into nursing and loan forgiveness for those who work as a full-time nurse in Ohio for 5 years.
- **Ohio Education and Training Voucher Program:** Offers a max of \$5000 a year to those who were part of the foster care system in Ohio (must have been in foster care on their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday and aged out or was adopted out of the foster care system after their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday)

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### THE SCHOLARSHIP SEARCH PROCESS: STEP-BY-STEP

There is more than \$85 billion in financial aid available each year. Of this, \$54 billion comes from federal loans and grants, \$16 billion from the colleges, \$6 billion from tuition tax credits, \$5 billion from the states, \$3 billion from employer-paid tuition plans, and \$2 billion from private sources otherwise known as **SCHOLARSHIPS**.

- FACTS:**
- 50%** Private sector monies that go undistributed each year
  - 80%** Scholarships that do not require a financial statement
  - 90%** Scholarships that are not concerned with grades

Scholarships can be a tremendous help in affording a college education. The process of finding and applying for scholarships may seem like an overwhelming task but it can be simplified by following four basic steps:

#### STEP 1: Know Where to Find Information

- Scholarship link on the AHS guidance website (must use your @bluestreaks.us email to access)
- OhioMeansJobs
- Internet scholarship searches
  - [www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com) / [www.cappex.com](http://www.cappex.com) / [www.scholarships.com](http://www.scholarships.com) / [www.studentscholarshipsearch.com](http://www.studentscholarshipsearch.com)
- College financial aid office
- Organizations/Foundations
- Newspapers
- Employers (yours and parents)



#### STEP 2: Do the Research

Now that you know where and how to find the information, you simply need to do the research to find the scholarships appropriate for you. Get the applications and make note of the deadline dates. Apply to as many scholarships that match your talents, goals, background, interests, and achievements as you can find.

#### STEP 3: Complete the Applications

Applications should be completed neatly and accurately. Answer all of the questions and follow all directions. Many can now be completed on-line. *If the scholarship requires a transcript or a letter of recommendation from your counselor/teacher, allow at least 10 days to process.*



**Time Saving Tip:** You will notice that most scholarships ask for the same basic information: extracurricular activities, leadership experience, volunteer experience, etc. This is information that you should have on your resume. (If not, update your resume!) If the scholarship allows you to send attachments with it (and most do), you can simply use your existing resume. Essays (if required) can also be used more than once if they appropriately address the essay topic.

#### STEP 4: Stay Organized.

Create a schedule, based on the deadlines of scholarships you would like to apply for. Stay committed to the process. Set a goal per week or per month of the number of scholarships you realistically will apply for and stick with it!!

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### SCHOLARSHIP CATEGORIES

Three categories of scholarships are available: *GENERAL, NOMINATION, & SCHOOL SPECIFIC*

**General Scholarships:** Any student meeting the eligibility requirements can apply for general scholarships. It is the student's responsibility to mail the application in. If the application requires a transcript, notify your counselor.

**Nomination Scholarships:** In order to be considered for a nomination scholarship, students must be nominated by their school. Archbold High School has a Scholarship Committee, which meets for the purpose of nominating students for these awards. This committee is appointed by the principal and is made up of several teachers. Most nomination scholarships are based upon GPA, class rank, ACT/SAT scores, leadership and community service experience. The committee selects the student who they feel best meets the scholarship criteria.

**School Specific Scholarships:** These are scholarships sponsored by specific colleges and universities. In most cases, the scholarships can only be used at the sponsoring institution.

### TYPES OF SCHOLARSHIPS

#### Academic Scholarships

- for students who have demonstrated academic talent (best grades and test scores)
- most are awarded by the colleges & state governments

#### Contests & Competitions

- award scholarships as prizes
- examples are essay & speech contests, project completions, pageants etc.

#### Career & Academic Interest Scholarships

- go to students in a specific major or career field
- must declare a specific major
- sponsored by academic organizations, professional associations, industry groups and companies

#### Athletic Scholarships

- sponsored by athletic departments of colleges
- scholarships are awarded for many sports, even less popular ones (i.e. archery, bowling, etc.)

#### Community Service Scholarships

- scholarships that seek out students who perform and can document community service

#### Club & Hobby Scholarships

- scholarships awarded to students who are members of various clubs and organizations (i.e. 4-H, National Honor Society, FFA, etc.)

#### Minority, Ethnic & Diversity Scholarships

- sponsored by state governments, colleges, and private foundations
- must be able to document ethnic background
- are also scholarships available for gay and lesbian students

#### Scholarships for Students with Disabilities

- colleges have Offices of Disabilities/Accessibility that may offer scholarships
- are also national advocacy groups that sponsor scholarships (i.e. asthma, cancer, hearing & visually impaired, etc.)

#### Religious Affiliation Scholarships

- many organized religious groups offer scholarships, especially if you attend a religious-affiliated college

#### Gender-Based Scholarships

- many target female students into professions that are male dominated and vice versa

#### Military Scholarships

- options are ROTC and National Guard programs
- others may be for students who have parents or family members in active service or veterans

#### Family Affiliation Scholarships

- scholarships available through parents employers or organizations they belong to (i.e. civic/professional organizations, unions, etc.)

#### Regional/Residence Specific Scholarships

- awarded based off of where you live (state, region, county, city, etc.)
- include many of the local scholarships specific to AHS students (available in spring)

#### College-Sponsored Scholarships

- many are merit-based but not all
- check financial aid office for all available scholarships
- may have separate application or may be part of admissions application
- deadlines to apply are early, often as early as November 1

## HOW TO CHOOSE THE BEST SCHOLARSHIPS

While there is no way to perfectly predict if you will win a scholarship, there are some guidelines you can use to select scholarships that fit you best and prioritize which scholarships to apply for. By understanding what the scholarship committees are looking for and by examining how your qualifications fit with those scholarships, you can make qualified decisions about selecting scholarships.

**Read the Minds of the Scholarship Committee:** Try to understand what the scholarship committee wants out of its winners. Think from the perspective of the scholarship committee about why it is awarding the scholarship and what kind of student it is seeking. The easiest way to get this information is to read the scholarship criteria and materials from the sponsoring organizations. This will help you see what the organization is trying to accomplish by providing the award.

**Know If the Pants Fit:** In other words, only apply to scholarships that fit you. If you dreamed of being a concert pianist when you were a child but have never taken a piano lesson, then don't apply for a scholarship in the music area. Apply for those scholarships for which your background is the best fit.

**Size Up the Competition:** Knowing how tough the competition is will also help you choose which scholarships to apply to first. Your competition can be as broad as every student in America or as limited to the top 10% of your graduating class. The larger the competition, the more outstanding you need to be to win. Look realistically at your accomplishments and think about how they compare to others at our school, in our town, and in our state. Select scholarships accordingly.

**Tick Tock:** A last way to eliminate is practicality. How much time do you have to spend on applications? Figure out how much time you can spend, then start applying, starting with those that fit you best.

**Note:** By having a strategic approach to selecting scholarships, you will spend your time on the awards that offer the best potential for paying off.

## CRAFT A WINNING SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION



Crafting a winning scholarship application requires a strategic approach. Scholarships are financial awards by organizations with a specific goal in mind. Perhaps they want to encourage study in a certain field or encourage participation in a particular hobby. This means that for each scholarship you apply for, you need to present yourself as the perfect applicant for the award by displaying how you meet the criteria. In each application you may present different aspects of yourself. For a sports scholarship you may focus on your abilities on the court and get your coach to write your recommendations. For a community service award you might focus on your experience with going on a mission trip. Whatever the scholarship, the key is to determine what values and qualities the scholarship committee is looking for in the winner and construct every facet of your application (essay, recommendations, interview, etc.) to demonstrate how you meet these objectives.

### Here's How!

**Give Them What They Want to Hear:** I am not suggesting that you lie on your applications—NEVER lie. I am, however, suggesting that you present yourself in the best possible way to appeal to your audience. **This is not the time to be modest.** In short, never lie on an application but do employ a little spin. To be able to “spin” effectively you need to know your audience. To determine who your audience is, ask the following questions:

- What is the mission of the organization giving the scholarship?
- Who will be reading the application?
- Who will be your competition?

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**Go For the Gusto – Quickly:** In the application, feature your most impressive points first. It is important that you prioritize the information that you present, and rank your accomplishments according to the following:

- **Fit with scholarship organization's goal:** The most important factor in prioritizing your achievements is how they fit with the goal of the scholarship.
- **Scope:** Prioritize your accomplishments by their scope, or how much of an impact they have made.
- **Uniqueness:** Since your application will be compared to that of perhaps thousands of others, include accomplishments that are uncommon.
- **Recentness:** This is the least important criterion, but if you get stuck, put the more recent achievements first.

**Write to Impress:** Compose an essay that grabs the reader's attention and highlights you as a person with character and personality.

- **Delivery:** The delivery of your application is very important. You must present your information in a compelling way.
- **Leadership is Better than Membership:** Many scholarships give extra points for leadership positions.
- **Extracurricular Activities & Hobbies:** Scholarship committees want to see evidence that you do more than read books and take tests. They want to see well-rounded applicants.
- **Honors & Awards:** Highlight any honors or awards in a way that gets the scholarship committee to pay attention to your application.

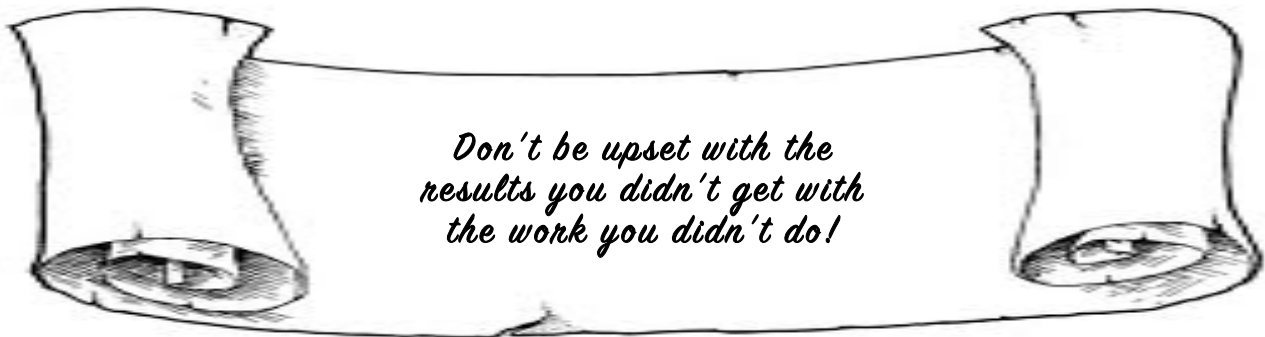
**Final Application Tips:** Here are a few things to consider before completing your application.

- If you don't have something nice to say, don't say anything.
- Don't leave any area blank. Make an effort to list something in every section.
- Ask yourself if what you are including will strengthen or weaken your application. Is the information relevant?
- How does your application look? Is it professional, accurate, and neat?
- Make copies of everything that you send.

**Crafting a Winning Application Takes time.** Make sure you give yourself plenty of it. However, you need to balance quality with quantity. Because each scholarship is judged on different criteria, it is not always easy to know if you will win. With time as the limiting factor, apply to as many scholarships that match your talents, goals, and achievements as you can find. It is time consuming—but worth your efforts if you win! Set a goal such as to apply to one scholarship a week or to work on scholarships for several hours each week.

### HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR ODDS OF WINNING

1. Choose to apply for smaller scholarships rather than larger ones.
2. Be persistent. Many students just apply for a handful. Apply for dozens of them!!
3. Pay attention to the fine print. Don't disqualify yourself by not following directions.
4. Tell a good story with your essay. Be creative and original.



*Don't be upset with the  
results you didn't get with  
the work you didn't do!*



## SCHOLARSHIP DANGER ZONES

There are several “danger zones”—times and places that can get you into trouble—when searching for scholarships. These “danger zones” are avoidable if you recognize them. The most costly danger zones include the following:

- Financial aid and scholarship scams
- Paying to locate scholarships
- Deciding whether to use paid consultants or services

## BEWARE OF SCAMS

Students and families looking for college financing are frequent targets of scam artists. Some of these are deceptive, and some are simply illegal. Some of the most common scams are these:

- **Free Seminar:** You may receive a letter advertising a free financial aid seminar or “interviews” for financial assistance. Sometimes the seminars do provide some useful information however most of the time, the seminar is a cleverly disguised sales pitch for consulting services you don’t need.
- **For-Profit Scholarships:** This scam looks just like a real scholarship program but requires an application fee. The typical scam receives 5,000 to 10,000 applications and charges fees of \$5 to \$35. These scams can afford to pay out a \$1,000 scholarship and still pocket a hefty profit.
- **Scholarship Prize:** This scam tells you that you’ve won a college scholarship, but requires that you pay a “disbursement” or “redemption” fee or taxes before they can release your prize. If someone says you’ve won a prize and you don’t remember entering the contest or submitting an application, be suspicious.
- **Advanced-Fee Loan:** This scam offers you an unusually low-interest education loan with the requirement that you pay a fee before you receive it. When you pay the money, the promised loan never materializes. Real educational loans deduct the fees from the disbursement check and never require an up-front fee.
- **Investment Required for Federal Loans:** Insurance companies and brokerage firms sometimes offer free financial aid seminars that are actually sales pitches for insurance and investment products. When a sales pitch implies that purchasing a product is a prerequisite to receiving federal student aid, it violates federal regulations and state insurance laws.

## PAYING TO LOCATE SCHOLARSHIPS

Do not waste your money on fee-based scholarship-matching services. The largest and highest quality scholarship databases are all available for free on the Internet. It takes only about half an hour to search any of these databases. Paid scholarship-matching services do not award scholarships and do not apply for scholarships on your behalf, and they don’t select the winning students. All they do is provide a list of the names and addresses of scholarships that superficially match your profile. It is then up to the student to contact the scholarship sponsor for current information and application materials—exactly what the student would do if they found a scholarship using a free service.

## CONSUMER RULES OF THUMB



1. If you must pay money to get money, it might be a scam.
2. If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.
3. Spend the time, not the money.
4. Never invest more than a postage stamp to get information about scholarships.
5. Nobody can guarantee that you will win a scholarship.
6. Legitimate scholarship foundations do not charge application fees.
7. If you’re suspicious of an offer, it’s usually with good reason.