

Searching for Scholarships I

The **BIG** Idea

- How can I find scholarships that suit my situation?

AGENDA

Approx. 45 minutes

- I. Warm Up (5 minutes)
- II. Where to Begin, What to Avoid (20 minutes)
- III. Share Info (10 minutes)
- IV. Get Started (10 minutes)

MATERIALS

STUDENT HANDBOOK PAGES:

- Student Handbook page 88, The Seven Commandments of Financial Aid
- Student Handbook page 89, Undergraduate Financial Aid 2007-2008
- Student Handbook pages 90-91, Scholarship Dos and Don'ts
- Student Handbook page 92, Scholarship Website Research
- Student Handbook pages 93-95, Scholarship Website Summaries

FACILITATOR PAGES:

- Facilitator Resource 1, Notes on Scholarship Websites
- List of local scholarships (one copy per student)
- Overhead projector or laptop and LCD projector

OBJECTIVES

During this lesson, the student(s) will:

- Understand how scholarship aid fits into the total financial aid picture.
- Consider the merits of scholarship search websites.
- Complete a profile on one of six scholarship sites.

OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students review basic financial aid concepts and determine how scholarships fit into the big picture. In teams, students review features of scholarship search websites and report on their findings. Finally, each student creates a personal profile on a scholarship search website of interest.

PREPARATION

- List the day's **BIG IDEA** and activities on the board.
- List the day's vocabulary words on the board.
- The following handouts need to be made into overhead transparencies or added to your laptop for display via LCD projector:
 - **Student Handbook page 89, Undergraduate Financial Aid, 2007-2008**
 - **Student Handbook page 92, Scholarship Website Research**
 - **Student Handbook pages 93-95, Scholarship Website Summaries**
- Consider how you will group your students for **Activity II**, Items 4 – 6.
- Obtain a list of local scholarships from your school counselor, and make a copy for each student.
- Arrange for students to use the computer lab.

VOCABULARY

Disburse: to pay out, as from a fund

Grant: also called gift aid, financial aid that doesn't have to be repaid. Comes from federal and state governments and from individual colleges, usually based on financial need.

Loan: financial aid that must be repaid.

Scholarship: financial aid distributed according to requirements set by the provider, like excellence in academics or sports.

Work-Study: a federal program that provides students with part-time employment, usually on campus, to help meet their financial needs.

IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS

Lessons 2 and 3 provide class time for investigating scholarships online. If your students require more time for a thorough exploration of financial aid options (for example, the completion of **Activity III** from last week's lesson), or your students are already sophisticated users of scholarship sites, you may wish to adjust the timing of these lessons accordingly.

If your class needs additional time to complete last week's financial aid discussion, feel free to abbreviate or omit the small-group investigation of scholarship websites in **Activity II, Items 4 -6**. You may also wish to reduce the number of websites investigated, based on your students' needs.

For **Activity IV**, you may wish to specify whether students may continue scholarship research on a site on which they already have an account or whether they must check out a site that's new to them.

ACTIVITY STEPS

I. Warm Up (5 minutes)

1. [Have students turn to **Student Handbook page 88, The Seven Commandments of Financial Aid**. Give them a minute or two to select a “Do” or “Don’t” for each answer.]
2. [When students have finished, quickly go over the answers as a class. Most are obvious (1 and 2 are Don’ts; 3 – 7 are Dos.), but you’ll want to reinforce the following points:]

SAY SOMETHING LIKE:

- Item 2: There are plenty of resources for locating scholarships for free, so why pay? More importantly, there are lots of scholarship scams where you pay for “help,” and get nothing in return. We’ll talk about how to avoid these in a few minutes.
- Item 3: When you complete the FAFSA, you’ll need to provide info about your parents’ income even if they’re not helping you pay for college.
- Item 6: You’ll want to make sure you’re getting the best deal, which isn’t always obvious. Later in the year, we’ll talk about how to compare financial aid awards.

II. Where to Begin, What to Avoid (20 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Who remembers the four kinds of financial aid? (*scholarships, grants, work-study, loans*) This week and next, we’ll be covering scholarships—where to find them and how to apply. But first, let’s see how they fit into the big picture. Please turn to **Student Handbook page 89, Undergraduate Financial Aid 2007-2008**. [Display this page via a transparency on the overhead projector or a laptop and LCD projector.] More than 106.7 billion dollars in financial aid was disbursed in that year, and this graph shows what percentage was paid out in each category.
 - What was the largest category of aid? (Federal **loans**, 41%)
 - You’ll see that another 6% was given as tax credits to students and families paying for college.
 - What percentage was paid through the Federal **Work-Study** program? (1%)
 - If you add all three of these categories together, you get 48%. The remainder – more than half – was disbursed as **grants**. That’s a total of 56 billion dollars! What’s so special about this kind of aid? (You don’t have to pay it back.)

The majority of this “gift” aid is based on need, and the amount you receive will be determined when you complete the FAFSA after January 1.

A smaller portion of this free aid is based on who you are and what you're good at. On the chart, it appears as "Private & Employer Grants" – a tiny 7% of the total financial pie. In reality, it's not tiny at all. In 2007-2008, 7.5 billion dollars were given away in this type of gift aid, also known as **scholarships**.

3. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** So how do you get your hands on this money? You'll find suggestions on **Student Handbook pages 90-91, Scholarship Dos and Don'ts**. Please be sure to read through the items under "Don't Be Fooled."

[You may wish to review this page with students if time permits.]

4. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** For the remainder of the class, we're going to examine scholarship search websites. On most of these websites, you create an account and provide personal information about yourself. This information leads to a list of scholarships for which you might be eligible – based on everything from your grades to your height – so accuracy is important. (Yes, there really is a scholarship for tall people!)

To make this research easier, each of you will be assigned to a team. You and your teammates will be responsible for reviewing a designated website and reporting your findings to the class. At the end of the class, you'll have a chance to begin – or continue – your scholarship search using one of these websites.

5. [Assign students to teams and direct them to **Student Handbook page 92, Scholarship Website Research**. If needed, display a copy of this page using the overhead projector, or your laptop and an LCD projector, and model what's required.]

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: Each team should choose a Recorder to complete this page and a Reporter to present this information to the class. You'll find instructions for logging on to each website on **Student Handbook pages 93-95, Scholarship Website Summaries**. You don't need to fill out anything on these pages yet. You'll use them to take notes when your classmates report on each site.

6. [Allow students about 10 minutes to research their assigned websites.]

III. Share Info (10 minutes)

1. [Reconvene the class and allow each group about a minute to report its findings. Instruct students to use **Student Handbook pages 93-95, Scholarship Website Summaries**, to take notes about each website so they can compare sites for further investigation on their own. See **Facilitator Resource 1, Notes on Scholarship Websites**, for details you'll want to include if students don't.]

IV. Get Started (10 minutes)

1. [In the time that remains, each student should choose a scholarship website and create an account, then investigate the scholarship offerings there. Remind students that they should be as accurate as possible in completing their profiles, which will create a list of scholarships best suited to them. Instruct students to record their username and password at the top of **Student Handbook pages 93, Scholarship Website Summaries**, so they can return to their account next week.]
2. [Circulate to answer students' questions and define any unfamiliar vocabulary they encounter.]
3. [Thank the students for their time, and distribute local scholarship information provided by your school counselor. Remind students that they'll have a chance to continue their research next week.]

Notes on Scholarship Websites

www.fastweb.com

5-minute registration yields a few scholarships. Additional personal info provides a more tailored list. Highly user-friendly. Many scholarship options. E-mail address is required.

www.collegeboard.org

Students complete minimal information for a list of scholarships. More info leads to a more tailored list. **No e-mail address is required.** Website navigation re: saving info and seeing results is somewhat confusing.

www.latinocollegedollars.org

Two features make this a great site for (but not limited to) undocumented students: 1) No registration required, and 2) an option to select scholarships where citizenship is not required. A user-friendly scroll-down feature allows students to see scholarship summaries at a glance, including eligibility and application requirements, as well as a link to the application.

www.scholarshipexperts.com

Similar to FastWeb, in that students provide personal information in exchange for a customized list of scholarships. Students may click more than one answer in each category, and need to click “Add Choice” to register their results. Registration takes about 20 minutes, so this is not a site for those who are impatient. E-mail address is required.

www.uncf.org (United Negro College Fund)

Students select from a list of scholarship titles, then click to view specifications. Registration (including social security number) is required to access an online application. Students must certify that they meet eligibility requirements in order to view applications. E-mail address is required.

www.scholarships.com

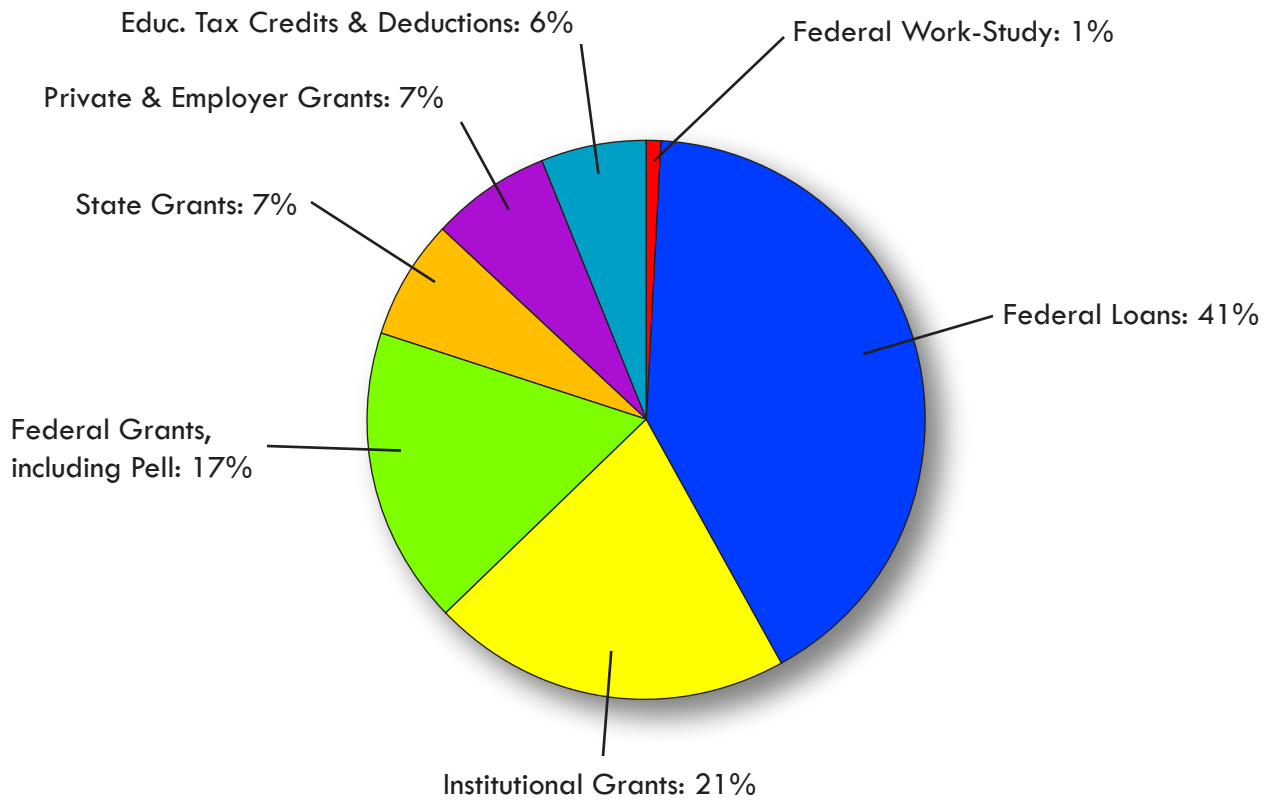
User-friendly 10-minute registration. Warning: ads for Airforce ROTC, Kaplan University, and online degrees are interspersed among scholarship info. List of scholarships doesn’t automatically appear; need to click on “scholarships” after creating profile. E-mail address is required.

The Seven Commandments of Financial Aid

For each commandment below, circle “do” or “don’t” to make the statement correct.

1. **DO/DON'T** limit your search to colleges you can pay for without financial aid.
2. **DO/DON'T** pay an expert to help you find scholarships appropriate for you.
3. **DO/DON'T** involve your parents in the financial aid process, even if they've already told you they can't afford to send you to college.
4. **DO/DON'T** calculate what college loan payments will cost you each month once you've graduated.
5. **DO/DON'T** include items like airfare to far-away schools and local transportation (like NYC Metrocards) in your calculations of what college will cost.
6. **DO/DON'T** compare financial aid awards from different schools.
7. **DO/DON'T** have a back-up plan in case hoped-for financial aid isn't available.

Undergraduate Financial Aid 2007–2008



Total Aid: \$106.7 billion

Adapted from: *Trends in Student Aid: Data on postsecondary financial assistance for 2008*, The College Board, www.collegeboard.com.

Scholarship Dos and Don'ts

Don't Be Fooled!

If a scholarship offer sounds too good to be true, it probably is. Here are some false claims that could mean you're about to lose money:

- "Thousands of dollars in scholarships go unclaimed each year."
- "Guaranteed or your money back!"
- "Give me your credit card or bank account number to hold this scholarship."
- "The scholarship will cost some money."
- "You've been selected . . ."*
- "You're a finalist in a contest" (that you never entered.)

*You should also be skeptical about "special offers" on college loans. Always compare loan terms with college loans offered by the government.

Smart Strategies:

Financial aid rules require that you report scholarships you receive to the financial aid office of the school you'll attend. (Aid from the school may be reduced by the amount of the scholarship, so be prepared to make the case that this money be subtracted from loans or your family's contribution instead.)

Gather all the materials you'll need. Here are some things you may be asked to submit with scholarship applications:

- One or two essays
- Letter(s) of reference
- Writing sample
- Resume
- Transcripts
- Copy of Student Aid Report
- Parent and Student Tax Returns and W-2 Forms
- GPA Certification Form
- Enrollment Verification Form
- Copy of Financial Aid Award Letter

Check with the college financial aid office about scholarships available through the college.

Check with your high school counselor about local scholarships.

In addition to online databases (like www.fastweb.com and www.collegeboard.com), use scholarship guide books available at your public library or counselor's office.

Prioritize your scholarship applications. Spend your energy on those that are the closest match for your qualifications.

Put deadlines on your calendar. Complete those with early due dates first.

Keep copies of your submitted applications for your records.

Send thank-you notes to let committees know you appreciate their consideration.

SOURCES:

The Fulfillment Fund: www.fulfillment.org

OPTIONS CAPDI of Goddard Riverside Community Center, www.goddard.org

Rutherford, Audrey, "Crash Course in Scholarships," **Next Step Magazine**, 10/18/04

www.latinocollegedollars.org

Scholarship Website Research

Use this page to investigate and rate one of the following free scholarship websites. Circle the website you're investigating.

- www.fastweb.com
- www.scholarships.com
- www.scholarshipexperts.com
- www.collegeboard.com
- www.uncf.org
- www.latinocollegedollars.org

You will share your recommendations with classmates, so please be as specific as possible about what the site does and doesn't offer, and how easy or difficult it is to use.

REGISTRATION

Is there a registration process? Yes No

How long does it take to register? _____ minutes

Are you required to provide an e-mail address? Yes No

List any info you were surprised to be asked about:

SCHOLARSHIP NOTIFICATION

Does the website send you e-mails about scholarships for which you might qualify?

Yes No

Can you opt out of these e-mail updates if you don't want them? Yes No

SCHOLARSHIP CHARACTERISTICS (Place a check mark beside all that apply.)

This website offers scholarships for the following groups of students:

- Students who are not citizens or legal permanent residents
- Students of specific races or ethnicities
- Students with learning disabilities
- Students with achievements in specific areas
- Students studying particular subjects in college
- Students writing essays on an assigned topic
- Other _____

RATE THIS SITE (Circle one.)

Difficult to use Some annoying stuff OK Pretty good Easy to use

COMMENTS:

Scholarship Website Summaries

Website: www.latinocollegedollars.org

How to log on:

At the top of the page, select choices from 3 dialogue boxes to describe yourself:

- high school student
- your GPA (grade point average)
- citizenship (choose “required,” “not required,” or “does not matter”)

Click “Search.”

What does it offer?

Advantages:

Disadvantages

Website: www.uncf.org (United Negro College Fund)

How to log on:

Click on “For Students” and select “Scholarships.”

Click on individual scholarships to find out more.

Once you find a scholarship of interest, click on “Apply Online.”

Click on “Register.” (You will be asked for personal information, including your social security number.)

What does it offer?

Advantages:

Disadvantages

Username: _____
Password: _____



Website: www.scholarshipexperts.com

How to log on:

Complete your profile, beginning on the first page.

Note there's more than one choice in many dialogue boxes. You have to click "Add Choice" to include each.

What does it offer?

Advantages:

Disadvantages

Website: www.fastweb.com

Begin by selecting the answers under "Search Scholarships."

(You will be asked for personal information, which is how they figure out which scholarships match your talents.)

What does it offer?

Advantages:

Disadvantages

Website: www.collegeboard.com

Click on the button that says “For Students.”

Click on the green button on the right labeled, “Pay for College.”

Then click on the button labeled “Scholarship Search.” Halfway down the page you will see arrow with the word “Start” next to it. Click on it.

What does it offer?

Advantages:

Disadvantages

Website: www.scholarships.com

Click on the red button that says “Find Scholarships Now.”

Enter your e-mail address and create a password for the website. Then fill in your school year, birthday, and zip code.

Once you have provided this information, click the “Submit” button.

(You will be asked for personal information, which is how they figure out which scholarships match your talents.)

What does it offer?

Advantages:

Disadvantages
