

COMMON SCHOLARSHIP MYTHS & TIPS

COMMON MYTHS AND FACTS:

1. Finding a scholarship that matches your profile is too time consuming.

Fact: The SCC Scholarship Handbook is a “one-stop shop” for scholarship applications. There are over 100 scholarships available for SCC students. And because you are competing in a smaller applicant pool than for example, a national scholarship, the likelihood of your being awarded one is greatly improved.

2. Merit scholarships are only awarded to students with high Grade Point Averages (GPAs)!

Fact: Many scholarships are designed for students with specific talents or interests and do not even use GPA’s as selection criteria. If a GPA is used as a part of the criteria, it is often used as a minimum qualification and once you cross that hurdle the GPA is not really a factor in the selection criteria.

3. I won’t get a scholarship because the competition is too strong.

Fact: Not so. Apply for scholarships which match your profile of interests, accomplishments and achievements. High paying scholarships often have large applicant pools but should not be ruled out. However, smaller scholarships tend to have smaller applicant pools which will give you a greater chance to stand-out and shine. Read the scholarship criterion carefully and then write your essay to show how closely you fit the criterion.

4. I don’t write well enough to submit a winning essay.

Fact: *What* you say can be just as important as *how* you say it. Nevertheless, writing your essay on a software program that has spell check and grammar check is advised as it will catch careless errors and help polish your essay. Neatness counts—coffee rings on your essay do not help you stand out in a good way. Tailor your essay to emphasize why you are the “ideal candidate.” Remember, that just as “one man’s meat is another man’s poison,” an essay that makes you an ideal candidate for one scholarship may leave you out of the running for another scholarship. Therefore, you may need to customize your essays to match the criterion for different scholarships or you may need to write completely different essays. Write your essay and then let it get “cold” for a day or two before editing it. Show it to an English teacher, parent or mentor for advice on how to improve it.

5. The scholarship process is a one-time thing. If I don’t get it this time I never will.

Fact: Not true. In general, a particular scholarship is only available once a year. However, students often don’t realize how much they have grown and improved from one year to the next. As a freshman, you may not have established a full and well rounded picture of what you are capable of but as a sophomore or a junior you have a great deal more to add to who you are becoming and what you are capable of achieving. Students can win scholarships for which they previously applied for and were not awarded. One thing’s for sure, if you don’t apply again, you won’t get it.



TIPS ABOUT RECOMMENDATION LETTERS:

Many scholarships require one or two letters of recommendation. You may never see the letters though as they can be submitted without your prior approval.

1. When selecting someone to write a letter of recommendation, be sure the author knows you well and likes you.

An instructor whose class you did well in may not be the best choice as they can only report how well you did in their class. A person who has only known you for one semester may not be able to provide a well-rounded picture of who you are or highlight your non-academic accomplishments.

2. Be sure to ask nicely and don't put them "on the spot".

You want someone to write a letter of recommendation who genuinely wants to foster your success. Follow up your request with an e-mail which includes:

- Information about yourself
- Why you are requesting the letter
- Whom to address the letter to
- A deadline that you wish to receive your letter

3. Be sure to give the author plenty of time to write the recommendation.

Telling someone on Wednesday that you need it by Friday can put unreasonable and excessive pressure on the author. Your lack of planning does not constitute an emergency on their part. A hastily written letter of recommendation, written with a touch of resentment, may not do you justice. Giving a person who sincerely cares about you ample time to "sing your praises" can really make a difference to the Selection Committees who will be reading numerous letters of recommendation.

4. Ask the author if they don't mind saving a digital copy for later use.

Just because you don't get the scholarship this year doesn't mean you won't next year and you will still need a letter of recommendation the next time you apply. Also, you may apply for more than one scholarship which means that each letter of recommendation might need modifications to fit the criterion of a particular scholarship. Editing an already written letter of recommendation is a lot easier than starting from scratch and shows thoughtful consideration of the author's time and efforts.

5. Be sure to say thank you.

The person who writes your letter of recommendation took personal time and effort to promote your success. Regardless, of whether or not you are awarded a scholarship, a sincere thank-you note goes a long way to fostering positive feelings between you and your author. For the author, knowing that you appreciate their time and consideration can be its own reward.