
MEMORANDUM

TO: SCHOLARSHIP SEEKERS
FROM: KENDALL MOORE
SUBJECT: SUGGESTIONS
DATE: FEBRUARY 1, 2019

This memo sets out some basic advice I have given students for the last thirty (30) years or so. Treat it like a grocery store of advice. Take what you want and leave what you don't.

Beth and I have three great kids. They didn't shoot the lights out of their class rank. One has overcome tremendous learning challenges. One was a National Merit Finalist. The other two weren't, and they did just as well. One took the ACT seven (7) times to get a desired score. All had a least a 3.6 high school GPA, but no one had a 4.0. They are all very different, and all are or were Presidential Scholars at their respective universities. They have all paid for all their school expenses, including tuition, fees, room, board, books, parking decals, car insurance, cell phone bills, fraternity or sorority dues, a professional trombone, a professional bass trombone, and some pretty amazing study abroad experiences. Kendall is a doctoral student, Kyle is a master's student applying to five (5) schools for his DMA, and Elise is a senior in college headed to seminary next year.

Between them, they have won well over 150 scholarships, awards, grants, internships and assistantships that they received in addition to numerous others that were tied to a specific school or major or geographic area that they declined. While many were one-time scholarships, most renewed, and some of those into graduate school. I would guess that 70% of those had never been given outside of a local area before my kids applied, and they won scholarships from thirty-five (35) states.

They also wrote over 6,000 letters of inquiry, of which probably ten percent (10%) were returned with bad addresses, eighty percent (80%) were simply ignored, and about five percent (5%) resulted in polite letters explaining why the child didn't qualify. My kids ultimately applied to 375 or so sources, and of those, some were general in nature so that all kids could apply, while some were restricted to certain majors or other criteria, so only one child would apply.

Over the course of several years, it is fair to say that as a family we put in over 3000 hours of effort so far researching, writing, mailing and talking. The scholarships that were offered ranged from \$50 to almost \$200,000. Most were in the \$500 to \$2,500 range, and many of those have continued to renew on a semester or a yearly basis.

The advice I will give you below is not theoretical. It is practical, and it is drawn from our actual experience.

1. **Make the best grades you can.** There simply is no substitute for this one. Having said that, recognize that there are plenty of scholarships for students with a solid B average. Some will tell you that class rank is more important than GPA in the consideration for a scholarship. While that may be true for competitive admission in Ivy League schools, that has not been our experience with scholarship awards.
2. **Work for the highest possible scores on the ACT and SAT.** Take it as many times as you can stand it, but work with teachers, coaches or mentors after each test so that you have a reasonable chance to improve your scores. Order the test answer key and your answers for the ACT so that you

can see what you missed as you prepare for the next test. And don't take every test. Skip one in between. Check out Get2College.Org to make an appointment for some free, personalized help.

3. **Do something besides study.** I like to see several kinds of activities, unless you are simply padding your resume. Don't. Depth is better than breadth. Quality is better than quantity. Length of engagement over a prolonged period shows commitment and persistence. Get involved in things that are fun for you. Give your time to causes that move you. Be passionate about something. Care about people. Do something for the public good, not just to get a scholarship, but because it is the right thing to do.
4. **Build a comprehensive resume.** Brag. Put it all in there and then ask several people to help you edit and rewrite it.
5. **Take the time to write a killer general personal statement.** Then beg your English teachers, a communication major and a business leader to critique it. Rewrite it several times. Here's a clue: it takes far more time to write a concise and compelling statement than it does to write a long one.
6. **But don't use a general personal statement for an application.** Make it specific to the program in which you are competing. You want your story to track the provider's story to the extent that the two stories honestly do match up.
7. **Clean up your social media presence NOW.** Clean up every channel. The more important and significant the scholarship, the more likely the donor is to Google your name. The savvier donors will ask their younger current recipients to vet you. If you are a girl who intends to go through sorority rush, you should already know this.
8. **Get a separate, professional email address for scholarship and recruiting purposes.** Consider using your initials and your graduation year. For example, ABC2016@gmail.com. "Pookie," "sexy," and "Yoda" probably should not be in the name.
9. **If you must work, then work well.** One of your best references will be an employer who says that you worked hard, you came early and you stayed late, and you went beyond what was expected of you.
10. **Have some mentors.** You will want them for many reasons, but you will need them for references.
11. **Your college or university will likely be the largest source of your scholarship, grant and aid money.** Estimates are that private sources make up somewhere between 7% and 10% of available dollars after the schools and the government. MeritAid.com is a useful source of information on awards offered by colleges all over the country.
12. **Many universities require you to apply for and participate in the Honors College or program to compete for their top scholarships.** If you qualify to apply, you should do so, and you should get to know everyone in the honors program, including the receptionist.
13. **Complete the FAFSA now, even if you think you won't qualify for Federal aid.** You can apply for next year's money on October 1. For example, you can apply in October 2018 for financial aid for the school year 2019-2020. You should apply as soon as possible, because if you do qualify, some money will run out. You want to be the first in line. You apply for the FAFSA at FAFSA.ed.gov. Don't go to a commercial site that links to the government site. Most colleges require you to complete the FAFSA, and many soft money scholarships are need based, so they require a copy of the FAFSA SAR, which is the summary Student Aid Report that shows your EFC, the Expected

Family Contribution. By the way, for the 2015-16 school year, with three kids in college, I was expected to contribute over \$60,000 to their education in that year. You will think you have fallen through the looking glass and that the Cheshire Cat prepared your SAR.

14. **Apply for state financial aid programs.** Mississippi's state financial aid application web site is <https://www.msfinancialaid.org/>. You should also look at other state's financial aid sites, particularly if you want to go to college in another state. Some of the state websites are incredibly comprehensive and include search engines.
15. **Apply to at least three schools.** If you have some game, you want them competing for you. If you commit to one school at the beginning of your senior year, you likely cut yourself out of consideration for additional "soft" money.
16. **Trust, but verify.** Your recruiter may tell you that all scholarships are given from the one application you file with the university. That is rarely true. Ask everyone you meet about institutional money and soft money. Of the nine (9) undergraduate schools our kids considered and we visited, we found sources of money that were unknown to the recruiters at every school.
17. **Call the Alumni Association at the schools.** Most of them offer money in one form or another, and they may have a separate application. Then ask about local alumni chapters and the scholarships they sponsor.
18. **Look for departmental money in your specific major.** Many departments have a separate application. Even if they don't, the department head may serve on the scholarship committee.
19. **Don't forget about community colleges.** They offer an outstanding value for many students. With an enhanced composite ACT score of 20-23 for example, a student gains full tuition at Holmes, and she could choose to live at home. There are fifteen (15) Mississippi community colleges, and their scholarship policies vary widely. Check their sites for specific information.
20. **Check out Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society.** For eligible community college students with at least 12 hours of credit and a 3.5 GPA, Phi Theta Kappa claims their members earn on average \$2,500 in transfer scholarships to four-year institutions. For the next three years, thanks to an outside grant, the \$60 cost of membership can be paid by a Golden Opportunity Scholarship.
21. **Call every service club you can find about scholarship programs.** Examples: Lions, Kiwanis, Exchange, Elks, P.E.O, Businesswomen, 100 Black Men, etc.
22. **Explore professional associations for your career choice.** For example, if you want to be a teacher, there are a half dozen or more professional associations for teachers. Many of them have scholarships for future teachers.
23. **Build a profile on all the major scholarship search sites.** Yes, I know how much time it takes. You will sift through hundreds of sweepstakes, drawings and the like, most of which we passed over. There will also be a hundred or more squirrely and unique one-time essays or video submissions. We passed on almost every one of those, as a good essay requires a significant amount of time to write. Unless you can recycle the core portion for another competition, you likely will not have time to do many of these if you expect to do everything else that is important to you in high school, both academically and socially. Some of the better-known search engines are FastWeb.com, Scholarships.com, CollegeBoard.org, Cappex.com, and Zinch.com. You should also check ScholarshipAmerica.org. Be aware that you are going to kiss a lot of toads looking for your prince. And hundreds of thousands of students will be kissing the same toads.

24. **Research your specific ethnicity.** If you are of Hispanic, Latino, Native American, African American, Eskimo or Asian heritage, for example, there are HUNDREDS of additional scholarships for which you will qualify. There are dozens of organizations, websites, books, lists of scholarships, articles and the like available to help you. Don't miss these unique opportunities.
25. **Check for military scholarships.** If you or a parent is a member of any branch of the armed services, including the Reserve, the Guard and the ROTC, there are dozens of programs that provide scholarships, grants, and other aid. That is beyond the scope of this memo, but you should check with your commanding officer for further information.
26. **For women, check out <http://www.thebestcolleges.org/scholarships-for-women/>.** It's a large list of links.
27. **Go to the library and the bookstore and pull scholarship search books.** They have sources of funds that are not on the websites. I do this every year. While I must look through hundreds of scholarships I have seen before, I typically find a few new ones. Here are a few suggestions for books from www.bestcollegereviews.org and www.financialaidsteps.com:

The Ultimate Scholarship Book: Billions of Dollars in Scholarships, Grants and Prizes by Gen Tanabe and Kelly Tanabe

How to Go to College Almost for Free by Ben Kaplan

Peterson's Scholarships, Grants & Prizes

Confessions of a Scholarship Winner: The Secrets that Helped Me Win \$500,000 in Free Money for College – How You Can Too! By Kristina Ellis

Paying for College without Going Broke by Princeton Review and Kalman Chany

Scholarship Handbook by The College Board

Scholarships 101: The Real-World Guide to Getting Cash for College by Kimberly Ann Stezala
28. **Draft a clear scholarship inquiry letter.** Tell a potential funding source about you, your background, your interests, and your need. Make "the ask."
29. **Search foundation and non-profit databases for potential grant-makers.** Send your letter and a resume to them and ask for a chance to compete.
30. **Never pay for general scholarship search help.** There are too many great free resources.
31. **Check with your church (temple, synagogue, mosque, etc.), your grandparent's church, your denomination, and other religious sources of funds.** Many senior adult groups have unpublished scholarships, and they want to reward hard work and enterprise. They also want to help students in need. My kids received scholarships from people of several different faith traditions.
32. **Follow-up and follow through.** Watch out for deadlines. Build a simple task list with deadlines, and put them on your calendar two weeks in advance.

33. **When someone responds to you in any manner, write a thank you note.** Every time. Some people will be so impressed with your thoughtfulness (which frankly used to be expected) that they pass your information on to someone else for consideration.
34. **Get started, and don't stop, even after you are in college.** Lots of money is available to upperclassmen who have proven themselves in their disciplines. In April 2014, in his third of five years to pursue a double degree and an honors curriculum, Kyle sent a letter to a foundation seeking funding for the summer of 2014 to participate in a music festival. He never received a response. In October of 2015, he received an email saying that the board had voted to grant a scholarship to him. And that check came directly to him, and not the school, to be used for any purpose to support his career path. That's how this works. You sow good seed, and just when you think nothing will happen, the crop comes in.
35. **Check out Co-op and Internship opportunities.** Depending on your major, your college may have opportunities for you to "co-op," which means alternating semesters of school and work. Most of these jobs pay enough to cover your expenses and to save some money. Even unpaid internships in the summer are worth pursuing, because when you get out of school, many employers are looking for "experience."
36. **Send a semester update to the people who sponsored you, mentored you and encouraged you.** Trust me; no one does this. You should.
37. **Apply for as many things as you can, so long as you meet the minimum qualifications, and so long as you are willing to take the time to do a good job with your application.**
38. **Ask your teachers, mentors and other references WELL IN ADVANCE of when you need their letters.** And ask them if they will write both a general "to whom it may concern" letter that is undated as well as a specific letter for a specific purpose. Ask for several original general letters. Then make color photocopies, taking care to have clean margins.
39. **Check every couple of weeks on your high school's website or guidance office for scholarship updates.**
40. **Check every other high school and college to see what opportunities they are posting on their websites.** I have researched and read well over 200 school websites.
41. **Talk to as many scholarship staff and officers as will give you their time.** Ask for their advice, and make notes constantly.
42. **Get someone with experience to take you through some mock interviews.** Pay that person for his or her time.
43. **Take the occasional long shot.** During the summer of 2016, I culled through about 7,000 private foundations that do not give to individuals, but rather only to other foundations. Kyle sent 1000 letters to those foundations. Just when I thought we had wasted over 100 hours and over \$500 in postage, he received a letter in September 2016 telling him that he had been granted a \$15,000 scholarship to the school of his choice for graduate school. So that effort was rewarded. In 2017, Kendall sent a letter to the same folks, and they granted him \$17,500 for graduate school.
44. **Always keep a copy of your correspondence and applications.**

45. **Plan your work, and work your plan.** No one owes you an education, including your parents. Having said that, there are many people who want to reward hard work, hustle and effort.
46. **Believe in yourself and recognize that this is just a numbers game.** The more you apply, and the harder you work, and the better you prepare, the more likely you are to score a scholarship (or several).
47. **“You must be willing to do the things today others don’t do in order to have the things tomorrow others won’t have.” Les Brown**