National
Multiple Sclerosis
Society

Scholarship Manual

Introduction

We all know the financial strain that an MS diagnosis can put on a family. Oftentimes, families are forced to choose between things that they would have once been able to easily afford. One of the most valuable of these decisions is your child's college education. Let's face it, college is expensive. With tuition costs and living expenses rising every year, it's becoming harder for families to fund their child's college education. These days, more and more families are turning to financial aid to help make the process a little easier to swallow. But when you have to compete with the other 2.4 million students applying for their cut of the financial aid pie, how do you make sure you get your piece (and make it as big as possible)?

The information you'll find here will give you a good look at the many college education financing options available to you, timelines and application guidelines to keep you on top of the game and scams to watch out for.

Everyone deserves the many benefits that come with a good education. It is our hope that this guide will provide you with the tools necessary to turn your dreams into reality!

Different Types of Financial Aid Available

The world of financial aid can be a scary one. With so many options, how do you pick which one is right for you? What if you need more than one? The information contained in this section will provide you with an overview of each of the different financial aid options available to you.

Federal Student Aid Programs

The US Department of Education's Federal Student Aid program provides over $100 billion in new aid to almost 14 million post-secondary students and their families each school year. This program easily ranks the Department of Education as the largest provider of college education funding. Below are listed all of the federal programs currently available.

- **FEDERAL PELL GRANTS:** A Federal Pell Grant is a form of financial aid that does not need to be repaid. Pell Grants are typically only awarded to students who have not yet completed a bachelor's or a professional degree. However, there have been some cases in which a student enrolled in a post-baccalaureate teacher certification program might be awarded a Pell Grant. The maximum award amount can change each award year and depends on program funding. For the 2009-10 award year, the maximum award amount is $5,350. Your award amount will depend not only on your financial need, but also on the costs to attend your school, whether you plan to attend full- or part-time and your plans to attend the school for a full academic year or less.

- **FEDERAL STAFFORD LOANS:** A federal Stafford loan is available to college and university students in addition to family and personal resources, scholarships, grants and work-study. Stafford loans are available to nearly all students, regardless of your current credit history. These loans have a number of benefits including a low APR (as low as 5.60%), higher borrowing limits of $2,000 and more and no payments due while enrolled in school.

  - Stafford Loans come in two forms, subsidized and unsubsidized. A subsidized loan is a federally guaranteed loan that is based on a student's financial need. Interest on these loans does not accrue while you are in school at least half-time or during any future deferment periods. There are maximum award amounts that you can receive based on your year in school. An unsubsidized loan is a federally guaranteed loan that is not based on a student's financial need. Interest on these loans does accrue from the time the loan is disbursed to the school. There are maximum award amounts that you can receive based on your year in school and your status as a dependent or independent student. The unsubsidized loan amounts may be increasing by $2,000 per year due to recent changes in legislation.

- **FEDERAL PLUS LOANS:** A federal PLUS loan is an unsubsidized loan to help parents pay for their dependent child's college education. The interest rate for a PLUS loan varies, but you can receive a 0.25% interest rate reduction if you sign up for auto-debit. PLUS loans can be used to pay for tuition, books, housing and more.

- **CAMPUS-BASED PROGRAMS**

  - **Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (FSEOG):** Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants are given to low-income undergraduate students to promote postsecondary learning. They are available at approximately 4,000 postsecondary institutions. Financial aid administrators at these institutions have a great deal of flexibility in determining the award amount given to each qualified student. Students who demonstrate "exceptional need" (those with the lowest expected family contribution (EFC) at the school) will be given priority.

  - **Federal Work Study:** The Federal Work-Study Program provides students with funds through part-time employment. The program is available at approximately 3,400 postsecondary institutions. Like the FSEOG, financial aid administrators have a great deal of flexibility in determining the award amount given to each qualified student. Hourly wages may not be less than the federal minimum wage.

  - **Perkins Loans:** Federal Perkins Loans are low-interest loans designed to help financially needy students cover the costs of their postsecondary education. Perkins Loans are available at approximately 1,800 postsecondary institutions. Borrowers who undertake certain public, military or teaching service employment are eligible to have all or a portion of their debt cancelled. Financial aid administrators have a great deal of flexibility in determining the award amount given to each qualified student.

- **ACADEMIC COMPETITIVENESS GRANT (ACG):** The Academic Competitiveness Grant (ACG) is a performance-based grant given to first- and second-year postsecondary students who completed a rigorous high school curriculum. The ACG is a need-based program. To qualify for an ACG, a student must be a U.S. citizen, be eligible to receive a Pell Grant, be majoring in mathematics, science or selected foreign languages and maintain a minimum grade-point average (GPA).

- **NATIONAL SMART GRANT:** The National SMART Grant is similar to the ACG, except that it is for third- and fourth-year postsecondary students.

- **TEACH GRANT:** The Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education (TEACH) Grant program provides grants of up to $4,000 per year to students who intend to teach in a public or private elementary or secondary school that serves students from low-income families. Applicants must maintain certain academic achievements and must also sign a TEACH Grant Agreement to Serve.

Scholarships

A scholarship is a financial aid award to a student and is typically based on a number of criteria. Scholarships can come from your school, community organizations, employers, private donors and a number of other sources.

> TYPES OF SCHOLARSHIPS

- **School-based**: Most colleges and universities are motivated to attract a diverse student body. To do this, schools might offer needs-based grants and scholarships, as well as scholarships based on various criteria such as degree program, ethnicity, heritage, residence or specific talent, among others. Many of these specific scholarships require that a minimum GPA level or above must be maintained. School scholarships and grants are typically renewed each year, as long as the student maintains the renewal criteria.

- **Employer:** Many employers encourage their employees to further their education by paying for college tuition while they are still working. There are often requirements that the courses or degree program be work-related and that a minimum GPA level or above must be maintained. Many companies also offer scholarships to the children of their employees.

- **Private:** The majority of private scholarships are awarded to students who match a defined profile. These profiles tend to be very specific and may include the following kinds of criteria:

    - Ethnicity
    - Religious affiliation
    - Special talent: artistic, specific academic area
    - Specific field of study
    - Residence location
    - Social activities
    - Membership in a civic organization
    - Disability

- **State:** When many people think of government funded college aid, they think of grants and loans. A number of states, however, offer merit-based scholarship programs. These scholarships vary from state to state, but are highly competitive and require adhering to high academic standards. See page 19 for a listing of New Jersey and Pennsylvania state scholarship programs.

> TIPS FOR LOCATING SCHOLARSHIPS

- **Take Inventory:** The best first step in your search for scholarships is to take a personal inventory. Grab a notebook and a pen and start writing down some basic (yet very important) information. Here are some key items to consider:
    - Year in school (Senior, Junior, etc.)
    - State of residence
    - Ethnic background
    - Religion
    - Membership organizations (4-H, Girl/Boy Scouts, Future Business Leaders of America, Future Farmers of America)
    - Employer (yours or your parents)
    - Disability
    - Military status (this includes ROTC)
- **Some additional items to list include:**
    - Extracurricular activities (football, cheerleading, choir, debate club, etc.)
    - Academics (classes taken, GPA, etc.)
    - Intended college major
    - Intended career path
    - Any other talents or interests
- **Become familiar with online scholarship search engines**
    - Websites such as FastWeb and Zinch have access to thousands upon thousands of scholarships each year. Creating a profile is free and once you're all set up, you'll receive e-mail alerts about new scholarships that come in and have access to their scholarship database.
- **Check with your employer or any membership organizations you belong to**
    - Many large companies offer scholarships to either their employees or the children of their employees. Check with the HR department to see if your company offers programs like this.
    - Many membership organizations such as Rotary Clubs, 4-H, Knights of Columbus and the Girl/Boy Scouts offer scholarships to their members or children of their members. Check with either the local chapters or national headquarters to find out if scholarships are available.

- **Look locally**
    - In a nutshell, the smaller the area that a scholarship covers, the greater your chances of winning it. Your best bet is to start in your guidance counselor's office. Your counselor might be aware of scholarships available for residents of your town, county or state. In addition to checking with your guidance counselor, try calling the municipal offices of your town, county or state and also look through their websites for potential scholarship information.
- **Check with your university's financial aid office**
    - Whether you're just starting to research schools or if you already know what college you will be attending, be sure to look into what scholarships they have available. Depending on the institution, they might have university-wide scholarships available or they might be awarded within a particular college or major. Your eligibility for these awards could be determined by academic performance, financial need, intended major, ethnicity and a host of other factors, so be sure to call the school or check out their website to find out what their guidelines are.

Scholarship Scams:

With more than 1.5 million scholarships (worth over $3.4 billion) available each year, the scholarship arena has become a haven for people all over the world looking to scam you out of your money. So how do you know what's legit and what's not? Here you will find a comprehensive list of the major types of scholarship scams out there today. Arming yourself with this knowledge will not only help you to keep yourself from becoming a scam victim, but you can pass the word along to your friends and family as well.

- **SCHOLARSHIPS FOR PROFIT:** Scholarships for profit look like any standard scholarship, with one major difference – they charge an application fee. The typical scam receives 5,000 to 10,000 scholarship applications and charges a fee usually between $5 and $35. After all of the application fees are collected, these scams can usually afford to pay out a $1,000 scholarship or more and still pocket a hefty profit – that is if they award a scholarship at all. Your odds of winning one of these scholarships are usually less than your odds of winning the lottery.
- **ADVANCE-FEE LOAN:** If someone is offering you an unusually low-interest educational loan, but is requiring you send them a fee before you ever receive the loan, don't think twice about running that offer through the shredder! A real educational loan will deduct any fees out of your disbursement check. No legitimate educational loan will ever require an up-front fee with an application. If you're still wondering whether that loan offer you received is legit, show it to your local bank manager and get their advice.

- **THE SCHOLARSHIP PRIZE:** Congratulations! You've won a scholarship worth thousands of dollars! But wait, you don't remember applying for this scholarship? And they want you to send them a check for the "disbursement" or "redemption" fee? Or maybe they already sent you a check for more than your stated award and you just have to send them back a check for the difference. As good as both of these scenarios sound, they are scholarship scams that you should avoid at all costs.

- **GUARANTEED SCHOLARSHIP SEARCH SERVICE:** If you find a scholarship search service that guarantees that you'll win a scholarship or your money back, run the other way and never look back. Many of these services will simply pocket your registration fee and disappear. Others will send you a list of scholarships, but if you don't win any of them, you'll find it extremely difficult to qualify for a refund.

- **INVESTMENT REQUIRED FOR FEDERAL LOANS:** You may sometimes run across a brokerage firm or insurance company giving a sales pitch for insurance, annuity and investment products, disguised as a "free financial aid seminar." When one of these sales pitches implies that purchasing one of these products is required in order to receive federal financial aid, it violates federal regulations and state insurance laws. Simply put, no form of federal financial aid will ever require any type of up-front monetary investment.

Protecting Yourself From Scholarship Scams

- **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 a scholarship.
    5. Nobody can guarantee that you'll win a scholarship.
    6. Legitimate scholarship foundations do not charge an application fee.
    7. If you're suspicious of an offer, it's usually with good reason.

- **WARNING SIGNS OF A SCHOLARSHIP SCAM:** If you see any of the following lines in a scholarship promotion, keep walking and don't look back:

    1. "The scholarship is guaranteed or your money back."
    2. "You can't get this information anywhere else."
    3. "I just need your credit card or bank account number to hold this scholarship."
    4. "We'll do all the work."

5. "The scholarship will cost some money."

6. "You've been selected by a 'national foundation' to receive a scholarship" or "You're a finalist" in a contest you never entered.

How to Put Together a Great Scholarship Application

With so many people applying for scholarship money these days, it's important to stand out in the crowd. A well-executed scholarship application is your first step in that direction. By following the steps outlined in this section, you will be well on your way to sending in a great scholarship application!

Start Your Research Early:

There are thousands upon thousands of scholarships available to students every year. So how do you know which are the right ones for you? By starting this research early in the game, not only will you have more time to request information and application materials and complete your application, but you'll also cut out some stress from the equation. Who doesn't want that?

Read the Eligibility Requirements Carefully:

This goes hand-in-hand with researching what scholarships to apply for. By reading the eligibility requirements carefully, you can save yourself the aggravation of putting the time into a scholarship application that you weren't eligible for. If you have questions or are confused about your eligibility for a particular scholarship, contact the scholarship sponsors as soon as possible.

Organize All Scholarship Materials:

Creating separate files for each scholarship can make the application process so much easier. File them by application date and keep a calendar of application deadlines and follow-up appointments. Many scholarships will require you to provide them with some combination of the following:

- Transcript
- Standardized test scores
- Financial aid forms, such as the FAFSA or PROFILE
- Parents' financial information, including tax returns
- One or more essays

- One or more letters of recommendation
- Proof of eligibility (i.e. membership credentials, proof of diagnosis, copy of driver's license, etc.)

Proofread Your Application Carefully:

Spell check, spell check, spell check! At least one run-through of your computer's grammar check feature wouldn't hurt either. One of the most disappointing things for an essay reviewer to come across is simple mistakes in spelling and grammar. Have a parent, teacher or friend read your essays before you submit them.

Don't Leave Items Blank:

If you are unsure of how to fill out any part of the scholarship application, contact the scholarship sponsors and ask them.

Follow Application Instructions to the Letter:

You may be tempted to show-off a little by writing a longer essay than is required or by sending supporting materials that were not requested. Don't. There is a reason those guidelines were specified.

Make Sure Your Application is Legible:

If your handwriting isn't your best feature, make sure that you type or print your application forms and essays.

Make Copies of Everything You Send:

If your application gets lost in the mail, having copies on hand will make it much easier to resend your application quickly.

Double-Check Your Application:

When you're applying for multiple scholarships, it's easy to want to re-use materials from previous applications (i.e. cover letters and essays). Be sure you check and re-check that you haven't left any incorrect names or blank fields.

Get Your Application In Early:

In the case of scholarship applications, the early bird really can get the worm. Pay careful attention to deadlines and get your application in as early as possible, or else you might miss out. Consider using certified mail or return receipt to ensure the scholarship sponsors received your application packet.

Plan and Review Your Essay Carefully:

Write a meaningful essay and make certain you have answered all the questions presented.

An FYI About How Scholarships Affect Your Financial Aid Package:

Believe it or not, private scholarships can actually reduce parts of your financial aid package. Colleges must consider outside scholarships as a student's financial resource, available to pay for education costs. If a college financial aid office meets your full financial need, government regulations specify that any scholarship money you win lowers your need figure on a dollar-for-dollar basis. What should matter most to you is which types of your aid are reduced or eliminated – self-help aid (loans or work-study) or need-based grants. Colleges, following federal regulations, can adjust your aid package in a variety of ways – some will subtract the value of unmet need first, others will reduce self-help aid before reducing grants, still others will use scholarship funds only to replace grant money. Some schools even give you the option of using scholarships to reduce your expected family contribution. It's a good idea to contact the financial aid office of schools that interest you and inquire about their policies regarding outside scholarships.

Financial Aid Calendar

Applying for financial aid can seem like a very intimidating process, but it doesn't have to be! This financial aid calendar is an excellent tool to help you map out your course to college funding.

> SUMMER BEFORE SENIOR YEAR

- Request college applications and financial aid information. Organize all college materials into separate files by college.
- Keep a calendar of all of the separate college admissions and financial deadlines.
- Start researching scholarships online.

> SEPTEMBER

- Meet with your school counselor to talk about college applications and financial aid.

> OCTOBER

- Are you an early decision or early action applicant? Be sure to fill out a supplemental aid application using estimated income figures.
- If you are hoping to qualify for merit- or need-based scholarships, check with each of the schools on your list to find out if they require early submission for your application.

- Ask your school counselor for information on state and local scholarships. Many of these scholarship programs require you to submit the FAFSA, the PROFILE or both, so be sure to submit them now.
- PROFILE Online is available starting October 1 for early decision and early action applicants who are applying for financial aid. Check the PROFILE website to see which schools require the PROFILE and to check their priority filing dates.
- If you are a male student who will be 18 at the time you complete your FAFSA application, you are required to register with Selective Services in order to be eligible for federal and state aid. You can register for Selective Services either at your post office or through the FAFSA form. If you need more information about Selective Services, call 888-655-1825.

> NOVEMBER

- Apply for scholarships in time to meet application deadlines.
- If you're applying for regular decision admission and financial aid, now is the perfect time to request a Department of Education PIN number. Your PIN number will serve as an electronic signature on all of your FAFSA documents and significantly reduces your applications processing time.
- While you need to wait until after January 1 to submit your FAFSA application, now is a great time to submit your PROFILE application.

> DECEMBER

- Keep an eye on all scholarship application deadlines!
- If you will be submitting a paper FAFSA application, make sure you pick one up from your guidance counselor at the beginning of the month.
- If you will be submitting your FAFSA application online, visit the FAFSA website to familiarize yourself with the site and its contents and features.
- If you submitted an early response or early action application, keep an eye on your mailbox, because your response should be arriving this month. If you are admitted to your early-decision school and you have applied for financial aid, you should also be receiving a financial aid award. Read the award letter carefully, as some awards require you to submit a written acceptance. If you have questions about the financial aid award, don't hesitate to contact the school's financial aid office directly.

> JANUARY

- It's FAFSA time!
- Since income and asset figures from your tax return are needed to complete the FAFSA, it's a great idea for you and your parents to prepare your tax returns as

early as possible this year. However, you do not need to submit your tax return to the IRS before submitting your FAFSA application.

- Sign and submit your FAFSA as soon after January 1 as possible. When you apply early, you improve your chances of receiving aid from as many sources as possible.
- Thinking about submitting your FAFSA online? Consider completing the pre-application worksheet. The worksheet is designed to help you and your family organize your financial information for your application. This worksheet should NOT be submitted to federal processors.
- If the schools you are applying to require a financial aid application to be submitted directly to the school, be sure to get this done now.
- If you're applying to a school or scholarship program that participates in the Institutional Documentation Service (IDOC), you may be asked to send tax returns and other documents to the IDOC customer service center.
- If a school requires the PROFILE, start filling out the application as soon as possible to meet February priority deadlines. PROFILE filers who complete the application after January 5 can print out a FAFSA worksheet, which provides answers to most of the FAFSA questions.

> FEBRUARY

- Most priority financial aid deadlines fall during the month of February. Typically, applications received by these deadlines are given the highest consideration. Check which dates the deadlines fall on for both the FAFSA and PROFILE to make sure you get yours in on time.
- You should expect your Student Aid Report (SAR) to arrive two to four weeks after you submitted your FAFSA. The SAR summarizes all of the information you provided on your FAFSA, including your Expected Family Contribution (EFC). If you provided an e-mail address when you submitted your FAFSA, you should receive your SAR via e-mail approximately 3-5 days after your FAFSA has been processed. If you did not include an e-mail address, you should receive your SAR 7-10 days after your FAFSA has been processed. Be sure to review your SAR to make sure that it's correct and complete. Once you've looked over it and made any necessary changes, sign it (use your PIN if you submitted electronically) and send it back. If you've not received your SAR four weeks after submitting your FAFSA, call 1-800-433-3243.

> MARCH

- Start looking for a summer job or internship! Any experience in your desired field that you can get early in your college career will be extremely valuable after graduation.

APRIL

- All that hard work you've been putting into filling out paperwork and meeting deadlines is about to pay off! Admissions decisions and financial aid award letters will be arriving this month. Be sure to read your aid award letters very carefully so that you know when the deadlines for accepting your award are.
- If your full need has not been met or if your family's financial circumstances have changed, consider meeting with financial aid staff to discuss your situation.
- Since reply deadlines for most colleges fall on May 1, you'll want to make your final decision on which school you'll be attending and mail the enrollment form along with a deposit check.
- Taking the AP exams? Now's the time to hit the books! Your AP scores will determine how much college credit is granted and those college credits can add up to big savings for you!

MAY

- If you're taking the AP exams, you'll be doing so this month. Make sure that your scores will be sent to your final-choice college.
- If you will be using student loans as part of your financial aid package, your college will send you instructions about the loan application process. You will need to complete and sign a Master Promissory Note (MPN) in order to receive your Stafford loan.
- If it will be difficult for your family to pay the expected family contribution for the semester, it's time to start pursuing alternatives such as parent loans or private loans to close the financial aid gap.

SUMMER BEFORE COLLEGE

- Your fall semester bill will arrive over the summer. Be sure to return it with proper payment as quickly as possible.
- If all forms have been completed correctly and all deadlines have been met, financial aid funds should be credited to your student account before the beginning of the semester.
- Whether you'll be staying in a dorm or in off-campus housing, now is the best time to finalize your housing plans.
- If you'll be travelling a long distance to your new school, make your travel plans now. Booking early ensures the best prices and the least amount of stress.
- If you're worried about working during the semester to help cover basic living essentials, consider working over the summer and saving up. It'll be one less thing to think about when your first semester rolls around.

Completing the FAFSA

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is the financial aid application that you will need in order to apply for federal and state student grants, work-study and loans.

- **WHERE TO FIND THE FAFSA:** The FAFSA comes in two versions – electronic and paper. The electronic version is available at www.fafsa.ed.gov. You can request a paper copy by calling 1-800-4-FED-AID or 1-800-433-3243.

- **THE ELECTRONIC FAFSA:** The easiest way to complete, submit and track your application is through FAFSA on the Web. When you file online, your processing time can get reduced by one to two weeks. Another bonus –your data is checked before it's transmitted to the processing center, so there's less chance of making an error that would need to be corrected and resubmitted with the paper form.

- **BEFORE YOU APPLY:** Complete your income tax return. The sooner you can get this done, the better. A lot of the information requested on the FAFSA is the same that you will find on your tax return. However, it is not necessary that you file your income tax return with the IRS before you will out the FAFSA. If you are planning on submitting your application on the Web, you should consider obtaining a U.S. Department of Education PIN. Your PIN serves as your electronic signature and gives you the fastest way to submit your application. Getting your PIN is easy! Simply fill out the brief application at www.pin.ed.gov. You should receive your PIN in the mail in 7-10 days. You are still able to use FAFSA on the Web without a PIN, you'll just have to print out and mail in a signature page.

- **COMPLETING YOUR APPLICATION:** January 1 is the first day that you are able to submit your completed FAFSA. Be sure to try and file it as close to this date as possible, as many school, state, and private aid deadlines are much earlier than federal deadlines. Be sure to pay close attention to your colleges' priority financial aid deadlines. Remember that many schools will also require you to submit additional financial aid forms such as the CSS/Financial Aid PROFILE or institutional financial aid forms.

What to Do If Financial Aid Isn't Enough

You get your financial aid package and scholarship award letters and realize that they still don't cover the cost of your tuition. Now what? This section will give you an overview of your different options and hopefully help put you back on track.

TAX INCENTIVES

- **Hope Tax Credit:** The Hope Tax Credit is available to first- and second-year postsecondary education students as a tax credit equal to 100% of the first $1,000 of tuition and fees and 50% of the second $1,000.
- **Lifetime Learning Tax Credit:** Similar to the Hope Tax Credit but is for junior and senior students as well as graduate students.
- **Tuition and Fees Deduction**
- **Student Loan Interest Deduction**

COMMUNITY SERVICE PROGRAMS

- **AmeriCorps:** AmeriCorps offers opportunities for adults of all ages and backgrounds to serve through a network of partnerships with local and national nonprofit groups. AmeriCorps members address critical needs in communities all across the country. As a member, not only will you gain new skills and experiences, but at the end of your service, full-time members earn a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award of $4,725 to pay for college, graduate school or to pay back qualified student loans. Members who serve part-time earn a partial award.
- **Peace Corps:** The Peace Corps' Fellows/USA program is a graduate fellowship program that offers financial assistance to returned volunteers who wish to earn professional certification, master's or doctoral degrees in a variety of subject areas. The program is available at participating schools in specific subject areas. Fellows receive scholarships, reduced tuition, paid employment, health benefits and housing or living allowances, depending on the program.
- **Advanced Placement (AP) Courses:** Advanced Placement courses are college-level courses that you can take in high school to potentially earn college credits. This means you'll have fewer classes to take and end up paying less money.

COLLEGE-LEVEL EXAMINATION PROGRAM® (CLEP):

The College-Level Examination Program® (CLEP) gives you the opportunity to receive college credit for what you already know by earning qualifying scores on any of 34 examinations. Earn credit for knowledge you've acquired through independent study, on-the-job training, prior coursework, professional development, cultural pursuits or internships.

- **QUALIFIED TUITION PROGRAMS (SECTION 529):** Qualified Tuition Programs, also known as Section 529 plans, are among the best ways of saving for your child's college education. There are two types of Section 529 plans – prepaid tuition plans and college savings plans. Prepaid tuition plans let you lock in future tuition rates at in-state public colleges at current prices and are usually guaranteed by the state. College savings plans are typically more flexible, but do not offer a guarantee.

- **UPROMISE®:** Upromise® is one of the easiest savings programs out there. It allows you to earn 1%-25% back from eligible purchases at more than 600 online retailers, 8,000 restaurants, and thousands of eligible grocery and drug store items. The money earned in your Upromise® account can be invested in a 529 plan, used to pay down a Sallie Mae student loan, or sent to you in a check to use towards college expenses.

- **COVERDELL EDUCATION SAVINGS ACCOUNTS (ESAS):** Coverdell Education Savings Accounts (ESAs) are accounts created as an incentive to help parents and students save for education expenses. Total contributions for the account beneficiary cannot exceed $2,000 in any year, regardless of how many accounts have been established. As long as the disbursements are less than the beneficiary's qualified education expenses, they will not be taxed.

- **UGMAS AND UTMAS:** The Uniform Gift to Minors Act (UGMA) established a simple way for a minor to own securities without requiring the services of an attorney to prepare trust documents or the court appointment of a trustee. The Uniform Transfer to Minors Act (UTMA) is similar, but also allows minors to own other types of property, such as real estate, fine art, patents and royalties, and for the transfers to occur through inheritance. UTMA is slightly more flexible than UGMA.

- **MILITARY AID:** The GI Bill is the main reason that the majority of people enlist in the military. Through the Post 9/11 GI Bill, individuals with at least 90 days of aggregate service on or after September 11, 2001 are eligible to have their tuition and fees paid up to 100% of the highest in-state tuition charged by a public educational institution. Veterans are also eligible to receive up to $1,000 per year to use towards books.

Resources for Finding Scholarships and Additional Financial Aid

This is not an exhaustive list

- **MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS SCHOLARSHIPS:**
  - **National MS Society Scholarship Program:** Annual scholarship program where high school seniors who are either living with MS or have a parent living with MS have a chance to receive $1,000-3,000 towards their college education: **www.nationalmssociety.org/living-with-multiple-sclerosis/society-programs-and-services/scholarship/index.aspx**
- **DISABILITY SCHOLARSHIPS:**
  - **Looking Glass:** Scholarships for students who have at least one parent with a disability: **www.lookingglass.org**
  - **Incight Education:** Scholarships for people with disabilities: **www.incight.org**
- **AMERIGLIDE ACHIEVER SCHOLARSHIP:** A program offered to full-time college students who use wheelchairs. The $500 scholarship contest occurs twice a year for the fall and spring semesters. Awards can be used for student's books and other school related supplies: **www.ameriglide.com/Scholarship/**
- **1800WHEELCHAIR.COM SCHOLARSHIP:** An annual scholarship program that awards a $500 scholarship to two students each year who currently use either a manual or power wheelchair: **www.1800wheelchair.com/scholarship/**
- **CHAIR SCHOLARS FOUNDATION NATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM:** Provides eligible "chair confined" high school seniors and college freshman with up to $20,000 for tuition to attend the college or university of their choice: **www.chairscholars.org/national.html**
- **GOLDEN SLIPPER CLUB:** An organization that raises money to fund initiatives such as a college scholarship fund, children's camp and more: **www.goldenslipperclub.org**

Local Scholarships:

- **DUNKIN DONUTS SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM:** $1,000 scholarships awarded to graduating high school seniors by local Dunkin Donuts franchisees. Scholarship recipients will be selected on the basis of "well-rounded" character: positive academic record, demonstrated leadership, commitment to school and community activities and experience in a work environment. Applications become available February 1: **www.dunkindonuts.com/scholarship**

New Jersey

- **NJ STARS & NJ STARS II:** NJ STARS is a scholarship program exclusively for New Jersey residents that covers the cost of tuition and approved fees at New Jersey's 19 community colleges. NJ STARS students who earn an associate's degree with a 3.25 grade point average or better are eligible for NJ STARS II at any New Jersey public four-year college or university: **www.njstars.net**

Pennsylvania

- **ROBERT C. BYRD HONORS SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM:** The Robert C. Byrd Scholarship Program is a federally funded program offering a merit scholarship for outstanding high school seniors who have been accepted at an institution of higher education. The Byrd Scholarship Program rewards academic excellence in high school and encourages students to continue their education. The federal government allocates the funds that determine the amount of the scholarship award: **www.pheaa.org/specialprograms/Robert_C_Byrd_Honors_Scholarship_Program.shtml**

- **GAINING EARLY AWARENESS AND READINESS FOR UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS (GEAR UP) SCHOLARSHIP:** The Pennsylvania State GEAR UP scholarship is a federally funded program that supports college readiness through early intervention activities in middle and high schools and offers a scholarship for postsecondary education. PHEAA administers the GEAR UP scholarship on behalf of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE): **www.pheaa.org/specialprograms/Gear_Up.shtml**

- **NEW ECONOMY TECHNOLOGY SCHOLARSHIP (NETS):** The Technology Scholarship and the SciTech Scholarship are both awarded through the New Economy Technology Scholarship (NETS) Program. These scholarships make financial aid available to undergraduates studying in approved technology, science or allied health fields: **www.pheaa.org/specialprograms/nets/New_Economy_Technology_Scholarship.shtml**

- **FOUNDATIONS:** Local foundations can sometimes offer scholarships

Scholarship Search Websites:

- **FASTWEB:** Create a profile and let FastWeb do the research for you: **www.fastweb.com**

- **SCHOLARSHIPS.COM:** Free college scholarship search and financial aid information: **www.scholarships.com**

- **BROKE SCHOLAR:** Find scholarships and use tools to stay organized and make the process easier: **www.brokescholar.com**

- **MERIT AID:** Free source for $11 billion in merit aid scholarships from 1,000s of colleges: **www.meritaid.com**
- **ZINCH:** Connect with scholarships and learn about colleges: **www.zinch.com**
- **SCHOLARSHIP AMERICA:** Provides information and resources for your scholarship search: **www.scholarshipamerica.org**
- **COMMON KNOWLEDGE SCHOLARSHIP FUND:** Educational and scholarship opportunities for students of all levels: **www.cksf.org**

College Readiness Websites:

- **FAFSA:** Your one-stop destination for all things FAFSA: **www.fafsa.ed.gov**
- **COLLEGE BOARD:** Major programs and services in college readiness, college admission, guidance, assessment, financial aid, enrollment and teaching and learning: **www.collegeboard.com**
- **I NEED A PENCIL:** Free SAT prep and other useful information: **www.ineedapencil.com**
- **CASH COURSE:** Information for college students to stay financially informed: **www.cashcourse.org**
- **FINAID:** Links to a variety of aid sources (i.e. scholarships, grants, loans, etc.): **www.finaid.org**
- **CAPPEX:** Free website to help you learn which colleges want you, before you apply: **www.cappex.com**
- **KNOW HOW 2 GO:** Complete information on college prep, whether in middle or high school: **www.knowhow2go.org**

Other Financial Aid Resources:

- **PENNSYLVANIA STATE GRANT PROGRAM:** Grant money made available to students through an easy, online application: **www.pheaa.org/stategrants/index.shtml**
- **UPROMISE®:** Members direct their spending to Upromise® partners—including more than 600 online stores, 8,000+ restaurants, thousands of grocery and drugstore items—and earn money for college. **www.upromise.com**

Resources:

Partial information for this guide was obtained from the following resources:

http://studentaid.ed.gov/PORTALSWebApp/students/english/PellGrants.jsp?tab=funding

http://www.finaid.org/loans/studentloan.phtml

http://www.finaid.org/loans/studentloandiscounts.phtml

http://www2.ed.gov/programs/fws/index.html

http://www2.ed.gov/programs/smart/index.html

http://www.braintrack.com/financial-aid-articles/articles/scholarship-types

http://www.finaid.org/scholarships/common.phtml

http://ed.gov/offices/OPE/PPI/HOPE/index.html

http://www.gibill.va.gov/GI_Bill_Info/benefits.htm#CH33

www.collegeboard.com

www.finaid.org

United States Department of Education, www.ed.gov

DO-IT, University of Washington, College of Education, www.washington.edu/doit/

Federal Trade Commission, www.ftc.gov

www.upromise.com

www.peacecorps.gov

www.americorps.gov

Free Application for Student Aid: www.fafsa.ed.gov

National Multiple Sclerosis Society
Greater Delaware Valley Chapter
1 Reed Street, #200, Philadelphia, PA 19147
1-800-548-4611 | national**MS**society.org/pae