
PAUL VI GUIDANCE NEWSLETTER

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FINANCIAL AID WORKSHOPS FOR PARENTS

Rich Woodland, Director of Student Services and Financial Aid at Curtis Institute of Music and formerly of Rutgers University, will present a financial aid workshop at Paul VI on December 11. The program is entitled "Paying for College" and reviews the guidelines for filing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Parents will be given a copy of the FAFSA On The Web worksheet and guided step-by-step through the completion of the document. Since all need-based aid is determined by this form and every college requires the FAFSA, it is very important that the form be completed correctly. The presentation will begin at 7 p.m. in the Media Center.

FINANCIAL AID FORMS

There are two types of financial aid forms to be used in seeking need-based aid, the Free Application for Federal Student Aid and the Profile. All colleges require the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to be considered for financial aid, but not all colleges require the Profile. Be sure to check the latest individual college catalog or call the college to find out what forms are needed.

The FAFSA form will be available online after January 1. It is strongly recommended that you file electronically at www.fafsa.ed.gov. This avoids any delays that could be caused by the Postal Service and the processing time is much shorter. The online form also has an automatic calculation check to avoid computational errors. Paper FAFSA forms are also available in the Guidance Office, but it is preferred that you file online.

Follow these steps to complete your FAFSA online.

- Open your browser and go to www.fafsa.ed.gov
- Select "Fill out a FAFSA" then follow the on-screen instructions to complete the application

- If you need help while you're filling out your FAFSA, click on the "Chat" link on any application screen to chat with a customer service representative. You don't have to exit the application or go to a phone to receive help
- Review your answers and, if necessary, make corrections
- Sign your FAFSA. The process cannot continue without a signature. If you're dependent, your parent also needs to sign. You have three options for signing your online FAFSA

1. If you have a PIN, you can electronically sign your FAFSA. Parents with PINs can also electronically sign. If you don't have a PIN, you can apply for one now by going to www.pin.ed.gov
2. You can print a paper signature page from FAFSA on the Web, sign it, and mail it to the address provided
3. You can transmit your online FAFSA without signing. If you choose this option, you will be sent a Student Aid Report (SAR) in the mail requesting signatures. Sign and return your SAR right away so that your FAFSA can then be processed

You can also receive general information about the Federal Student Financial Assistance Programs by using the website www.ed.gov/offices/OPE. Use the State of New Jersey Student Assistance website to get information about state aid. The internet address for the State of New Jersey is www.hesaa.org.

If your college or university requires you to submit a Profile application for financial aid in addition to the (FAFSA), turn your browsers to <https://profileonline.collegeboard.com> to complete this additional form. There is a charge to file the Profile, so have a credit card available.

The date listed on each of these forms should match the year you will be entering college and plan to use the money (2008-2009).

Families should avoid any web site that charges a fee to file the FAFSA, as this form is free.

In contrast, the financial aid professionals at colleges are the ones who make the aid decisions every day and are fully trained in how aid works ethically and legally. Their advice and help is always free.

PRIVATE SOURCES OF FINANCIAL AID

Although the majority of aid available is based on financial need, as demonstrated by the FAFSA, there are private sources of aid if you are willing to do the research. Often these awards are based on academic performance, leadership qualities, extra-curricular activities or scores from a competitive exam.

The key to finding these awards is the student's willingness to do the research. The Guidance Office also has available a list of Internet sites dealing with financial aid and scholarships.

Where, besides at Paul VI, does a student look for sources of aid? Parents should check with their employer's personnel department. Often, businesses will sponsor awards for the children of employees. Professional, religious and fraternal organizations also often sponsor scholarships for members and their families.

Don't overlook the colleges themselves. While many colleges automatically screen all applicants for scholarship opportunities, some require that the student make a special request to be considered. Establish a close communication with the financial aid officers. Don't be afraid to ask questions or explain your need for aid. Be ready to meet with them and present documentation to support your case.

SCHOLARSHIP SCAMS

With the cost of a college education rising every year, it's no wonder many people jump at any opportunity to find scholarships, grants and financial aid. Many "scholarship search" companies exist to take advantage of this anxiety about paying for college. Most seniors receive at least one postcard in the mail promising a guarantee of scholarships. Usually there is a fee involved, leaving students and parents to wonder "Is this for real?"

In the fall of 1998, articles on this topic appeared in USA Today and Good Housekeeping. Mark Kantrowitz of Pittsburgh, author of the Financial Aid Information Page website, summed the situation up with the statement, "The best rule of thumb is, don't pay money to get money." Kantrowitz's Internet site also contains a "Scam Alert" section. The National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators estimates 350,000 students lose \$5 million a year to scams.

On February 10, 2000 the U.S. Senate held hearings on the rising costs of college. Included in the hearings was testimony on scholarship scams. Mr. Kantrowitz testified on the issue of financial aid fraud. According to Mr. Kantrowitz, one of the most common types of scams involves having students pay an applications or processing fee for a guaranteed scholarship search. Other types include the unclaimed aid myth and false claims of government or nonprofit affiliation or endorsement.

Alice Hardy, a Federal Trade Commission (FTC) lawyer specializing in scholarship fraud, explained that typically a scam operator sends postcards asking students to call a toll-free number. During the phone conversation, the student is told of a guaranteed scholarship or a money-back refund. The fact that there are complicated strings attached isn't explained. Often to get that refund, the student must produce rejection letters from every source on the scholarship list provided by the service. This is impossible, because many of the sources don't exist or don't issue rejection letters. These search services also often use professional sounding names designed to inspire confidence, which makes the situation even more confusing.

Many of these services advertise that there are millions of dollars in unclaimed scholarship funds available. This just isn't true. According to Kantrowitz, "It's a myth." The misleading statistics come from government studies conducted from 1976 to 1977 and in 1983 that referred to employer tuition reimbursements and private foundation scholarships: funds unavailable to the general public, according to Ellen Frishberg, Director of Student Financial Services at Johns Hopkins University.

One of the newest scams is the financial aid seminar. Usually the student and his/her family are invited to a "free" seminar on financial aid. These turn out to be high-pressure sales pitches for financial aid products and services of dubious value. In a two-year investigation entitled Project ScholarScam, the FTC shut down eight of these search services that were proven to be scams.

Some of the scholarship search services are legitimate. However, students and their parents are most likely paying for information they can obtain themselves for free. A listing of some of the Internet sites offering free scholarship searches is available in the Guidance Office. Students can go to <http://www.finaid.org> and the College Parents of America, an advocacy organization in Washington, DC that has a site at <http://www.collegeparents.org>, which features information on nationwide programs. You can also call them at 1-888-256-4627.

TIPS FROM A SCHOLARSHIP JUDGE

Several years ago, Sue Macy was a judge in a scholarship competition. She reported in the November/December issue of *Careers and Colleges* some of the things she discovered that would help seniors applying for private scholarship awards.

- Use the scholarship application itself. Don't type the questions over. The judges look at a large number of applications and get used to looking for certain things in particular places. Therefore, a typed out application is harder for them to read. Plus, it's easy to make a mistake and mistype questions or even leave some out altogether.
- Make a photocopy of the application before you make any marks. Use the copy as the first draft. Then transfer your polished answers to the actual form.
- Pay attention to details. Be sure that you fill in all the requested information and data. Many applicants forget to sign the form or have a parent sign when required. Mistakes like this put you at a disadvantage immediately.
- Be concise. Judges are looking for what and how you write, not necessarily how much you write. Let your personality show with your creativity, but don't get carried away so that the essay becomes too "cutesy."
- Have some self-respect. It's OK to explain how you overcame a hardship, but don't milk the situation for all it's worth.
- Be humble. Tell the judges about your accomplishments, but avoid bragging.
- Do the math. If the application asks for financial information, be sure the numbers add up correctly.
- Choose your recommendations wisely. Often scholarship applicants are closely matched and a great letter of recommendation can make the difference.

ATTENTION SENIORS!

For those of you who have still not applied to any colleges, please see your counselor for assistance and guidance. All seniors make sure that you are taking advantage of the scholarship opportunities that are available to you. Check the school website under "Guidance" for updated scholarship information.

On January 10, 2008 at 7:00 PM in the Cafeteria, members of the Class of 2007 have been invited to speak with our senior class about their experiences during their first semester at college. This will be an informal discussion regarding things that they wished they knew to expect before going into their freshman year of college. All seniors are encouraged to attend. If you are interested, please sign up in guidance. Pizza and soda will be served.

FINANCIAL AID FLASHES

Mrs. Robinson is Paul VI's scholarship chairperson. Listed below are scholarship opportunities that have come through the Guidance Office. If you have any questions please see Mrs. Robinson.

Name: The Official USAA Scholarship Foundation
Deadline: December 12, 2007
Apply: www.usaa-academy.com

Name: University of St. Thomas Presidential Scholarship
Deadline: January 12, 2008
Apply: www.stthom.edu/admissions

Name: Sam Walton Community Scholarship
Deadline: January 14, 2008
Apply: www.walmartfoundation.org

Name: The American Musical and Dramatic Academy
Deadline: February 1, 2008
Apply: www.AMDA.edu

Name: Mount St. Mary's University: Bishop's Scholar. Program
Deadline: February 1, 2008
Apply: www.msmary.edu/bishop

Name: 2008 New Jersey Business Idea Competition
Deadline: February 15, 2008
Apply: www.fdu.edu/rothman

Name: Sallie Mae/Brandon Teacher Scholarship
Deadline: February 15, 2008
Apply: See Mrs. Robinson for details

Name: KFC Colonel's Scholars Program
Deadline: February 15, 2008
Apply: www.kfcscholars.org

Name: SJOA College Scholarship Program
Deadline: March 1, 2008
Details: Applicant must meet all the criteria, including having played football or cheerleading in the Tri County Midget Football League
Apply: www.sjoabandits.com

Name: NJ Vietnam Veterans' Memorial Foundation
Deadline: April 18, 2008
Apply: www.njvvmf.org

Name: Abbott and Fenner Scholarship
Deadline: June 20, 2008
Apply: www.abbottandfenner.com/scholarships.htm

YOU'RE INVITED

Many colleges and schools invite prospective students and their parents to Open House programs. Below are listed some of these opportunities. In some cases, it is necessary to pre-register for the meeting. See the bulletin board in Guidance for details on these and other programs.

- Our Lady of Lourdes School of Nursing
Date: Sunday, February 10, 2008
Time: Information session at 1 PM and 2 PM, Tour of the school to follow
RSVP: 856-757-3730
- New Jersey Orthodontists: Groundhog Job Shadowing Program
Date: February 4-8, 2008
RSVP: www.jobshadow.org
- Rider University
Date: December 11, 2007
Time: 10:00 AM
RSVP: www.rider.edu
- Drexel University
Date: January 14, 2008
Time: 9:30 AM – 2:30 PM
RSVP: www.drexel.edu