PNCA

External Scholarship Resource Guide for Undergraduates

Q: What is an external scholarship?

A: Any scholarship provided by an entity other than the school you are attending (i.e., it doesn't come from PNCA).

Note: All **underlined** words and phrases are hyperlinked

I. Introduction

The purpose of this guide is to help you get started looking for external scholarship opportunities. We have compiled strategies for finding external scholarships, scholarship databases and search tools, as well as a list of individual scholarships, to aid you in your search.

Below, we have put together some generalized lists to help you brainstorm the kinds of scholarships you might look for or might be available to you.

Scholarships: Where to look

There are thousands of scholarships, and though scholarship search engines are useful tools, sometimes it is most effective to go straight to the scholarship's source. Here are some ideas of where to look for scholarship opportunities.

- Places you/your family have memberships to
  - Ex: clubs, gyms, organizations, associations
- Local entities in your community
  - Ex: churches, nonprofits, community centers, city or state offices
- Large brands with nationally available scholarships
  - Ex: Google, Nike, Coca Cola, Intel, McDonalds
- Small private businesses
  - Ex: Law firms, local credit unions, theatres

Scholarships: What to look for

There are all sorts of scholarships available for all sorts of different students and situations. Here are some ideas for types of scholarships to look for:

- Social location or identity
  - Ex: your race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, citizenship, first-gen college student, religion, military service, economic background, etc.
- Area of study, artistic discipline, merit-based, extracurriculars
  - Ex: your major, art-medium, good grades, portfolio, sports, hobbies
- Community involvement, activism, volunteering
  - Ex: volunteerism, involvement in racial justice activism, LGBTQ activism, housing justice, disability rights advocacy, economic justice, environmental justice, etc.

II. Scholarship Tracking Sheet

Name	Deadline	Amount	Website	Notes

III. Scholarship Databases

Just as there are thousands of scholarships, there are hundreds of websites advertising their ability to connect you with those scholarships.

As with all things involving high volumes of money, there are people out there who will scam you under the guise of offering a scholarship, if they are given the chance. Below are some rules of thumb to bear in mind.

Avoiding scholarship scams

- You should *never* have to input your credit card, bank, or social security numbers to apply for a scholarship or register for a scholarship website. Be wary of anyone asking for sensitive personal information.
- You should *never* have to pay to apply for or access scholarship opportunities. (Contests that have entry fees are different.)
- Many scholarships refuse to pay the student directly, sending the check to the institution instead. Some scholarship funds, especially those intended to support the student beyond just tuition will pay the student directly, but almost always in the form of a check.

Just because a scholarship database lists a scholarship, it does not mean that that scholarship is legitimate or current. Always double-check the website of the source of the scholarship to verify that it is both legitimate and currently available.

Legitimate scholarships tend to:

- Have a list of past winners.
- Display obvious application deadlines and eligibility requirements.
- Never ask for banking, credit card, or social security numbers.
- Have a point of contact for questions or concerns.

Another note**:** nowadays, most scholarship websites either require you to register to view their lists or offer “discounts” or “coupon codes” with major brands. Both of these tactics are how the sites make money, either by collecting and distributing your data or by contracting with brands to promote their products. Only engage with sites you are comfortable sharing your data with or receiving advertisements from.

In the next two sections (sections IV and V), we’ve compiled lists of scholarship databases for your search. Remember to remain diligent.

IV. Databases from For-Profit Entities

Here, we've provided a sample of scholarship databases and search tools that come from private businesses. Each name is hyperlinked to their website.

Name	Description
Finaid.org	offers numerous categories
Scholarships.com	registration req.; niche categories
Poets & Writers	*contests, not scholarship*; cash prizes for creative writing, entry fees req.

There are plenty more to find just by Googling "list of scholarships." At a certain point, they are all basically the same, and using one over the other will make little difference in what kinds of scholarships you find.

Just bear in mind the tips discussed earlier for remaining diligent in your scholarship search.

V. Databases from Nonprofit Entities

Here, we've provided a small list of entities that offer their own collections of scholarships. Each name is hyperlinked to their website.

Name	Description
Congressional Black Caucus Foundation	for Black and African American students
United Negro College Fund (UNFC)	for Black and African American students
Executive Leadership Council (ELC)	for Black and African American students
Ford Family Foundation	for traditional, transfer, and non-traditional students
National Federation of the Blind	for legally blind students
Hawai'i Community Foundation	for residents of Hawai'i
Hispanic Scholarship Fund	for Hispanic students
Native Forward Scholars	for Native and Indigenous students
National Center for Learning Disabilities	for students with learning disabilities
Point Foundation	for LGBTQ+ students
Pride Foundation	for LGBTQ+ students
Alpha Kappa Alpha Educational Advancement Fund	for undergraduates in their sophomore year or later
Young Arts	not a traditional database, but a huge national scholarship program for young artists between 15-18 years old

VI. Oregon state scholarships

The FAFSA (see section VII) is the most well-known provider of government aid, but most states also have government-funded programs to support their students.

Though the application processes can be somewhat involved (as they try to offer aid to as many students and situations as they can), applying for these scholarships is very worth the work.

Below are scholarship and grant opportunities provided by the state of Oregon. If you do not qualify for scholarships in Oregon, consider looking into options your home state might provide.

Oregonstudentaid.gov
OSAC (Office of Student Access & Completion)
Oregon Opportunity Grant
Oregon Tribal Student Grant *
Deceased or Disabled Public Safety Officer Grant *
Oregon National Guard State Tuition Assistance *
ETG (Chafee Education and Training Grant) *

* These scholarships require an additional application.

OSAC, like the Common App, is one application that is used in applying to any number of the thousands of scholarships they have connections with. Take the time to look through their list (there will be many!) to see what you are eligible for; OSAC manages the submission of your application and details any extra materials you might need to gather, all in one place.

The **Oregon Opportunity Grant** is a need-based scholarship that Oregon students who fill out the FAFSA are automatically considered for.

The **Tribal Student** grant, the **Public Safety Officer** grant, and the **National Guard** grant are all for students who fall into certain social groups.

ETG provides funding for current or former foster care youth.

VII. FAFSA

When people talk about the FAFSA, they are usually referring to applying for federal student loans. While this is a large part of why people apply for the FAFSA, the FAFSA application is not only about loans. Submitting a FAFSA provides opportunities for grants and scholarships as well.

studentaid.gov

Grants available through the FAFSA

The main grants available via the FAFSA are:

- Pell Grant
- FSEOG (Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant)

Neither of these grants require that you borrow federal loans.

Pell Grant is awarded to undergraduate students who have exceptional financial need. The amount of Pell a student is awarded is based on the severity of their need and the level of their enrollment (i.e., being full-, half-, or less-than-half-time).

FSEOG is awarded directly from WU/PNCA. It is a limited fund offered to students with demonstrated financial need (which is what the FAFSA determines). Because it is a limited fund, not all students will receive FSEOG, but that doesn’t mean they won’t receive other types of institutional (i.e., PNCA-based) aid.

Lastly, as you can see in section VI, it is also not uncommon for scholarships, public or private, to require that the student has submitted their FAFSA before considering them eligible. When the FAFSA is required for a scholarship application, the scholarship is typically using the FAFSA to make determinations about need and to ensure that students are utilizing all the resources available to them.

Dispelling FAFSA myths

Here are common myths that misguide or deter students and their families from utilizing the FAFSA:

1. **"Filling out the FAFSA costs money."**

Nope! The FAFSA is completely, 100% free.

2. **"I won't qualify because I/my parents make too much money."**

False: There is no income cap for the FAFSA. Just because a lot of aid is geared toward students with exceptional financial need, even students from middle class or wealthy families can qualify for some sort of federal aid. This is especially important for students whose families may make decent money but are not able to pay for their education totally out of pocket.

3. **"The FAFSA is only for students who want federal student loans."**

False: As discussed earlier in this section and in section VI, completing the FAFSA can qualify students for both federal grants and for other external scholarships (like OSAC). Filling the FAFSA in no way obligates you to borrow federal student loans.

4. **"The FAFSA opens in January and has to be submitted by June."**

Normally, the FAFSA opens on October 1st, for the following school year. The final deadline is June 30th of the following calendar year (well after your Spring term will have ended!)

That said, it is in your best interest to fill out your FAFSA as soon as possible, so you can have the most accurate picture of your financial aid for the following year.

5. **"I/my parents have to file our current-year taxes before completing the FAFSA."**

False: The FAFSA uses your tax returns from two years ago (ex: the 2026-2027 FAFSA uses taxes from 2024), so the current-year taxes are not needed to fill it out.

That said, if your financial situation has changed dramatically between two years ago and now, please look to the **Financial Aid Appeals form** on the Willamette University website, to see if your situation qualifies for an appeal.

6. **"I shouldn't fill out the FAFSA until I am accepted to the school I want to go to."**

False: When you fill out the FAFSA online, you have the option to add up to 10 schools, and you can always go back and add a school to your FAFSA after filling it out. By adding the schools you've applied to—even if you haven't yet been accepted—those schools are able to create your aid package as soon as possible, giving you the most accurate idea of your financial responsibilities if you choose to accept admission to that school.

7. **"I'm a self-supporting student, so I don't need to include my parents."** This may or may not be true. Who the FAFSA considers to be **Independent** does not perfectly map on to how we

typically think of independence. Being self-supporting, for example, does not indicate an Independent status on its own, if you don't meet the other criteria listed.

If you come from difficult circumstances, and you have cut off contact with your family for reasons related to your safety, it is possible to get a dependency override exception. These cases are rare, but if you think it applies to you, please reach out to our office.

8. "The Student Aid Index number is how much I am going to have to pay for school."

False: The EFC or SAI is not how much you must pay for school. This number is a federal calculation used to determine need. (For example, students with high SAIs are typically not eligible for Pell Grant.) However, the SAI does not consider any institutional aid or external scholarships you will be receiving. You should look to the award letter and billing statement you receive to get an accurate idea of how much you will need to pay.

9. "Whatever aid the FAFSA says I'm going to get is set in stone."

False: The FAFSA does its own calculations based on the federal standards set by the Department of Education, but ultimately the particulars of your financial aid situation are handled by the school you are attending. If you are in a situation where the FAFSA does not accurately represent your current situation, or where the FAFSA does not capture all the relevant details of your situation, please reach out to the financial aid office so we can work with you to find other solutions.

10. "I need to complete the FAFSA only once."

False: you must complete the FAFSA for each academic year you wish to be considered for federal aid. So, even if you received the federal aid this year, you will not receive it next year unless you apply for it again. (The good news is that the process is much more streamlined after the first year you do it!)

VIII. Specific Scholarship Opportunities

In this section, we've compiled a small list of specific scholarships of all kinds for you to look into, as a way of jump-starting your scholarship search. Good luck out there!

Name	Amount	FAFSA?	Essay/Art?	Description
1st Art Gallery	$1,000	-	Yes	Fine arts, visual arts, music, performing
AIAS Foundation	$2,500	-	Yes	Pursuing a career in video games
AIGA Worldstudio Schol.	$3,000	Yes	Yes	Graphic design, illustration, photography
Whitaker Foundation Art Scholarship Fund	$10,000	-	Yes	Art students with a special emphasis on watercolor and museum studies
American Council for the Blind	$2,000	-	-	Disability, blindness, employed
Ashoori Law Good Deeds	Varies	-	Yes	Acts of kindness
Audra M. Edwards Schol.	Varies	-	Yes	for LGBTQ+ students who are residents of Oregon or SW Washington
Berger and Green Heart Disease Schol.	$1,000	-	Yes	Essay about heart disease/your congenital heart defect
Carrot-Top Beacon Schol.	$1,000	-	Yes	Need-based, rural students, patriotism
Church Hill Classics Frame My Future	$6,000	-	Yes	Contest, art submission
Coca-Cola Scholars	$20,000	-	-	Achievement, leadership, and community involvement
College JumpStart Schol.	$1,000	-	Yes	Merit-based
Fisher House Military Children	$2,000	-	Yes	Military dependents
Whitaker Foundation	$2,000	-	Yes	Water-color
Gen and Kelly Tanabe Scholarship	Varies	-	Yes	Merit-based
GE-Reagan Foundation Scholarship	$10,000	-	Yes	Leadership, service, merit
INCIGHT Scholarship	Varies	-	-	Students with a disability who are residents of Washington, Oregon, or California

Jack Kent Cooke Foundation	$55,000	-	-	Need-based
James Alan Cox	$2,500	-	Yes	Photojournalism
McDonald's HACER Schol.	Varies	Yes	Yes	Hispanic students with financial need, community involvement
Mente Summit Schol.	$1,000	-	Yes	Need-based, Latino/Latine residents of OR
National Cowboy Museum Stacey Schol. Fund	$500-$5,000	-	Yes	Art, classical or conservative tradition of Western culture
Print and Graphics Schol.	$5,000	-	-	Studying graphics, pursuing a career in printing, graphic communication, packaging, or publishing
Ron Brown Schol.	Varies	-	-	Need-based, for Black and African American students
L. Ron Hubbard Illustration Contest	$500	-	Yes	Sci-fi and fantasy illustration
L. Ron Hubbard Writing Contest	$1,000	-	Yes	Sci-fi and fantasy writing
Shawn Carter Scholarship Fund	Varies	-	-	Need, service, overcoming adversity
Spolin Law Civil Rights Schol.	$1,000	-	Yes	Essay about the U.S. constitution
Veterans United Scholarship	Varies	Yes	Yes	Need-based, is a disabled veteran/is the surviving child or spouse of a deceased veteran