

Writing for Scholarships

A Scholarship Guide for College of General Studies Students

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I. Where to find scholarships

How to find out what your college offers:

- a. ask your advisor
- b. ask financial aid
- c. ask student government
- d. search the college's website
- e. ask the information desk
- f. ask the Dean's Office

Scholarships, Awards and Honors

Alpha Sigma Lambda National Honor Society Alpha Sigma Lambda is an honor society aimed at recognizing the achievements and accomplishments of non-traditional adult students.

Typically, these are returning adults who have other obligations such as work and family, but still are able to maintain academic excellence. For more information, please visit

www.alphasigmalambda.org/.

Dean's List

Early each term, CGS students whose preceding 12 credits indicate outstanding academic achievement are recognized on the Dean's List. To be recognized on the Dean's List, a student must have completed at least 12 credits (not including courses taken on the Satisfactory/No Credit option) with a term GPA of at least 3.50.

Golden Key Golden Key is an international academic honor society that recognizes and encourages scholastic achievement and excellence among college students from all academic disciplines. It provides campus and community service opportunities enabling personal growth and leadership development as well as interaction with university faculty and administrators to develop and maintain high standards of education. Golden Key rewards its members through scholarship and award programs, and members access exclusive career opportunities and assistance through Golden Key's partnerships with businesses and graduate programs.

Graduation Honors Those members of a graduating class who have attained an outstanding scholastic record and have taken at least 60 letter-grade credits while enrolled in the College of General Studies graduate with honors. There are three levels of honors, depending on a student's GPA: cum laude (3.25), magna cum laude (3.5), and summa cum laude (3.75).

Honors Convocation Honors Convocation is celebrated annually to recognize faculty and students who have received awards of academic achievement and distinction. The University-wide ceremony is held during the spring term. All faculty members and faculty librarians are invited to participate in the processional in academic regalia. The guidelines for being invited to the Honors Convocation can be found at:

www.pitt.edu/~provost/honorsconguidelines.html.

Scholarships The College of General Studies bestows numerous awards annually to CGS students for outstanding academic performance. The Assistant Dean of Student Affairs sends eligible candidates invitations to apply for the scholarships. Criteria for eligibility for College of General Studies' scholarships are listed below and on our Web site at www.cgspitt.org/scholarships-and-financial-assistance.cfm. Students may receive one academic scholarship per academic year.

CGS Student Government sponsored scholarships and awards:

Success and Determination Scholarships: The Success and Determination Scholarships recognizes two students who have demonstrated, in an extraordinary way, the ability to overcome life's obstacles in order to obtain his/her education. The recipients are awarded a one-time \$1000 scholarship, of which \$500 is donated by the College of General Studies and \$500 is allocated by CGS Student Government from student activity fees. Also, the recipients' names are engraved on the wall display in the William Pitt Union. Applications are available in the CGS Student Government Office, 824 William Pitt Union. For more information about the Success & Determination Scholarship, call 412-648-7895.

"Outstanding Student of the Year" Award: Presented annually to an outstanding CGS student who has obtained academic excellence and has demonstrated a distinguished record of service and leadership to student government or student organizations in the College of General Studies, the University, and/or the community. This scholarship is based primarily on the candidate's essay, recommendation, and interview. The recipient receives a one-time \$1000 award from the CGS Student Government. Also, the recipient's name is engraved on the wall display in the William Pitt Union. For more information, call 412-648-7895.

Other Pitt Scholarships for CGS Students:

www.cgspitt.org/scholarships-and-financial-assistance.cfm

The Ann M. Levenson Scholarship: This scholarship is offered in recognition of the role former Associate Dean Ann M. Levenson played in the lives of CGS students. The one-year scholarship in the amount of \$1000 (\$500 for two consecutive terms) is made to a maximum of 25 students annually. Students must enroll for a minimum of 6 credits each term they are awarded the scholarship, but they cannot repeat as a Levenson Scholar within the same credit category, and they must be pursuing a degree program offered by the College of General Studies. Students are automatically considered for this scholarship whose GPA's put them at the top of each of the following categories: Students with less than 24 credits Students with 24 to 47 credits Students with 48 to 71 credits Students with 72 credits or more. Recipients are named at the end of each spring term. For more information, contact CGS Assistant Dean Ruggerio, at crr36@pitt.pitt.edu.

Bettye and Ralph Bailey: Established by alumnus Bettye and Ralph Bailey, this scholarship provides financial aid to CGS students. The number and value of awards may vary annually. Award decisions are based on a combination of an individual's financial need and merit and is by invitation only. Priority is given to part-time, nontraditional adult students enrolled in CGS. Students are evaluated by admissions and CGS staff for this scholarship Candidates must submit an essay and be interviewed by the Assistant Dean of Student Affairs. The application process begins in the spring and awards are made by August.

Bruce P. McGough Scholarship: Bruce P. McGough is an alumnus of CGS. He established this scholarship to assist CGS students in pursuing their degree. The number of awards may vary. This is a one year scholarship in the amount of \$2,000 (\$1,000 is awarded for two consecutive terms), and is for CGS students who demonstrate financial need. The scholarship is by invitation only. Candidates must submit an essay and be interviewed by the Assistant Dean of Student Affairs. The application process begins in the spring and awards are made by August.

The Chancellor's Evening Scholarships are the most prestigious academic awards that CGS students can receive at the University of Pittsburgh. The scholarship is for six credits per term, two terms per year for a maximum of 48 credits. Recipients must maintain a minimum 3.00 GPA. Students who demonstrate high academic achievement with a minimum 3.00 GPA, are pursuing a CGS degree, and have completed a minimum of 48 credits may be invited to apply for the scholarship, which are by invitation only. Candidates must complete a multi-step application process that includes faculty recommendations, a personal statement, and interviews. The selection process begins in January, and recipients are chosen in April. For more information, contact CGS Assistant Dean Ruggerio, at crr36@pitt.pitt.edu.

Commonwealth Scholarships: The University provides funds to support the recruitment and retention of historically underrepresented student populations. CGS provides book scholarships and summer tuition scholarships. Awards may vary according to the number of credits taken. Historically underrepresented students who are CGS students, have a FAFSA and FAAS on file with OAFSA, are pursuing a CGS major and have a GPA of 2.0 or better are invited to apply for this scholarship in the spring term. Those invited must complete an application stating how they will use the funds and outline the courses they plan to take. For more information, contact CGS Assistant Dean Ruggerio, at crr36@pitt.pitt.edu.

J. Steele Gow, Jr. Scholarship: The CGS Student Government established the J. Steele Gow Scholarship, which is based heavily on merit, with some consideration given to financial need and involvement in CGS Student Government. Students must have completed at least 30 credits in the College of General Studies and have a QPA of 3.25 or above. Up to \$800 is awarded

annually for this scholarship. For more information, contact CGS Assistant Dean Ruggerio, at crr36@pitt.pitt.edu. Applications are due by February 1st.

John C. Gongas, Jr. Scholarship: This scholarship was established by alumnus John C. Gongas, Jr. in order to assist CGS nontraditional students who are facing financial and time constraints while pursuing their degree. The number of awards may vary. This is a one-year scholarship in the amount of \$2500 (\$1250 is awarded for two consecutive terms). CGS students who are nontraditional, are enrolled in a CGS major, and have a GPA of at least 2.0 are eligible for this award, which is by invitation only. The application process begins in the spring and awards are given in August. For more information, contact CGS Assistant Dean Ruggerio, at crr36@pitt.pitt.edu.

The John O. Bolvin Scholarship: This scholarship is offered in recognition of the role former Dean John O. Bolvin played in establishing CGS as a non-traditional entry into the University of Pittsburgh. A one-year scholarship in the amount of \$1000 is awarded (\$500 for two consecutive terms) each year to a maximum of 25 new transfer students to the University of Pittsburgh. Awardees must be enrolled at least half-time (6 credits per term) in a degree program offered by the College of General Studies. Selection is based on academic performance at the student's previous institution with preference given to students from local community colleges. All transfer applicants are automatically considered for this award. Recipients are named each on a rolling basis for both the fall and spring terms. For more information, contact CGS Assistant Dean Ruggerio, at crr36@pitt.pitt.edu.

Tom R. Slone Scholarship: Established by CGS alumnus Tom R. Slone, this scholarship is available to mentors in the Big Brothers/Big Sisters youth mentoring organization who are enrolled in a CGS course of study. The number and value of awards may vary annually. At minimum, individual awards cover the full cost of tuition and fees for one course per fall and spring term. Award decisions are based on a combination of an individual's financial need and merit. To apply, submit your application to OAFAs by May 31 and indicate that you are a current Big Brothers/Big Sisters mentor. Also, contact your local Big Brothers Big Sisters organization. Provide a short, one-page essay of your experiences in Big Brothers/Big Sisters and discuss how

this scholarship will assist you in accomplishing your personal and educational goals. Make sure to complete a FAFSA application. New students should apply for the scholarship at the same time they apply for admission to the college. Continuing students should apply by May 30. For more information, contact CGS Assistant Dean Ruggerio, at crr36@pitt.pitt.edu.

University Women's Association: The Association was founded as a social organization in 1912 by faculty wives who were new to Pittsburgh and the University. Later, the Association offered scholarships to faculty wives and female employees of Pitt who wanted to return to college to complete their degrees but did not have the funds. Since 2004, the Association has awarded \$41,500 in scholarships. Scholarships can be up to \$3000 and are open to male and female full-time students who have had an interruption in pursuit of undergraduate education of at least three years before returning or transferring to the University of Pittsburgh, have at least a 2.5 QPA, a sophomore standing, and demonstrate financial need. Applicants must have a defined career goal with a realistic expectation of graduating from the University of Pittsburgh within three years. The application process is completing an application form; writing a one-page letter of interest specifying the degree sought, financial situation, family responsibilities, and professional goals, as well as explaining how receipt of the scholarship will assist in attaining your goals; submitting a current copy of all of your transcripts; and submitting a letter of recommendation from a Pitt faculty or staff member. The application deadline is March 15. Candidates meeting the criteria will be chosen for interviews in April. The final selection will be made in late April. Recipients will be presented at the May luncheon. Awards will be sent directly to the University. For more information and an application, contact Jackie Cain, cainjackie@gmail.com or cainjs@verizon.net.

Scholarships for Study Abroad

College of General Studies Nontraditional Part-time Student Study Abroad Scholarship:

The College of General Studies Student Government, in collaboration with the University of Pittsburgh's Study Abroad Department, has established a scholarship to assist a part-time nontraditional student to study abroad during his or her academic career. The scholarship is for \$1000 for a student participating in a study abroad program for academic credit. Students must

be currently enrolled, part-time, in CGS; must be at least 25 years of age, have a minimum Q.P.A. of 3.0, and have obtained at least 60 college credits, of which 30 must be in CGS.

Awards are based on the quality of the essay and study proposal, academic performance, and the interview with the Study Abroad Scholarship Selection Committee. Applications are available on the CGSSG website, www.cgssg.pitt.edu, November 1, or visit the CGSSG office, 824 William Pitt Union, 412-648-7895 for more information.

Nationality Rooms Scholarships: Approximately 25-30 scholarships are awarded annually for summer study abroad. Students must have a minimum QPA of 3.0; be a full-time student on the Oakland campus (graduate-level or undergraduate with 60-90 credits); be an American citizen or permanent resident; be on campus for two semesters prior to the study abroad and return to the Oakland campus as a full-time student for two semesters immediately following the summer experience. Proposals must include a minimum five-week stay and earn University of Pittsburgh credit. Applications available the Monday after Thanksgiving break. Application deadline is near the end of January. Contact the Nationality Rooms Office in 1209 Cathedral of Learning for exact deadlines and more information.

Provost's Scholarship for Study Abroad: All full-time degree-seeking undergraduate students, who are minorities or studying either in the following Colleges/Schools; Business, General Studies, Engineering, Health and Rehabilitation Sciences, Information Science, Nursing, and Pharmacy, are eligible to apply. Each year, 10-\$1,000 scholarships are awarded to qualified students with a QPA of 2.75 or higher. Scholarships are for summer, semester, or year-long programs. Please visit the Applications and Forms page, www.abroad.pitt.edu, to download the Scholarship Application. Please contact the Study Abroad Office for deadlines, 802 WPU.

Study Abroad Scholarship Fund: All full-time degree-seeking undergraduate Pitt students who have a 3.00 QPA or higher are eligible to apply to the Study Abroad Scholarship Fund. Scholarships are available for summer, semester, and full-year programs. Please visit the Applications and Forms page on the Study Abroad Office website, www.abroad.pitt.edu, to download the Scholarship Application. Please contact the Study Abroad Office for deadlines.

UCIS: International Studies Fund (ISF): The International Studies Fund (ISF) is intended to help students at the University of Pittsburgh to conduct research on international issues or in international settings. “International” is defined as relating to another country or culture, comparative analysis covering more than one country or culture, studies of international relations or of transnational activities, or studies which examine topics related to global issues. ISF grants may not be used for tuition, language study, internships and other non-research related expenses. Conference, workshop or symposium travel is not eligible for funding under the ISF program. Full-time graduate and undergraduate students at the University of Pittsburgh from all Schools and Campuses are eligible to submit a proposal, including international degree-seeking students. The application deadline is March 15. For more information, visit www.ucis.pitt.edu/main/isf.

VIRA I. HEINZ Program for Women in Global Leadership: VIH prepares women for tomorrow’s global challenges by offering an unparalleled opportunity for international experiences, leadership development and community service. Three women (full-time students) from each of fifteen institutions are admitted during their sophomore year into the three-year program and receive a \$5000 scholarship to put toward the cost of an international experience of their choosing.

The VIH Program has three principal components: the international experience, the Community Engagement Experience and two weekend-long, intensive leadership development retreats. During the spring semester prior to and the fall semester following their international experience, the awardees meet in Pittsburgh, PA, for training in foundation skills necessary to maximize cultural learning while abroad and engage their leadership skills in their own communities upon their return through their community engagement. For more information and deadline, visit www.abroad.pitt.edu/viraheinz.

Other places to search:

a. Look online for free scholarship websites, such as:

www.fastweb.com

www.brokescholar.com

www.scholarships.com

www.clubscholarship.com

b. The public library

c. The McCarl Center library

* Alpha Sigma Lambda, the honor society for non-traditional students, has donated the following books to the McCarl Center Library:

- Gardner's Guide to Finding Money for School Online, by Christina Edwards, Washington, D.C.: Garth Gardner, 2003.
- 1001 Ways to Pay for College, by Gen and Kelly Tanabe, Los Altos: SuperCollege, 2003
- Scholarship Handbook 2005 (College Board Scholarship Handbook, 8th Ed)
- How to go to College Almost for Free, by Ben Kaplan, New York: HarperCollins, 2002.
- The Scholarship Scouting Report, by Ben Kaplan, New York: HarperCollins, 2003.
- Money-Winning Scholarship Essays and Interviews, by Gen S. Tanabe and Kelly Y. Tanabe, Los Altos: SuperCollege, 2002.

d. Any book store

e. The Scholarship Coach: Ben Kaplan's website, www.scholarshipcoach.com, is mostly a pay sight, but it has good "free" tips too.

f.. Local clubs – the Rotary Club, a credit union, college clubs, etc.

TIP: Start early – see what the scholarships are looking for and begin to fulfill the requirements now!

- keep a log of everything you do that you can use (e.g. Community service, leadership positions, associations, etc.
- take a class with a renowned professor and then ask him/her for a letter of reference after they know you and your work

II. Brainstorming

If you think you want to apply for a scholarship, now or in the future, it's time to start brainstorming and answering important questions: *Who are you and what do you want?* These are two of the hardest questions you may ever have to articulate, but once you do, you'll have a better focus for your essay and your future in general. Start brainstorming right away and bullet point the following, so you can use it now and in the future.

Questions to answer:

- What are your personal goals?
- What are your academic goals?
- What are your career goals?
- Who or what were significant people, events, and ideas that have influenced your worldview and aspirations?
- What are your major accomplishments?
- List and describe your community service.
- List any service or extracurricular activity at your school
- What attributes or experience sets you apart from other students?
- What challenges have you overcome?
- What made you decide to go to college?
- Do you have extreme financial circumstances that you need help to pay for college? List what they are and why. Many scholarships require a statement of extreme financial circumstance.
- Why should you win this award over another student?

III. The Scholarship Application Packet

Once you have the scholarship application packet, make additional copies immediately – you may make an error and you don't want the application to appear sloppy.

Do your homework!

Who is the organization that is offering the scholarship? Research the scholarship funders. Who are they? What do they do? Does the organization have a website?

- Do a web search and find out what you can about the organization and the scholarship committee members, if you have their names.
- Read and pay attention to words and phrases they use. Make notes and incorporate them into your essay. It will make your essay more familiar and “inline” with the funder.
- But don't plagiarize!

Keep in mind the organization's focus, mission statement, objectives, etc. when writing your essay or personal statement.

Scholarship application packets are usually composed of, but not always:

- Cover page of requirements
- Application
- Letters of reference
- Essay(s) and/or personal statements
- Your transcript

1. The cover page:

The cover page usually introduces the scholarship and lists the items required. Read carefully and note on a separate piece of paper everything they (the scholarship committee) want from you. Keep this page on top of the packet and check off items as you gather the requirements. This is especially helpful when you are applying for more than one scholarship. Frequently,

scholarships call for letters of reference, transcripts, financial information, awards won, community service, etc.

2. The application:

Read the entire application first and carefully before you begin to fill it out. Make notes of information that you need to gather, such as number of credits completed, etc. If you make an error when filling out the application, start over on a new copy.

3. The letter of reference:

Almost all scholarships ask for letters of reference or recommendation. Choose carefully who you ask to write your letter. Letter requirements usually fall within three categories:

- a. academic/faculty
- b. professional
- c. personal

Here are some examples:

- Please include three letters of reference including at least one academic reference. Do not use family members.
- Include one letter of reference related to the essay topic.
- A letter of recommendation from a faculty member (professor, dean, advisor) is required.

Getting started:

1. Politely request the letter – people like to help other people, so don't feel funny asking for this. Be sure you say thank you!
2. Give the writer a copy of the scholarship application cover page so they have adequate information on the scholarship, what the scholarship is looking for in you, and who they can address the letter to. The person writing the letter may not be aware of everything that you are doing (community service, other classes, etc). To help the

- writer know you better, you can also send them a brief note about your accomplishments or a previous scholarship essay.
3. The writer, if an academic, will probably give you the letter in a sealed envelope, with a signature over the seal. Many scholarships ask for letters of reference this way.
 4. Let the writer know the results, regardless of whether you received the scholarship. If you don't, they will be left wondering what happened.

4. The essay:

The essay is your chance to stand out from the other applicants and it is, in my opinion, critical to getting the scholarship. Therefore, it is crucial that you give the judges exactly what they ask for, while painting a picture of yourself that is both memorable and makes them want to help you further your education and career goals. You're really selling yourself. Why should the scholarship committee award you this money above all others? Here's where you tell them why.

Read the essay question carefully - what specifically do they want to know about you? What are the parameters – one page, two pages, 500 words, etc. Write down the main points of the question and begin thinking how you fulfill them. Refer to your lists above.

TIP: use Word Count = under Tools, click on Word Count

Ben Kaplan, in his book How to Go to College Almost For Free, writes that successful scholarship essays lets the application judge feel that they really know you and this leaves a strong impression. Ben writes,

“Why do winning applications leave such strong impressions? Quite simply, great scholarship applications create vivid portraits of the applicants: They don't just recite accomplishments—they depict the person behind all the credentials, interests, and goals. After all, *judges award scholarships to people, not to résumés.*”¹

I begin by writing an outline for my essay, starting with the main points of the body first:

- The body of the essay:
 - include all the main points the essay questions asks for

- make sure they “flow” together (like you were writing a normal essay)
- Don’t write huge paragraphs that are hard to read. Break them up into smaller sections. You might also want to use headings.
- The introduction
 - after I have a rough draft of the body, I go back and write the introduction
 - start with something to catch their attention
- The conclusion
 - wrap up main points
 - relate, in an indirect or direct way, why you deserve to win
 - thank them for making the scholarship available

You can make a cover page, or put the title of the essay and your name at the top of page one (unless they specifically ask you for one way or another).

TIP: If more than one page long, don’t forget page numbers!

TIP: Is there a word limit? Use ‘Word Count’ = under ‘Tools,’ click on ‘Word Count.’

TIP: PROOFREAD!!! The best way, when you think you’re finished, is to read it backwards, one sentence at a time, starting from the end. Or, read it out loud.

TIP: Ask someone to else PROOFREAD!!! Or even two people – many times, two people won’t catch the same errors.

TIP: PROOFREAD again.

Examples of essay questions:

1. Please write a brief statement about your college goals, future plans, and what this scholarship will mean to you.
2. Please include a one-page letter of interest.
3. Include a 500-1000-word essay addressing the topic of the obstacles you have encountered to get to this point in your educational life.
4. In a brief, reflective statement, discuss your intellectual interests and any personal, career, or academic goals, which relate to them. The Selection Committee is interested in knowing both what these interests and goals are and why you have them. Consequently, you may wish to

include pertinent information about significant people, events, and ideas that have influenced your worldview and aspirations.

5. The transcript:

You can get your transcripts from the University Registrar's Office. At Pitt, this is in Thackeray Hall and transcripts are free. Usually, when I need a transcript, I ask for several official copies in sealed envelopes and one unofficial copy. This way, I don't have to go back to the Registrar's Office each time I apply for a scholarship.

- Official transcripts are on secured paper and bear the university seal. Many scholarships require transcripts to be sealed in an envelope and date-stamped.
- Unofficial transcripts do not have the university seal and are labeled and stamped "Unofficial Issued to Student." You can make your own photocopies from the original. Only use these when the application asks for it.

Finish:

Make sure you filled out the application completely and signed it.

Put the packet in the order they ask for – don't staple it all together! You can staple individual pieces, like your essay; but paperclip the whole thing together.

Make a copy for yourself of entire packet.

Try to have it finished a few days to a week before the due date – this way, if something happens, you have an extra day or two. If you're worried that it won't make it in time, send it Priority or Express Mail and request a delivery confirmation. The extra fee will pay off if you get the scholarship.

Follow-up:

If you don't hear from the committee two weeks after the due date, call them and ask them if they made the decision or when they'll announce the awardees.

IV. The Interview

Many scholarships will ask to interview the applicants before making the final decision. Here is your second chance to make an impression.

Prepare to defend your essay. The first time that I had an interview, I over-prepared myself. I wrote down the possible interview questions listed in the book, Money-Winning Scholarship Essays and Interviews, and wrote down my answers. Then I asked my mother to ask me the questions, so I could get used to being questioned by another person. I also asked her to ask me questions that she just made up, so I could prepare for that too.

Possible interview questions might be: Why is an education important to you? Why did you decide to go to the University of Pittsburgh? What are your career goals?

TIP: be early, dress respectfully

TIP: find out who is on the interview committee and do some homework – research the backgrounds of the interviewers and their role in the organization.

Thank-you Notes

If you win: Thank-you notes - handwritten

- find out the names on the award committee and send each one a note
- send to everyone who wrote you a letter
- send to anyone who told you about the scholarship

If you don't win: Thank-you notes

- send to everyone who wrote you a letter to thank them and explain you didn't win. It's the polite thing to do. They won't be left wondering what happened, and you can ask for another letter again in the future.

Good Luck!

¹ Kaplan, Ben. How to go to College Almost for Free. New York: HarperCollins, 2002, 177.