Applying for Private College Scholarships

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Your Presenter Today

Shawn Morrissey
Director of College Relations

Shawn joined MEFA in 2022 and has nearly 30 years of experience working in the financial aid industry. In his role at MEFA, he works with colleges and universities to amplify MEFA's public service mission to help families plan, save, and pay for college.

Shawn has served in several leadership positions in local, regional, and national associations, including serving as MASFAA and EASFAA President and regional representative to the NASFAA Board and currently serves as Sector Interests Committee Chair and a member of the Conference Committee with EASFAA. He has a Bachelor of Business Administration degree from Anna Maria College.

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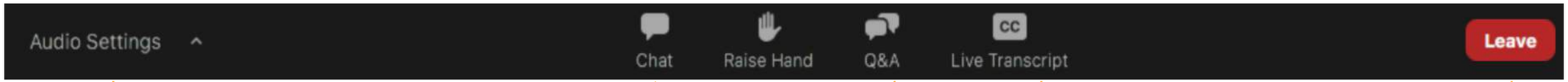
How to Participate



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About MEFA

State authority created by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in 1982, helping families plan, save, and pay for college

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Webinar Topics

- What are Scholarships?
- Where to Look for Scholarships
- Online Search Engines
- Tips to Find Scholarships
- Financial Aid

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What are Scholarships?

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Scholarships

- Funds to help students pay for college that do not have to be repaid
- Often given in recognition of certain attributes of the student, such as good grades, community service, or leadership
- Provided by community organizations, foundations, non-profits, and corporations
- Can make a significant impact in helping cover college costs

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Key Facts

The typical high school senior will match with 50 to 100 scholarships in a search engine*

Each year there are around $100 million in unclaimed scholarships in the U.S., often because there aren't enough qualified applicants**

*savingforcollege.com; **Forbes.com

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How to Get Started

Here are some questions to help shape the scholarship search:

- What areas of study after high school interest you?
- Where have you volunteered?
- What are the various cultural backgrounds in your family heritage?
- What are your special talents?
- Do you or anyone in your family live with a disability or health challenge?
- Have any of your parents or grandparents served in the military?
- Where do your parents work?

Source: College Board

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Where To Look For Scholarships

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High School Guidance Office

School counselors often keep an updated list of local scholarships.

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Local scholarships only attract a small pool of applicants, those eligible students within the region, and are therefore generally easier to win.

→

Many guidance offices post scholarships on the school's online college planning portal, such as MEFA Pathway or Naviance.

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At Work

Check with your parents' place of work for private scholarships dedicated to children of employees.

If you have a summer or part-time job, see if they offer scholarships for staff members headed to college.

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Professional Associations

Research professional associations related to your aspirational career Some groups offer scholarships to high school students interested in that particular career field.

Many local organizations have their own websites where you can find information on the scholarships they offer. Start by checking the websites of your local Elks, Rotary Club, and PTA organizations.

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mefa.org/resource-center

MEFA regularly publishes articles of scholarship lists. Some examples include:

- Scholarships for STEM Students
- Scholarships for Students with Disabilities
- Scholarships for College Students
- Studying Abroad? Check Out These Scholarships
- Going Green: Scholarships for the Environmentally Friendly
- Scholarships for Artists

Select the *Scholarships* category and *Article* content type at mefa.org/resource-center

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Online Search Engines

There are several reputable websites that provide scholarship search tools.

You can filter by specific criteria.

To get the most out of scholarship databases, create an account. Although it might be more work up front, it will be easier in the long run since you will not have to re-enter information for every application.

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Online Search Engines

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MEFA Pathway

- Select criteria specific to you:
  - State of residence, area of study, ethnicity, type of school, and religion
- Add scholarships to a personalized list
  - Use this list to keep up with deadlines and track the scholarship status and amount
- Search for both national and local scholarships
  - Over 5,000 national scholarships are available
- Log in to your existing MEFA Pathway account or easily register for an account at mefapathway.org

MEFA | pathway™

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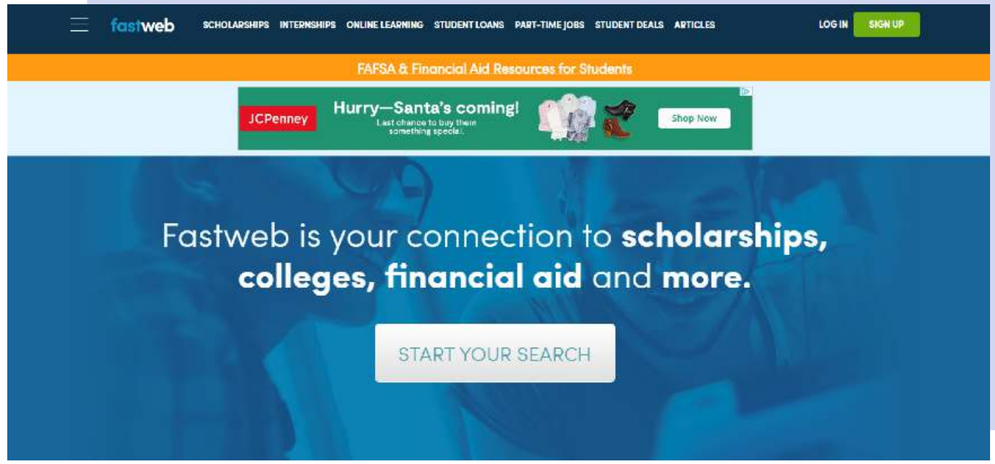
Fastweb

- First college scholarship search website, founded over 25 years ago
- Matches you to scholarships based on your location, colleges, majors of interest, academics, and extracurricular activities
- Database of 1.5 million college scholarships
- Each scholarship is vetted by a real person
- Must become a (free) member on Fastweb to access the scholarships you qualify for and application instructions



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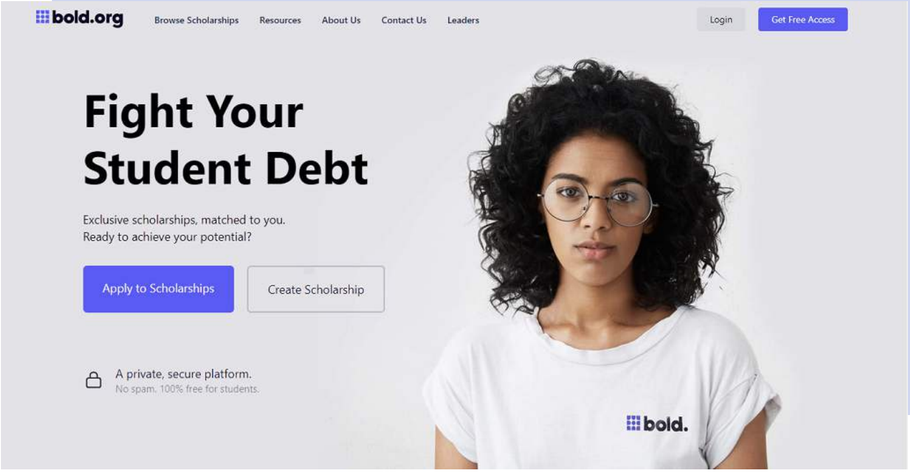
Bold.org

- A streamlined, secure scholarship service that matches you to scholarships based on your profile
- Create a profile that showcases your abilities
- Focuses on exclusive Bold.org scholarships that can only be found on Bold.org



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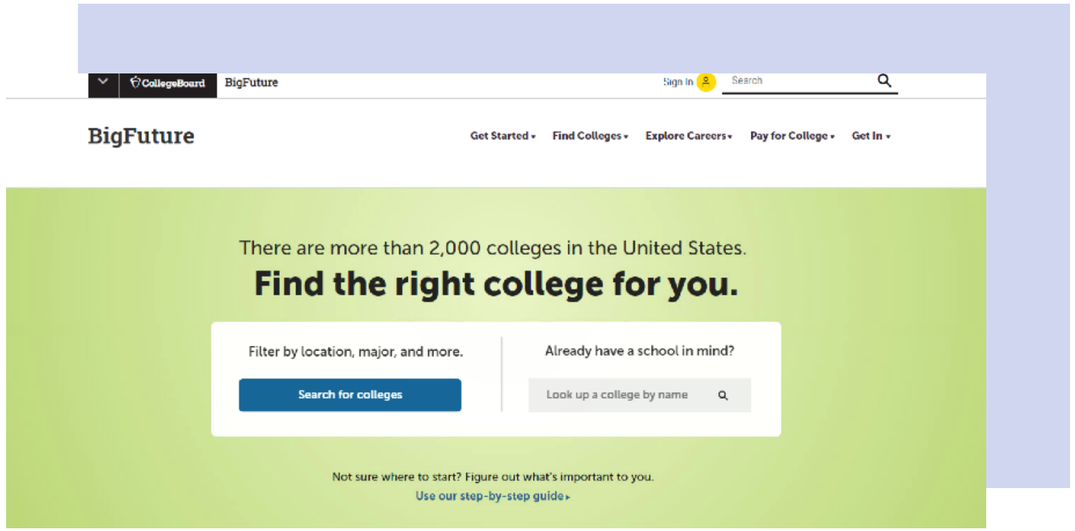
Big Future

- Owned by College Board
- Get matched to a personalized list of scholarships, based on your background, achievement, and future plans
- Save time on applications when you apply to scholarship providers by making use of an auto-fill available function



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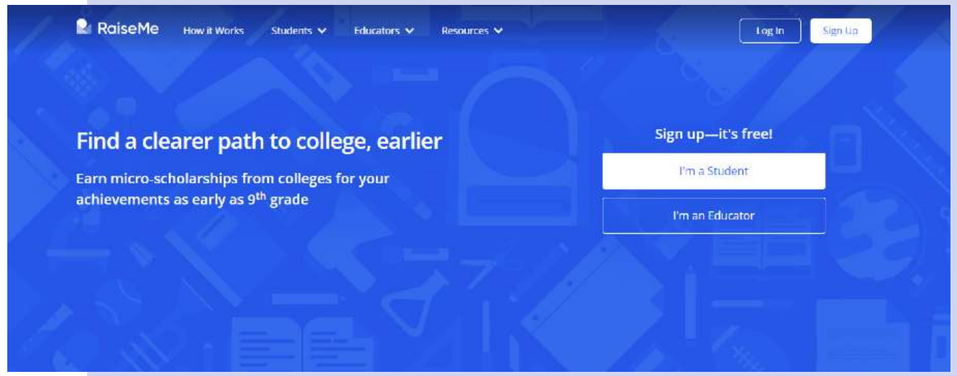
Raise.me

- Allows you to earn scholarships by completing tasks such as getting A's, taking AP courses, or babysitting a younger sibling
- Accounts are free
- You cash in your scholarship credits and receive money from a college once you apply to the college, receive an acceptance, and attend
- Only certain colleges (there are over 200) participate
- Scholarships are anywhere from $25 to $2,000



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Tips To Find Scholarships

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Start Searching Early

There are private scholarships open to children as young as 5 years old, so don't wait until senior year of high school to start looking.

View MEFA's article, *Scholarships for Elementary & Middle School Students*.

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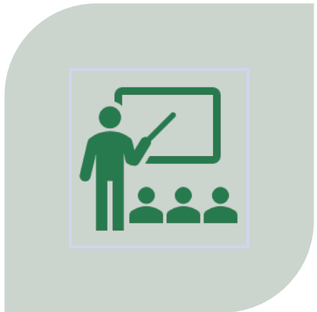
Stay Organized

As you find private scholarships to apply for, keep a running list of deadlines, scholarship amounts, and requirements.



Create a spreadsheet that you can easily reference and update, including columns for the scholarship website URL, the deadline, the prize awarded, and what is required to apply.

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Set a Weekly Goal

You're more likely to earn a scholarship if you submit an application for several, so set a goal to apply to a certain number of scholarships every week.

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Try for Scholarships that Require an Essay

Most students avoid scholarships that require an essay, opting instead for easier and shorter applications.

As a result, essay scholarships, in general, have a smaller pool of applicants, increasing the chances of winning.

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Look for Scholarships Related to Favorite Activities

Scholarships are often catered to students with specific interests or talents. Make a list of your extracurricular activities–sports, music, art, clubs, etc.–and search for scholarships that award students with those interests.

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Clean Up Your Online Profile

Agencies awarding scholarships may do a quick search to seek out any public information about you online. Make sure your internet presence is professional and mature, and remove any material from your public social media pages that doesn't represent your best self.

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Never Pay

Don't pay a fee for a scholarship search tool. Plenty of free online search tools exist, and they include the exact same scholarships as those that require payment.

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Avoid Scams

Be cautious of applications that require detailed personal information that is not relevant to the scholarship itself.

Some companies that claim to offer scholarships are actually just using student information for marketing purposes.

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Financial Aid

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The Importance of Financial Aid

- Most students receive the bulk of their college cost help from financial aid.
- Submit the FAFSA and any other required financial aid applications on time!
- Applying for financial aid will open your eligibility to federal, state, and college money.

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The Financial Aid Effect

- Once you receive a private scholarship, alert the financial aid office at each college where you've applied.
- If you're receiving need-based financial aid, your private scholarships will need to fit within the total amount of your financial aid eligibility, which is determined by the college cost and your family's Student Aid Index (SAI).
- The financial aid staff will work with you to maximize the amount that you can receive in private scholarships without affecting your financial aid.
- For specific questions, contact each college's financial aid office.

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Thank You!

Questions?

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