

Transcript Episode 11: It Takes More than Grades to Get the Scholarship

Intro: Adulting – Thinking of all the things adults have to do can be intimidating. Maybe you are realizing just how much you don't know about living on your own. If this sounds familiar, join us today to learn the skills you need and take some of the stress out of being an adult.

This is Grown Up U, an adulting podcast to help you navigate the twists and turns of adult life. Listen and get life skills you didn't learn in school.

Valerie: Getting that college scholarship takes more than a 3.5 GPA and 29 ACT. Your application needs to be a foundation of community service and experience. Awarders like to see well-rounded applicants. Think of ways to make your application stand out and help you get the scholarship you are going for. Hello, my name is Valerie Turner, and I am the FCS agent and staff chair in Monroe County.

Julie: And I am Julie Goings, county extension agent from Phillips County. College can be a costly endeavor for most college students, both financially as well as an investment in time. For many students, it is the cost that inhibits their ability to attend and graduate. While some of the financial burden can be relieved through scholarships, one must first apply for and 'win' the award. Today we are going to look at three aspects of getting a college scholarship. First, we will examine types of scholarships and where to find them. Next, let's talk about what your scholarship application should include. And lastly, we'll look at ways to put together a scholarship toolbox.

Valerie: Julie it has been several years since either of us were applying for college scholarships but Julie, I know you used to work for a college. Tell us some types of Scholarships and how a student might find them?

Julie: There are literally thousands of scholarships available from the local level to an international level and everything in between. Although there are thousands available, not every scholarship offered would be applicable to every individual. (Huff) For example there would be no need for me to apply for an athletic scholarship.

Valerie: Me Either.

Julie: Scholarships also come in varying monetary amounts as well as nonfinancial awards. Like books or room and board. Knowing the types of scholarships available and where to locate them is our first stop.

Scholarship types can include Local, such as a local business. At the state level think about the Arkansas Scholarship Lottery. This is an excellent opportunity for students in Arkansas. Look at Regional and National award. Your parents' alma mater might offer university-specific awards and you can look for scholarships that are intended for the particular field of study you wish to pursue.

When you get ready to look for scholarships you need to start with a web search and then reach out to other resources, such as your High School Counselor, who should have numerous options to look into. Valerie, you and I both were school counselors. Where else would you look?

Valerie: Look no further than Local Civic Organizations they are great sources for scholarship possibilities. Lions Club, Rotary, Kiwanis, they usually offer small awards, but their national and international chapters also have scholarships available. Youth Organizations such as Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, 4-H. They may have something for which you qualify.

And check with businesses your parents use, like their insurance carrier, their bank and their employer. You may have scholarships just for members.

Keep in mind that some scholarships can be stacked, increasing your investments. This simply means that it is possible to receive more than one scholarship at a time.

Now that you identified some scholarships you want to apply for, this is your chance to shine!

Your application needs to paint a picture of a well-rounded individual who seeks to better themselves and the world they live in. We have developed a check list to help ensure your application outshines all the other applications.

Julie: The first step for all students is to Apply for FAFSA, which is the Free Application for Federal Student Aid. It asks a series of questions that determine whether you are eligible for financial aid. If you are a dependent of your parents, most of the questions will be about their income. However, if you are a financial independent, you will have to answer the questions based on your personal information. FAFSA will in turn connect you with scholarships that are available.

Valerie: Now it is time to apply.....and Apply for more than one scholarship, don't sell yourself short on possibilities. Make sure you carefully read each scholarship application to know the requirements:

- who is eligible to apply (JR, SR, College Freshman, member of organization, specific sports field)
- what specifics are needed for each application and make a list of those needs (proof of Identification of applicant, copy of transcript, references, etc.)
- application due dates and submission requirements (will it have to be mailed, hand delivered, attached to an email, uploaded to a website)

Julie: Letters of Recommendation can be very helpful. They are exactly what they sound like, a letter from a person who knows you and would recommend you for a scholarship. Not all applications require such a letter but when one does, it is very important you attach a proper letter of recommendation.

Make sure you give plenty of response time for the person to write the recommendation and return it before due date.

Ask the right person, no relatives and usually not a classmate. It could be a teacher, club leader, coach, or an employer. It someone who is knowledgeable of you, your abilities, and your work ethics. One who can speak favorably of you. And someone who is appropriate for the scholarship.

Valerie: For example. if you are applying for an athletic scholarship it would be most appropriate for your coach to write the letter. But if you're applying for an art scholarship, you would want your art teacher to write a letter. If applying for an organizational scholarship, a letter of endorsement from one of their members would be awesome. And be courteous. Supply the reference with a copy of the scholarship when possible.

By supplying a copy of the application (preferably filled out with your information) the person writing the letter will be able to customize the letter accordingly. Also make sure the individual knows when you need the completed letter and how it should be received. Do they need to give it back to you to go in with application or does it need to be submitted directly to the scholarship committee?

Sometimes it is possible to get a 'generic' letter from a person that would cover several scholarships requirement for a letter of recommendation. If you do receive such a letter, make sure the person who wrote the letter is informed of all applications where the letter will be submitted. You don't want a scholarship committee calling your reference only to be told, "I'm sorry sir, I never wrote a letter for them."

Julie: Wow! Essay questions can also be instrumental in receiving the scholarship.

Many college scholarship applications require you to answer an essay question of some type. It is a very important part of your application, but it can seem to be the hardest. Don't let that essay keep you from applying. Look at some commonly asked essay questions and use them to prepare for your applications. Brainstorm ideas do some research or create your own "stock" of scholarship essays. The essays should be honest and answer the question being asked. And don't forget to ask several people to proofread before submitting.

Valerie: That's a very important thing Julie, proof reading everything. Lastly, you will want to put together a Scholarship Toolbox Scholarship applications can be one page or numerous pages and can require hours to complete. Do yourself a favor and create a file system where all your 'scholarship tools' can easily be found. We suggest a file box with labeled file folders for each of the following, make sure you have extra copies of each.
You need transcripts – most only require unofficial copies, but some may ask for an official copy.
Essays – should be basic, but easily adapted to fit the needs of each scholarship.
Headshots – this is usually a head and shoulders picture of you in your cap and gown or casual business attire.
And last but most important, a calendar – to keep track of due dates, deadlines, methods of submission, and more.

Julie: You certainly don't want to miss a due dates, or a deadline do you Valerie.

Valerie: No Sir.

Julie: If you are unable to obtain a scholarship, don't let that stop you from following your dreams. You still may be eligible for work study programs, grants or student loans. If the idea of a huge financial burden looms over your decision to further your education, you might look at other options, such as community college, technical schools or online programs. Gosh, Valerie, I can see this leading to another podcast.

Valerie: That it could.

Julie: Good luck in your search for funding your education. Remember to visit our website for a list of resources and references pertaining to this topic.

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