



NEWS RELEASE

MEDIA CONTACT: Rebecca Bahl
Communications and Research Specialist
(515) 273-7483
rbahl@ICANsucceed.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Scholarship Application Tips

WEST DES MOINES, IOWA – Feb. 1, 2009 – In the current economy, more students are looking for ways to pay for college while the cost of attendance continues to rise across the country. Students shouldn't overlook scholarships as a valuable source of funding in this environment, according to the Iowa College Access Network (ICAN).

"Scholarships are an ideal source of college funds because they don't need to be repaid, unlike student loans," says Juan Garcia, manager of ICAN. "The possible payoff is well worth the time to locate and research scholarship opportunities."

ICAN recommends the following steps for scholarship applications.

- **Start early and don't stop.** If you're in high school, begin searching for scholarships early in your junior year. Many opportunities exist for college students as well, so you should continue looking for them into your final year of college.
- **Look locally first.** Ask your school counselor or college financial aid office about opportunities they're aware of. Then contact community and religious organizations, your and your parents' employers, professional organizations and area businesses.
- **Expand your search.** Check with the college you plan to attend and any student organizations you are or plan to be involved with. Don't pay for scholarship services; free online search services can match your unique background and qualifications against a database of scholarship opportunities.

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- **Get organized.** Keep applications, deadlines and requirements for each scholarship together, and make a plan for submitting everything on time. Remember to give people plenty of time to write letters of recommendation for you.
- **Understand the mission.** Take the time to understand the goal of the organization awarding the scholarship. You can then demonstrate how your qualifications promote or meet that goal.
- **Complete the form neatly and accurately.** If you're submitting a paper application, make a copy of it first. You can use the copy as a rough draft and use the original for your final answers. Make sure you fill in every line legibly and accurately.
- **Show your best side.** Remember that your scholarship application is likely the only impression the judges will have of you, so offer the best picture you can by being professional, using vivid examples and expressing your excitement about and gratitude for the opportunity.
- **Write a winning essay.** Address the topic completely while including details about yourself and your ideas. Develop a theme around your main topic. Your essay should follow a logical order and conclude smoothly. Have others read it for errors and proofread it carefully.
- **Include a resume or profile.** List your memberships, participation, honors and awards, employment, and future plans and goals.
- **Mind the little things.** When you submit your application, pay attention to the details: Include materials in the order requested, don't include extra materials and don't use special packaging or folders unless you're asked to do so.

The outreach representatives at ICAN's College Planning Centers in Cedar Rapids and West Des Moines can help students with scholarship applications and searches, as well as other college planning needs. All ICAN services are free and available in person or over the phone. Spanish-speaking representatives are available. Call (877) 272-4692 for an appointment.

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About ICAN: ICAN is the College Access Network for Iowa, as designated by the National College Access Network (NCAN). The ICAN College Planning Centers provide free information and support to students and their families as they plan their postsecondary education and apply for financial aid. The centers are located in Cedar Rapids at 1100 Blairs Ferry Road N.E., Suite 104, and in West Des Moines at 160 S. 68th Street, Suite 1101. Both are open 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on Mondays and Fridays, and 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. For more information, call (877) 272-4692 or visit www.ICANSucceed.org.

ICAN is provided by Iowa Student Loan; no ICAN services, however, are dependent on a student borrowing through an Iowa Student Loan preferred lender.

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