

The goal of the American Graduation Initiative is to help 5 million Americans earn degrees or certificates over the next decade. Author Carol Stewart shows students how to achieve financial aid success. This is the first and only book about creating goals and developing strategic plans that is (1) directed towards college students, (2) written to show characteristics of effective goals and (3) structured with an easy-to-follow 6-step system that students can start using today.

Looking For Scholarships: A 6 Step System for Creating Financial Aid Opportunities

**Buy The Complete Version of This Book at
Booklocker.com:**

<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/4908.html?s=pdf>

Looking for Scholarships:

*A 6-Step System for
Creating Financial Aid
Opportunities*

By Carol H. Stewart, Ph.D.

<http://www.LookingForScholarships.com>

Version 2.2

Copyright © 2010 Carol H. Stewart, Ph.D.

ISBN 978-1-60910-419-1

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the author.

Printed in the United States of America.

BookLocker.com, Inc.
2010

TABLE OF CONTENTS

About the Author	ix
Acknowledgements	xiii
Introduction	xiii
A college tuition mindset	1
Scholarships, grants and loans—oh my!	2
Answering the difficult questions... ..	4
Staying informed	7
Who should read this book.....	8
Next Steps.....	8
Chapter 1: The Search for Money	11
Defining (free) money	12
Why me?	12
Scholarship myths	14
What works, what doesn't and what's new... ..	15
Creating and achieving your goals	16
The six principles: framework for success.....	17

Carol H. Stewart, Ph.D.

Chapter 2: Pledge	22
Pledge: making a commitment	23
Following in the footsteps of others	24
Chapter 3: Prepare.....	26
Defining need	27
The aid package	27
Traditional savings plans	28
529 Prepaid Tuition Plans	30
Other options	30
Chapter 4: Plan	34
Defining financial aid	35
The role of the federal government	36
Chapter 5: Prioritize	45
Defining state-run grant and scholarship programs	46
Chapter 6: Participate	48
Strengths and weaknesses	48
Values and priorities	49
Casting a wide net.....	50

Looking for Scholarships

Chapter 7: Prosper.....	52
Separating the haves from the have nots.....	53
Procrastination	53
What do strengths have to do with it?	54
Look in your own backyard.....	55
Appendix A: Additional federal funding opportunities.....	60
Appendix B: Military educational opportunities	62
Appendix C: State agencies.....	69
Appendix D: National religious organizations.....	141
Appendix E: National associations.....	143
Appendix F: National service organizations	150
References	155
Endnotes.....	123

CHAPTER 1: THE SEARCH FOR MONEY

- Defining (Free) Money
 - Why me?
 - I'm here to teach you
 - Scholarship myths
 - What works, what doesn't and what's new
 - Creating and achieving your goals
-

Tuition at our institutions of higher learning is slowly but surely being priced out of reach for middle class families.

JODI RELL

Governor State of Connecticut, 2004 to present

At this point, you may be asking yourself why would an organization give away scholarship money? Many large corporations are often looking for new products and ideas. They understand that their employees are the best resource for innovation. They also know that education (or learning) is a never-ending process. While earning a degree may be the end result, learning often continues long after the degree is received. If you look at some of the most successful companies such as Microsoft, Apple, Google, Yahoo or industries such as pharmaceutical, telecommunications or technology you see the next wave of leaders and innovation.

DEFINING (FREE) MONEY

The cost of college tuition includes many things and there are several ways in which to pay for it: student loans, scholarships and grants.

College tuition is the cost associated with attending a college or university. While the majority of the costs include the cost per credit per course, there are additional costs involved such as activity fees, technology fees and administrative fees. For those students living on campus a room and board fee applies. Books are usually not included in tuition, they are an added expense.

Financial aid has a much broader definition. At one end of the spectrum, we have those who pay for college in cash through money saved and/or invested. At the other end of the spectrum, we have those who pay for college through student loans and private loans. Somewhere in the middle, we have students who are awarded grants and scholarships. Student and private loans are monies that have to be paid back while scholarships and grants are often referred to as *free money* because the monies do not have to be repaid. That's why they are so highly competitive. There are billions of dollars in financial aid available. The key is finding the right match for you.

I will explain each financial aid option in detail in future chapters.

WHY ME?

My journey to earning my degree was a long one and along the way, I was discouraged by not asking for financial help. I heard all of the reasons why I shouldn't or couldn't apply which I

Looking for Scholarships

believed to be true. Then one day as I was talking with one of my graduate school colleagues about the rising cost of college tuition, she shared with me her secret. She had been awarded a grant to help with her tuition and although the grant helped out tremendously she still asked the university for additional financial help. This viewpoint defied everything I had been told or read about financial aid. She went on to explain that while our situations were similar, after all we were close in age, skills, knowledge, and beliefs there was one thing that set us apart – she asked for help and I didn't.

That day I made an appointment with the financial aid officer (FAO) and explained my situation. The FAO asked me a few questions, reviewed /verified some relevant information and advised me she could offer me some of the same financial opportunities my friend had been offered. I don't want to make it sound easy but it was far less complicated than I had made it out to be.

That day changed my life forever. I began by ignoring the naysayers and started searching for scholarships in my field of interest. I also created specific, realistic and achievable goals – by planning ahead and writing them down in a way that was manageable – only then did I see the results change.

I'M HERE TO TEACH YOU...

Along the way, I've had many scholarship successes but I've also made some colossal mistakes. My story doesn't end there. Once I had success with my journey, I was curious to see if the strategy I learned would work at another university. When my

Carol H. Stewart, Ph.D.

son was ready for college, I took the strategies I learned and applied them to his situation. It took a little time to learn to customize it for his particular situation, but eventually he achieved success as well.

The process for searching or applying for financial aid can seem overwhelming. That's why we recommend you start at the beginning – by writing down exactly what your goals are along with steps you can take today to achieve them.

SCHOLARSHIP MYTHS

There are dozens of websites that claim to have access to billions of dollars in scholarship monies and they will give you access to this information at no cost to you. While there are some websites that have up-to-date scholarship information, many of them collect your personal information for the sole purpose of selling it. There are other websites that take twenty minutes to get through because of all the advertisements you have to wade through just to get to the scholarship information. And there are others whose information is out-of-date and obsolete. Here is what we've found and what I refer to as the *new norm*:

Scholarship Myths

Old Way of Thinking: To earn a scholarship you have to be...	New Way of Thinking: To win a scholarship you have to be...
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lucky	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Organized, persistent and consistent

Looking for Scholarships

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A “traditional” student (in high school, an athlete or high GPA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A non-traditional student (any age, non-athlete or a good GPA)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Passive (wait for someone to recommend you)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assertive (take charge and ask for help)

WHAT WORKS, WHAT DOESN'T AND WHAT'S NEW...

There are thousands of students – just like you – who search for ways to pay for their college education who are successful. They are organized by creating specific, measurable and achievable goals. They are persistent in not giving up with the first rejection. In other words, they apply for ten or twenty or thirty scholarships knowing that they will not win them all. But they are consistent with their efforts; they commit to one hour a day or ten hours a week to search and apply for scholarships for which they are eligible.

These students also ignore friends and families and third parties who tell them free money is only for those students in financial need, star athletes, or the very brightest. While this may be true *in some cases*, it is not true in all cases. If you look at the list of scholarship money available, you will see belonging to a specific organization or being born into a specific heritage or writing a stellar essay are the deciding factors in many cases.

Finally, no matter what your situation is (or what you think) talk to your college's Financial Aid Officer. Ask about what scholarships are offered through the college; what choices you have; are

Carol H. Stewart, Ph.D.

there grants available based on merit or matching funds due to specific affiliations or community service? If s/he says no, then ask someone else until you find someone willing to work with you.

So now you know what free money is...how does that help you?

CREATING AND ACHIEVING YOUR GOALS

Start with the end in mind. As Jack Canfield notes in *The Success Principles* one has greater success of achieving goals if they are written down⁷. The first step in this process would be for you to write down your top three, four or five goals. You want to be accepted into college – but which colleges? What will you study? Do you need to acquire any other skills? Write down your goals on a sheet of paper – be as specific as possible. One technique is called the SMART model. Although there are different variations to defining the acronym, the more common one is Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic/Relevant, and Timely/Tangible⁸.

It is not enough to say “I want to win a scholarship”. Using the SMART model a goal would be “I want to win ten thousand dollars in scholarships for the 2010-2011 academic years.” Let’s look at this example in detail. By identifying a dollar amount and academic year, this goal meets both the Specific and Measurable elements. The dollar amount identified is also Achievable and Realistic. Finally, I wrote this goal in January of this year allowing me six or seven months to achieve the goal which meets the Timely element.

Best-selling author, Harvey MacKay created another goal-setting model he refers to as the MIDAS touch. According to MacKay (2010), “A goal is a dream with a deadline, measurable, identifiable, documented, attainable and specific and goals must be in writing”⁹. MacKay also emphasizes goals that are in writing are more achievable than ones committed to memory.

It’s worth noting the importance of having a network or a support system to help you through this process – whether by providing moral support or helping you with specific tasks – and to have someone hold you accountable every step of the way.

THE SIX PRINCIPLES: FRAMEWORK FOR SUCCESS

You are beginning to understand how the financial aid process works. You’ve learned what works, what doesn’t and the *new norm*. You understand the scholarship myths and you are ready to start creating your goals. You are now ready to take everything you’ve learned and carry out the steps necessary for success.

Since money for college is about *loans, scholarships and grants*, you need to look into all of your options and not limit yourself to one category. To help you with this task, I’ve created a framework that helps bring the financial aid mindset to life.

The framework is called *The Six Principles* after the six activities I’ve identified that others have used to achieve success. When used appropriately, they lead you down the path of discovering

financial aid opportunities, solutions and choices. They represent a framework that's easy to remember and apply:

- **Pledge** – Studies show people are more successful in keeping commitments if they make a pledge to themselves in writing.
- **Prepare** – Applying for scholarships is not difficult but it does require you to be organized. Make a list of potential scholarship opportunities, gather the required documentation (social security, tax information, etc) and read the eligibility requirements carefully (and definitely more than once). Put the list in a spreadsheet or any document that will help you keep track of potential opportunities.
- **Plan** – Create a plan that is reasonable and manageable. If you are like most students, you have identified dozens (if not hundreds) of opportunities – which can be overwhelming. Break the list down in practical chunks or group them together by due dates (or deadlines) or some other commonality. Select one of your goals and create specific action steps to do every day to support the goal. Repeat this step with your remaining goals.
- **Prioritize** – Be realistic in your approach. Once you have identified all of the opportunities you feel you are eligible for, prioritize the results. Make a list of required supporting documentation (such as letters of recommendations or transcripts). Approach your guidance counselor (or people you've asked for recommendations) with your list and give her/him adequate time to follow through with your requests. Start with those opportunities that you identified as high priority. After you've applied for three opportunities, find another three new opportunities and begin the cycle over again.

Looking for Scholarships

- **Participate** – The article in *USA Today* stated that most scholarships went unclaimed because of students either did not apply at all or did not apply on time. Incomplete applications or typographical errors on essays are two other reasons given. Using abbreviations or a form of Internet shorthand may be fine when posting on Twitter but it's not okay in your college essay.
- **Prosper** – The competition is fierce for large scholarships, for example, a scholarship worth \$10 thousand dollars a year for four years, while the smaller scholarships are often overlooked. My research also showed the number of scholarships decreased as the amount increased. For example, there may be one \$10 thousand scholarship awarded per year in comparison to ten or twenty one thousand dollar scholarships through another organization. Yes, it's true you would have to apply for several scholarships at one thousand dollars to make up for the one awarded in the amount of ten thousand dollars, but your chances of being awarded the smaller amount is increased substantially based upon quantity.

To see how this framework works, let me use an example. Let's say your goal is to earn \$10 thousand dollars in scholarships. You could:

1. *Pledge* one hour a day or ten hours a week to searching and applying for scholarships for which you are eligible;
2. *Prepare* by identifying which scholarships you qualify for. Make a list of deadlines and other criteria you need before you begin applying. If your goal is \$10 thousand – separate the larger amount scholarships from the smaller ones;

Carol H. Stewart, Ph.D.

3. Create a *plan* by organizing those scholarships you've identified in groups by commonality such as deadlines and dollar value. If your goal is \$10 thousand – then make sure your list has at least two or three or ten times that amount in opportunities available;
4. Establish a system where you *prioritize* your results. Dedicate time each week to fulfill the requirements and send off your application. When you are finished with the first one, immediately sit down and complete the second one. When you have completed and submitted the second one, immediately apply for the third one. It is easy to become overwhelmed with the sheer volume of scholarships or the supporting documentation that is required;
5. Actively *participate* in as many scholarship opportunities as possible. There are several free websites that claim to have databases with thousands of available scholarship sites. Sign up for two or three and see what types of information they send your way. Many of these sites are free – but to sign up you have to subject yourself to the dozens of ads and pop-ups that can be annoying;
6. Only by establishing a system and committing your time and energy towards your goal will you be successful and *prosper*. Constantly evaluate your progress or look at ways you can improve your application for next year. If you lose out on a scholarship, review the winning entry and see if you can identify any gaps or differences between the winning entry and yours.

This framework is designed to help you accomplish your college tuition goals. Each activity in the framework is not necessarily in

Looking for Scholarships

the order in which it should be performed but rather is a piece of the whole process.

Only you can decide which goals you would like to set for yourself, but use your accountability partner (or support system) to brainstorm options or to set realistic goals. The saying, “there’s strength in numbers,” is another way of approaching (and achieving) your goals. Ask friends to let you know if they see scholarship opportunities you may qualify for; share your strategy with members of clubs and organizations; you never know when an opportunity might present itself.

Next Steps:

Do This (New Way of Thinking)	Don’t Do This (Old Way of Thinking)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Identify your college tuition goals	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Leave this step in the hands of others and not take responsibility for your education
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Calculate the financial gap – how much do you have today vs. how much more you need	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Assume someone else (such as parents) will foot the bill or rely 100% on student loans
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ask someone to help you with the process (or at the very least) verify the work you’ve done	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Do this process alone

The goal of the American Graduation Initiative is to help 5 million Americans earn degrees or certificates over the next decade. Author Carol Stewart shows students how to achieve financial aid success. This is the first and only book about creating goals and developing strategic plans that is (1) directed towards college students, (2) written to show characteristics of effective goals and (3) structured with an easy-to-follow 6-step system that students can start using today.

Looking For Scholarships: A 6 Step System for Creating Financial Aid Opportunities

**Buy The Complete Version of This Book at
Booklocker.com:**

<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/4908.html?s=pdf>