

# IDENTIFYING & PRESENTING FINANCIAL NEEDS



**Many scholarship applications include space for you to identify financial need. This is one area that scholarship applicants either tend to leave blank or describe in a manner that negatively reflects on them. Here are some tips to present your financial need in a way that will benefit your application.**

## **Identify events or situations in your life that reduce the money available to help you pay for college.**

Sometimes applicants believe that financial need is based on the results of their FAFSA identifying them as eligible for financial aid. FAFSA information is for determining eligibility for federal student aid, but there are many private and institutional scholarships that are not linked to FAFSA criteria at all. For these applications, “financial need” is a broader term, and you should think of any situations or events in your life that reduce the money you have available to help you pay for college. Some examples of financial need include having a parent who was recently laid off from work or a family member who has a chronic illness. These circumstances reduce the money a family has available to spend on college and will help your readers contextualize how the scholarship money could help you. If you plan to pay for college without any help from your parents, or if you are a parent who is raising a child, mention these situations. Traditional college students usually receive some financial help from their parents, so if you are not a traditional student, let your scholarship committee know this. It will help them remember you and understand the impact this money could have on your ability to attend school.

## **Present your financial need in a positive manner.**

Your scholarship committee will read many applications from students who have financial need. The ones who make the greatest impression on readers are the ones who present their situations as a challenge they are meeting and overcoming. People like to support successful ventures. For example, if you are a student who had to buy your own car and pay for your own expenses in high school, mention that in your scholarship application and explain how it has helped you learn to manage your money. Money management is a skill that many college students learn for the first time when they leave home, so highlight you already possess this skill that will help you budget for college and life expenses. If you are a single parent who is working full-time and studying, let your readers know that you understand the value of a college degree to help you have access to higher paying jobs in order to provide for yourself and your family.

## **Steer clear of appearing entitled.**

Avoid describing yourself as deserving of a scholarship just because of your life circumstances. Everyone has obstacles in their lives that are challenging and difficult to them. You do not know what situations others are describing, so do not assume you are the neediest person. This creates an image of entitlement that will hurt your chances for being awarded a scholarship.

In a nutshell:

Present your need as a situation that has helped you grow and mature and not as a negative hindrance. This positive presentation sends the message to your scholarship committee that you are someone who is not easily discouraged by difficulties. By showing your readers that you already have the ability to overcome challenges, you help them feel reassured that investing money in your education will be a move that will help you continue to improve yourself. According to the Texas Board of Higher Education, of the college students who started studying in 2004, only 52.8% had graduated after 10 years and another 27.3% were still taking classes. This means almost 20% of the students who started studying stopped before completing their degree. Many students enter college without knowing how to deal with obstacles in their education. Present yourself as someone who can endure hardships to accomplish your goals in order to make a positive impression on your committee and let them know that awarding you a scholarship is a worthwhile financial investment.

### **Works Cited:**

“Community and Technical Colleges 6-year Graduation Rates of First-Time Entering Undergraduates - Full-time and Part-time.” Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, <http://www.theccb.state.tx.us/reports/DocFetch.cfm?DocID=2300>. Accessed 11 Dec 2017.

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