

Digital Tech College & Career Readiness Series Scholarship Exploration

James Rose

Welcome. I greet you. Thank you for participating in the scholarship section of this workshop. My name is James Rose and I'm the director of Reach 4 Success, which is under the Consortium of Universities of Washington DC. I am so excited and because of that I just want to go ahead and go right into this, because it's important to me that you know what to do to get the money. But before we do all that you have to know the facts and why scholarships are so important. Sixty-three percent of undergraduates enrolled between the years of 2018 and 2020 received financial aid; 28% of undergraduates received federal grants. Well, the thing that alarmed me is, 56% of all aid that students received was a loan. Now I don't know about you, but loan is not something that I smile at. And this is the reason for this workshop, so you don't have to worry about loans - loans is a necessity, loans is a reality, but it doesn't have to be a debt. So I just wanted to let you know the facts.

When you apply for scholarships, it's not really a hard task, but there are some important things that you need to know. So what I want to share with you in the beginning are the top four most relevant application materials. The first one is the application. Whatever application you fill out, you want to make sure that you read it from the beginning to the end. You don't want to make any mistakes. There are many times and countless times that I was part of a selection committee and people did not follow directions and asked for their last name first, you gave the first name first. So it stayed like that to me to make sure that you pay attention to. Also what you want to have prepared is the transcript of your grades. It's also good, that when you have that, that you have an explanation when you go there are some things that, you know, you know that you're going to have to explain later on because you might have gotten an F in a particular class. But, you took that class over you got a B or hopefully you got an A. To understand that you might have to explain the circumstances. It could have been mitigating circumstances, so make sure you always keep that noted somewhere when you are doing your application.

Next is letters of recommendation. Letters of recommendation are really important, but here are some tips that I want you to follow. When you are doing a letter of recommendation, always ask for recommendations in advance. Always get permission to use that particular recommendation

if the counselor or teacher is not available when you're filling out an application, when you're filling out a scholarship application as well as an admissions application. You want to get their permission and normally what I tell students to do is have the recommendation letter in a Word document. This way you have access to it. And you can get it and send it off with everything. And you know that you have the particular instructor or counselors permission.

The fourth thing are essays. Essays are very important, but what I'm going to tell you is three types of essays that if you perfect these essays, at least 500 to 1000 words, if you're like me, I would probably do maybe 700. The reason why this is important is because one of the frustrations about filling out scholarship applications is it can be tedious if you're doing a lot of writing, but I guarantee you if you do these things, it will allow you to send 25 scholarship applications out versus four or five because you're tired of writing. When I say perfected, an essay is not perfected unless at least three people have looked at your essay. Because I guarantee you, if they have questions, the panel will have questions, the selection committee will have questions, so you want to make sure that you define perfect as three people have watched either your video or read your essay. Just a tip, for those of you who have a community college near you, and I know we're in COVID, they have opportunities and will provide you opportunities where you can send them, as well as Reach 4 Success, a copy of your essay. We will not write the essay for you. They will not write the essay for you, but they will give you some helpful tips on what you need to do to improve your essay.

Now going further. Here are the three types of essays that I think a student should perfect. Now these are just my names. You can call them whatever you want. The first one is to "tell my business." To "tell my business" just says you want to write an essay about your struggles, you want to write an essay about why are you going to come. You want to write an essay that will talk about the mitigating circumstances. What has motivated you to apply for that scholarship. You have people who are adopted, that's a real good leeway into your essay. So "tell my business."

The second one is the "Miss or Mrs America." Again, that's what I call it. For any of you who have ever watched a Miss Teen, Miss America, Mr America Pageant, they always ask one question - what are you going to do to give back to the community. You want to write an essay

about that. If you are selected for this scholarship, how are you going to be able to give back once you receive that wonderful degree that you are striving for.

And the third one is community service. Why is community service important - because 67% of the scholarships that are out there are based on community service. I know you've been told the myth of if you're not able to apply for merit scholarships, you might as well hang it up. That is a myth. It is not a fact. And I want to use this opportunity to change your whole mentality, in terms of where you look for scholarships. So community service, you first have to understand what community service is - are you in a ministry in the church? That's community service. Are you taking on any leadership roles? Are you the person that the neighborhood kids look up to? Are you tutoring? All of those things are community service. And some of you say that you don't do any of those things, well create a community service. Well you may be saying, "I Don't do any of those things." Create a community service. Just to give you a brief story. I had a student, he told me I can always use his name, Devin, who came to Reach 4 Success and I counseled him and what he did was he created a community service opportunity where he was diagnosed with dyslexia. So what he did was he went into the schools and volunteered to help students in the elementary schools that was also dealing with dyslexia. Now what did it do? It gave him the opportunity to get an award from President Bush. And because of that award, because of that community service, Devin received a four year scholarship to the New York Culinary Art School, which is 1) hard to get into, and the fee is astronomical in terms of a vocational school. So, community service really is important.

First you have to find scholarships that's right for you. What makes you unique? What are your skills, what are your experiences. You know, what are you going to do that's going to get the attention of the panel. I'll give an example for those of you who saw *Legally Blonde*. Elle did something that was different. She sent a video. So, things like that when you are looking for a scholarship in the field of journalism, don't just fill out the application, send them a mock interview that you did. Just doing something that says, where the middle meets the road, that you can say out of these two candidates, what made them unique, and they will say well you know this person sent this wonderful mock interview. You know, so you want to make sure you do that. What are your interests. If the academic know that there is a real good percentage of those, but know that it's more all competition, knowing that you normally have to go through

one, two, even three rounds. On leisure. You know, don't take for granted because, you like to wave a flag banner and you like to create, that is not an area in which you cannot find a scholarship. What are your affiliations, your clubs, organizations, churches, civic groups that you might be in. These are all important. Now what I want you to do is, *this is a homework assignment*, and this is a wonderful homework assignment because it's not something that you have to turn into me. You want to put all of this together in chronological order. So whenever you need this information, you can go right to your book and you can pull it out. You don't have to think about what clubs was I involved in; what organization was I affiliated with, you have all of that in the chronological order. Your application form. Again, I have to stress - you have to follow the instructions, they always ask questions about yourself, your contact information, your year in school, personal backgrounds, your college plans, and definitely your major.

Letter of recommendation. We already talked about letters of the recommendation. So you want to make sure that these are the most acceptable. A teacher, a guidance counselor, an employer, an someone in a professional field. Always, always, always ask for this information in advance so they can do their due diligence and write this wonderful wonderful recommendation.

Now, I'm excited about this. Let's get some money! The first thing you have to do is fill out the FAFSA form. You are going to participate in a wonderful presentation about financial aid, and I want you to make sure that you tune in. What you are going to be told, and what is going to be stressed it to fill out the FAFSA form. Why do I need to fill out the FAFSA form? Because the FAFSA form is more than just to determine federal aid. And we're going to talk about some of those things. When you fill out the FAFSA form, you'll find out in a wonderful presentation that aid is based on federal aid. But what you don't know, is that in order to be eligible for state aid, you have 1) fill out the FAFSA form. You have to fill it out by expiration date/due date. For example, if you are a Maryland resident and you're going to a school in Maryland, you have to get the FAFSA form, although it's available in October the previous year, you have to get that information in before March 1st to be eligible for state funding. You cannot do that without filling out the FAFSA. Okay? So you want to make sure. Information will be provided in terms of DC residents, Maryland residents, and Virginia residents. The websites that you need to go to in order to be considered for state funding. And DC residents, is osse.dc.gov. Maryland residents

is mhec.state.md.us. And for Virginia residents is schev.edu. It'll give you some helpful hints and wonderful wonderful scholarships that you are eligible for. Once you fill out the FAFSA form.

Now let's talk about the different types of scholarships. One of the most tedious things about scholarships is you always want to get in. Why? Because you don't know where to look. But we're going to help you alleviate that. We already talked about state scholarships. We also talked about how you can afford college. So that means that if you are a Maryland resident, going to a school in Maryland, and especially for your first timers. There is so much money you will receive by going to a school in your state. Now I'm not here to tell you where to go, I'm just telling you how to find the most money to fund your education. Your local private scholarships, what do we mean? Civic and professional groups fund local students to attend college. You know, you have a lot of organizations that are local - your local YMCA, or urban lead, different communities in your local area that provide scholarships. And so you have to do some research, but they are out there. Because many are not listed by a database. So you want to make sure that you understand that. Advertisements in high school, guidance counselor's, now here's a trick. Just because you do not attend a particular high school does not mean that you can't get a hold of information that they're giving their students in terms of scholarships. What do I mean? Just because you go to real name Rose High School, doesn't mean that if you have a good friend or cousin or brother, that goes to James High School, that you guys can't put your information together and see what you can apply for, because those scholarships are not geared totally toward students who go to that particular school. Therefore any high school students. So that's another tip.

One of the things that you need to understand and when you don't want - I'm old school, I know, you can probably tell, I know you're probably confused. But, I have to say don't put all your eggs into one basket. And I know many of you, hopefully all of you are scholars, and you want to apply for the scholarships that pay for all four years. But I will say this, you won't have to know, for example the Ron Brown scholarship, very highly competitive. So if you only apply for scholarships that pay for all four years, or they're only \$10,000 or \$20,000. And you don't receive any scholarships, how much money will you have? I'll help you. You have none. But, if you apply for thirty \$1,000 scholarships and you receive 10 of them. I'll help you again, You'll have \$10,000. So small amounts add up to big amounts. Also small amounts also add up to

what I talked about earlier. Your little binder. All of the awards and scholarships that you have received that makes you unique. That puts you ahead of your other classmates when it comes to looking for scholarships.

Know your local resources - Reach For Success. Our organization has a website, Reach4Success.org, that gives wonderful scholarship advice. We're also on Facebook, your local library, local businesses, your parents and your guardians, employers. How many of you know that there are some people in your family because they don't have children, you can reap the benefits of receiving some type of scholarship through their organization. Especially if you have a relative that works at one of the local university or any universities. There are some universities that grandchildren can receive tuition remission for going to that same school. So you want to do your research. I know it's a lot, but I tell you, when I give you my homework assignment it is going to make it seem so much better.

Churches. How many do you know that because you go to one church does not mean that you can't get scholarship information from another church. I see it all the time, I work with them. Organizations foundations. One of the things that I give students as a homework assignment is that everything is a potential scholarship. What do you mean, Mr. Rose? How many of you eat at Kentucky Fried Chicken. How many of you know that Kentucky Fried Chicken has a \$2500 to \$3500 scholarship every year. Sounds wonderful, right? But, the unfortunate part is at the end of the time period on a deadline, they have millions of dollars that they did not spend because students have not applied. So, the homework assignment, the second homework assignment I'm going to give you, that's wonderful because you don't have to turn it in, is everything that you run across, you use that as an opportunity to do what you guys do being younger using your search engine. If you see m&ms, you want to go to m&m. You want to see if they have scholarships. You eat at McDonald's. You drive by a store. How many of you know that Danny's Chinese food - you know the one that you find on most corners in the metropolitan area - has a book scholarship? I know you didn't know that! That's what I'm here for. To fill you in on the things that you don't know to make things so much easier. Deer Park. Every bank that you come across. Banks give out the most money. They're not just to take your money to credit cards or for you to take out loans. But, they have a community service base that you can get. And, you don't have to normally be a member or have your money at that particular bank. Because, like

myself, they care about students, they care about the United States, and they want our students to excel. The opportunities are there.

So isn't that a wonderful homework assignment? So I guarantee you if you do what I tell you to do by the end of each day, you would have 20 to 30 different areas to look for scholarships. Why is that important? Because what's on the internet is not necessarily in the books. What's in the books, you might not necessarily find on the internet. So you want to bring all of these things together. We talked about community service. Let me tell you it's a wonderful thing that you go to the nursing home on Christmas. But we're talking about areas in which you do this long term. So we appreciate it you did it during the Christmas time, and you did it for a couple of days. But we're talking about something further than that.

So I want to let you know there are so many - you have government agencies, you have the Gates Foundation, we already talked about civic and faith based organizations. One of the final days we are going to talk about are unusual scholarships, yes they exist. How many have heard about the scholarship you can receive by making a prom dress out of duck tape. It really does exist. This is what I want you to do. Homework assignment #3. Go onto your search engine and simply search "unusual scholarships." It'll bring up thousands. But it brings me to the point that you have to make sure that you read all of the information. Why? Because there's going to be scholarships that you might see about skateboarding, you don't skateboard. But, if you read that scholarship, it says, write an essay on why a skateboard park would be important in your neighborhood. When you know friends who skateboard, so you can use them.

Finally, follow up, follow up is important. Always remember to say thank you. Always follow the instructions on receiving funds. Always make sure you know who you talk to, where you send information, because it's just like Judge Judy. If you have more evidence, it can actually get you some money. Why is follow-up important? Because there's been a situation where students who have gotten in contact with our organization to find out what the status is with their essay and found out that they didn't have one. But, because they simply did that follow up to say thank you, what can I do to be a better candidate next time. They've receive a couple \$1,000 because they showed evidence that they did apply for that scholarship. Now, they didn't get the whole scholarship. Well, because they followed up, they received a few \$1,000 more. Okay, so that's

very important. Now, we started off with “Let's win some money!” Here are the things that I want you to make sure you write down. And that you keep this in mind and condition yourself: be proactive; don't wait for somebody to get in contact with you, you get in contact with them. Have you heard anything? Be timely. Remember, you have to be timely when you fill out that FAFSA form, you have to make sure you do it before the deadline to be eligible for state funding. Be organized. You have to be persistent. And above all, you have to be positive. What do I mean by be positive? Don't be prideful. Have other people help you. And I guarantee you the money will come. Thank you so much for participating. And remember, you can afford college. I'm Mr Rose, Director of Reach 4 Success, and I'm here for you.