

SCHOLARSHIPS & FINANCIAL AID

What are the different types of financial aid?
How do I apply for Town of Weston scholarships?
What is the process for applying for federal financial aid programs?
Where can I find the resources to help me navigate these issues?

The Weston High School Guidance Department has created this document to assist students and families in answering these questions. Most students, as they research post-high school options, work through these questions with their guidance counselor. Students have information presented to them through the Guidance Seminar classes that they take as juniors and seniors. Parents receive this information through the informational seminars that are held in junior and senior year, by accessing the Guidance Department's website <http://www.weston.org/schools/hs/guid>, and by attending the annual Fall Financial Aid Night hosted by the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority (MEFA). MEFA is a valuable source of information on financial aid and scholarships, and interactive tools are available on their website <http://www.mefacounselor.org>. The Guidance Department and MEFA help students access scholarships and grants (money awarded to students which does not need to be repaid) as well as financial aid loans (which is borrowed money which must be repaid).

TOWN OF WESTON SCHOLARSHIPS

Organizations within the Town of Weston offer scholarships to students. To be considered for any of these town scholarships, students need to complete the [Weston Town Scholarship Application](#) and complete the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) which can be accessed at fafsa.gov. **Please be aware that a copy of the SAR/EFC page of the FAFSA must be attached to the application.** Hard copies of the application are also available in the Guidance Department. Each application is copied and sent to the scholarship committees for consideration. The student's guidance counselor often helps by answering questions and reviewing the application before it is submitted. Decisions on the scholarship recipients are made by the individual committees and are based on documented financial need as well as on the quality of the application itself. In addition, representatives from the scholarship committees meet to coordinate awards in order to support as many eligible students as possible. Some committees award money to the student directly while others send money directly to the institution to which the student is matriculating.

FINANCIAL AID

Students can access financial aid through four sources: Federal, State, College/University, and outside private scholarships. The FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) is the form that all colleges and universities require. It is available starting January 1st. An additional application that many private colleges and universities require, the CSS Profile, asks for in-depth information for the purpose of awarding students their privately managed money. While some colleges and universities have their own application process for these funds. The FAFSA and CSS Profile are the two primary applications that students and parents complete for the purpose of applying for loans or grants. Families should plan on completing both if the student intends to apply to a range of colleges and universities.

Work-study is another option commonly used by students. Work-study programs allow students to work part-time on or near campus while in college. Students are paid directly for the hours that they work, and these funds supplement any financial aid award students may receive through the FAFSA application. Students are asked on the FAFSA application if they intend to consider Work Study as an option to supplement income during the academic school year.

OTHER SCHOLARSHIPS

Finally, outside scholarships provide another source of financial aid for students. These can be grouped into several categories: sponsoring agencies and interest groups; corporations and organizations; colleges and universities; and the Town of Weston. Most of the scholarships are needs based, but some are also merit scholarships. The sponsoring agencies and interest groups vary significantly in terms of threshold qualifications ranging from parent occupation to areas of interest for future study. There are a number of scholarship search engines available through the Internet which make locating these sources much more manageable than in the past. The Guidance Department provides a list of these search engines on its web site. Families should note, however, that the Weston High School Guidance Department strongly discourages parents from soliciting help from organizations that charge a fee for “assisting students and parents in finding scholarships.” We have found that such agencies and organizations rarely produce information worthy of expense. Should you have any questions about a service, please call the Guidance Department.

Traditionally, a wide range of companies and organizations offer scholarship programs. The Guidance Department maintains an ongoing list of these agencies which contains eligibility requirements, how to access applications, deadlines and key contact people. Students may discuss these options with their counselors, or parents may request a copy of the list from the Guidance Department secretary.

As referenced above, many colleges and universities have their own scholarship money, typically awarded to students who ultimately matriculate to that institution. Please contact the Guidance office to learn about specific scholarship information from a particular school. For example, the University of Massachusetts system has two types of scholarships for students: the “John and Abigail Adams Scholarship” and the “Stanley Z. Koplak Certificate of Mastery.” While these two scholarships both waive tuition costs, there are important differences in eligibility requirements and the application process. Students planning on applying to the University of Massachusetts should investigate these funding sources. At Weston High School, one guidance counselor, Maryann Shea, is the coordinator of these scholarships. For more information, please contact Ms. Shea via email at sheam@weston.org.

CLOSING

In summary, there is a range of possibilities open to students to supplement the rising cost of higher education. The most important advice the Guidance Department and MEFA gives to students and parents is to stay on top of application deadlines! Students and families need a system to organize both college and scholarship applications. Too often, students miss opportunities by not having the application prepared in a timely manner. If you need further information or wish to discuss your particular concern, we encourage you to make an appointment with your guidance counselor to go through these options or answer your particular questions.