



# COLLEGE PLANNING



## Paying For College—Get Smart, Start Early

(NAPSA)—Millions of students each year pursue a post-secondary degree and for many, paying for their continuing education is a primary concern. According to the U.S. Department of Education, nearly 73 percent of full-time undergraduate students receive some form of financial aid to help them pay for college.

During the past decade, an estimated one million low-income, academically qualified students failed to attend college due in part to financial need, according to the Lumina Foundation Focus.

Many high school graduates do not continue their education because they lack information about how to prepare and apply for college.

For students seeking financial aid, Scholarship America, the nation's largest nonprofit, private sector scholarship and educational support organization, offers the following tips:

- Ask and learn. Knowledge truly is power. Learn everything you can by talking to high school counselors, college financial aid administrators, and friends who've already gone through the process.

- Prioritize. Prioritize your efforts, beginning with the federal government and then moving on to state programs and the private sector for supplemental funds. Several corporations offer scholarship programs with specific criteria for which you might be a good fit.

For instance, Mercedes-Benz USA offers the annual Drive Your Future Scholarship Program. This awards \$1 million in scholarship funding to students who are the first in their families to attend college. Visit [www.mbusa.com/dri](http://www.mbusa.com/dri) vefuture for more information.

- Submit a FAFSA. Many students refrain from submitting a free application for federal student aid (FAFSA) as they do not expect to qualify. This is not always the case. Forms are available at [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov), through



**A number of corporations now offer scholarships to students who fit a particular profile.**

high school guidance counselors or by calling 1-800-4-FED-AID.

- Know Your Deadlines. Applying early often increases your chances at receiving financial aid; consider developing a calendar with financial aid deadlines so you don't miss opportunities. Submit forms early so your application is quickly processed.

- Investigate. Online search engines specializing in financial assistance for college, such as [www.finaid.org](http://www.finaid.org) or [www.scholarships.com](http://www.scholarships.com) are a great resource for prospective scholarships.

- Avoid Scams. If an opportunity sounds too good to be true, it very well might be. Visit [www.ftc.gov](http://www.ftc.gov) for a list of common fraudulent scholarship scams.

- Repeat the Process. Many scholarships and financial aid packages require you to reapply each year to sustain funding. Moreover, requirements frequently change and new scholarships become available each year, making it crucial to revisit the process on a regular basis.

Scholarship America has distributed more than one billion dollars to more than one million students by helping communities and corporations establish scholarship programs.

Learn more by visiting: [www.scholarshipamerica.org](http://www.scholarshipamerica.org) and click "For Students" to review open scholarships and access more scholarship links and information on preparing for college.