

# College scholarship tips

BY MELANIE TACOMA  
Record-Eagle staff writer

Katelin Engerer has been saving money for college for four years, and her summer job has nothing to do with it.

By keeping up her grades, participating in an exchange program, and spending time volunteering, Engerer has been making herself eligible for a number of scholarships throughout her high school career.

As the cost of college tuition increases each year, scholarships can be very important for students going to school.

"I had been planning to go to the University of Michigan," Engerer said. "I got in there, but they didn't give me as much money as Michigan Tech. It's not the only factor (in my decision), but it's nice to have money."

According to Linda Deneen, guidance counselor at Traverse City Central High School, scholarships can be broken into two main categories: need-based and merit-based.

While a student's financial situation is the sole factor in calculating need-based aid, merit-based scholarships can be awarded for a number of reasons.

"Many merit-based scholarship students earn through their respective colleges, and athletics are certainly part of it," Deneen said. "The scholarships are awarded because the student has done something extraordinarily well or are expected to do something extraordinarily well."

Typically, non-athletic merit scholarships are awarded to students based on their grades and standardized test scores.

However Jeanne Snow, the executive director of the Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation explained that each scholarship the foundation awards requires students meet different criteria.

"For example, one may require a certain grade point average, another may not because its purpose is to help a student that's average or below average," she said. "We have traditional and non-traditional scholarships."

Karen Starkey, director of counseling at Petoskey High School, said there is a lot of scholarship money available if students know where to look.

"They have to ask and be diligent," she said. "There are people who really beat the bushes and get scholarships. The money's out there, but you have to work for it."

"There are lots of smart, motivated kids who should walk away with thousands of dollars in scholarships, but don't because they don't apply (for them)," she added.

For example, Starkey said, Central Michigan University has a special scholarship for students who live in Charlevoix County, and AAA offers one to students who were crossing guards in elementary school.

Deneen added that many schools will offer money to entice very specific types of students to their institution.

"Say for example they need a harpist at the University of Michigan," she said. "There would be a scholarship for harp players."

Merit scholarships are

usually offered by the university a student is planning to attend or by local third-party groups, such as the Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation and the organizations it represents.

"Our community is very gracious in awarding scholarships for kids all over the area," Deneen said. "The community support is wonderful."

Snow said the Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation gives at least 50 scholarships a year, which they advertise on the Internet, through high schools and in the newspaper.

According to Deneen, non-local third-party scholarships are the exception for most students. There are various scholarship search-families can do, however, if they're interested in looking farther afield.

An Internet search will provide a list of groups that offer money to students meeting a set of qualifications, but both Deneen and Starkey said it takes a lot of searching to find reputable organizations.

"A good rule of thumb is that if the group offering the scholarship asks for money to apply for the scholarship, that's a red flag," Deneen said.

Though it is possible to find scholarships on the Internet, Deneen said that ultimately high schools have some of the best information on reliable sources for students.

"Students seeking scholarships should consult their high school guidance counselor as soon as they get back to school in the fall," she said.

# Parents' extra benefits from volunteerism

BY PAUL R. HUARD  
Copley News Service

Educators say that working as a volunteer at your child's school is a way to make a difference, no matter what the student's age or grade.

Whether working in your own child's classroom or volunteering to help with activities or events, volunteers make a difference every day school is in session. They work one-on-one as reading tutors, help teachers prepare classroom materials, plan special events and help with the "paper chase" in school offices.

"I can never imagine a time when we have more volunteers than we need," said Anne Mitchell, principal of Roosevelt Elementary School in Medford, Ore.

Volunteering also allows parents to see the school environment from the inside, said Mitchell. It's a chance to see your child interact with his or her peers, see teachers in action and understand the educational goals set for schoolchildren, she added.

During a time of personnel cuts and lean budgets in most school districts, volunteers are essential.

Jobs range from chaperoning a special event to daily or weekly help in classrooms, the library, on the playground or in the administrative office. Usually, schools are just as willing to accept volunteers who participate in one special event as parents who make a daily or weekly commitment.

"It's OK to take small bites," said Mitchell. "You're still a volunteer, even if you volunteer once a month or once a year." Most school districts set a

few standards for volunteers. Chief among the requirements are the ability to pass a background investigation and the willingness to take a short training class. But the No. 1 qualification is the willingness to help.

School officials say that parents and grandparents shouldn't worry about being "unqualified." School districts see volunteers as community resources, and are eager for citizens to involve themselves.

Neither is age a disqualifying factor. Many districts actively seek out senior citizens as well as parents with school-age children in an effort to bridge the "generation gap" between students and older people who have a wealth of information and experience to share.

Most school districts have a volunteer coordinator you can call for information about applying to be a volunteer.

Jane Wyen, coordinator of the AppleCorps Volunteer Partnership Programs Office of the Plano Independent School District, Plano, Texas, recommends the following tips for successfully working as a volunteer.

■ Learn the students' names right away and use them often. Be sure that all students know your name.

■ Let students take their time warming up to you. Trying too hard to establish a relationship with them may seem intimidating or may alienate students who don't know how to deal with that kind of "enthusiasm."

Instead, make yourself accessible to them and be kind.

■ Get to know each other by first talking about things students like. Then share something you like with them.

■ Build the student's self-confidence. Praise your students honestly and frequently. Emphasize what the student does well. Talk about the student's strengths and don't criticize a student in front of peers.

■ Respect students' privacy and don't goad them into telling you something they're uncomfortable with. Most of all, listen to them.

■ Earn respect by avoiding the "Do as I say, not as I do" syndrome. Arrive at school on time, follow rules and be a good role model.

■ Be reliable. Students will be disappointed when you are absent. Show you care by calling when you can't go to school when expected.

■ Ask questions that may lead them to the answer instead of telling them the answer.

■ Don't compare one student to another.

■ Give attention to all students. Don't favor one or two students over others.

■ Give the students as much time as they need for them to understand new ideas.

■ Enjoy yourself. Being a volunteer is a great way to feel good about yourself and what you are doing to help a child.

# Many students to lose federal college aid under new formula

BY REBECCA TROUNSON  
Los Angeles Times

U.S. Department of Education budget officials have estimated that 84,000 college students will lose their eligibility for federal financial aid for the 2004-2005 school year under a new formula the department is using to determine a student's financial need.

The Congressional Research Service, the research arm of Congress, included the figure in a recent report on the initial impact of the changes made by the department in May to the complex federal formula used to figure a student's need.

The report also said the changes would reduce the Pell Grant program, the nation's primary vehicle for awarding scholarships to low-income students, by \$270 million for 2004-2005.

Besides those dropped from the program, hundreds of thousands of students who qualify for grants may find their awards reduced, financial aid experts said.

Democratic lawmakers, who requested the analysis, have criticized the new formula, saying it is unfair to students because it relies on

outdated figures that do not reflect the nation's slumping economy.

"This is going to exclude a lot of young people who otherwise would qualify for the opportunity to get a college education," said Rep. George Miller, D-Calif., the ranking Democrat on the House Committee on Education and the Workforce. "That's just unfair and wrong."

Miller, Sen. Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., and other members of Congress have introduced legislation in an attempt to study the impact further or stop the changes entirely.

Most financial aid — whether federal, state or from higher education institutions — relies on a single formula that calculates how much money families can contribute to their child's education.

Adjustments occur in the formula every year but this year the department sparked an outcry by lowering the amount families can deduct in state and local taxes, making their discretionary incomes appear larger, at least on paper. The problem, financial aid experts said, was that the tax figures used to make the

adjustment were from 2000, before many states raised their taxes, and thus do not reflect current realities.

Dan Langan, a spokesman for the Education Department, said the department is required by law to update the tax tables used in the calculation and is required to use the latest data available from the government, in this case 2000.

Langan did not dispute the report's figures. But he also said that the government's spending on education is continuing to rise, with \$11 billion being spent on the Pell Grant program in the current year, and the Bush

administration proposing \$12.7 billion for 2004-2005.

Although some students under the new formula will no longer qualify because they are deemed too well-off, the department projects that will be more than offset by the growing number of low-income students applying for college.

But financial aid experts also said the congressional report does not include the full impact of the changes in the aid formula. They say that the formula used for the Pell Grant often is the basis for calculating state and university aid as well.

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