


 Paying for school just got easier

How to Help Students Find and Win Private Scholarships

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About the Speaker


- Mark Kantrowitz is publisher of Fastweb.com, the largest free scholarship matching service
- Mark is a member of the board of directors of the National Scholarship Providers Association
- Mark is a nationally-recognized expert on student financial aid and was quoted in more than 1,000 different newspaper and magazine articles in the last 12 months
- Mark is the author of the bestselling book *Secrets to Winning a Scholarship*, available on Amazon.com in Kindle and paperback formats

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Why Help Students Win Scholarships?  Paying for school just got easier


- Private scholarships help students succeed in college by reducing their loan and work burden
- When students win prestigious national scholarships, it enhances the school's reputation
- Private scholarships can supplement a college's own financial aid funds, stretching limited institutional funds further
- Scholarship winners are more likely to graduate
- Students who graduate with no debt are twice as likely to go on to graduate school

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How to Increase Number of Applicants  Paying for school just got easier


- Ask faculty/staff/parents to encourage individual students to apply for specific scholarships
 - The encouragement must be personal, one-on-one and not part of a group announcement
 - Provide faculty with a list of scholarships that are relevant to their field of expertise and department
- Track statistics on who has won scholarships and publicize lists of winners of prestigious awards through posters and other promotions
 - This will create a culture of winning, where students are expected to enter and take pride in the school

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Work with Your Student Newspaper  Paying for school just got easier

- Provide the student newspaper with a monthly list of the most prestigious, most generous and most unusual scholarships with upcoming deadlines
- Write an advice column to provide tips for winning scholarships, profiles of past winners
- Send a press release to the newspaper whenever a student wins a major scholarship
- If newspaper isn't interested, create your own scholarships newsletter

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Motivate Students to Apply for Awards  Paying for school just got easier

- Create a "Winner's Circle" scholarship available only to students from your school who have applied for scholarships
- Colleges can adopt a more favorable outside scholarship policy that ensures that the students benefit financially from winning a scholarship
 - Private scholarships first fill unmet net (gap)
 - Private scholarships reduce loan and work burden before reducing institutional need-based grants
 - Provide other benefits to winners, such as first choice of dormitory, ability to work with prestigious faculty

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Scholarship Outreach Tips



- Post local and important scholarships to a bulletin board outside your office
- Create a scholarships web site to list internal and external scholarships, FAQs, resources
- Colleges should perform outreach to students at local "feeder" schools to encourage students to consider applying for scholarships earlier (www.finaid.org/age13)
 - Hold a financial aid night
- Explain benefits of winning a scholarship



Increase the Number of Matches



- To win more scholarships, increase the number of applications
 - It's a bit of a numbers game, random choice of winner
 - Even among the most talented students, winning involves a combination of skill and luck
 - Students who win many awards have many more rejections than wins; perseverance matters
- Search offline in addition to online
 - Online searches are targeted, offline more exploratory
 - Scholarship listing books in the library (< 2 years old)
 - Coupon section of the Sunday newspaper



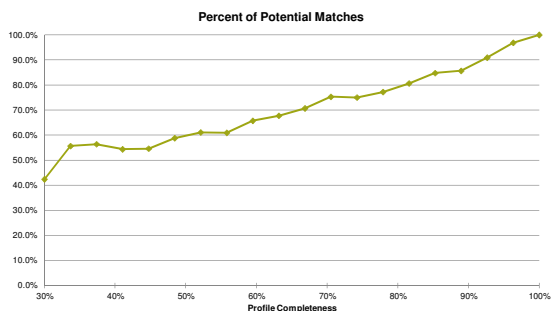
Use Scholarship Sites Effectively



- Encourage students to answer all of the optional questions in the scholarship matching service's personal background profile
 - Students who answer all of the optional questions match about twice as many scholarships as students who answer only the required questions, on average
 - The optional questions are there to trigger the inclusion of specific awards in the search results.
- Ask your IT staff to whitelist the award and deadline notification email messages
- Suggest students search 2 or more award sites



Profile Completeness Matters



How to Increase Chances of Winning



- Conduct workshops on a variety of topics
- Have staff read the essays and provide individual feedback and suggestions
- Enlist older winners to mentor younger students
- Ask scholarship provider for reviewer comments
 - Students who apply again after addressing the comments are much more likely to win the award
- Google student names for inappropriate material
- Provide wisdom on what works and what doesn't
- Remind students of upcoming deadlines



Workshop Ideas



- How to search for scholarships online and offline
- Advice on applying for scholarships
- Writing workshops to help students write better essays and applications (e.g., writing the personal statement)
- Practice interviewing skills
- Workshops on specific scholarship programs
- How to keep a scholarship once won
- Importance of writing thank you letters
- Understanding the taxability of scholarships



Advise Students on Their Essays



- Do not write the essay for the student
 - Proofreading for spelling and grammar and reviewing organization and flow is ok, rewriting the essay is not
- Did the essay follow the instructions and answer the application question(s)?
- Has the essay been tailored to sponsor's goals?
- What does the essay tell the reader about the student, the student's impact on others?
- Is the essay interesting or boring? Does it tell a story with specific examples and anecdotes?



Help Students Ace Interviews



- Conduct mock interviews to help them practice
 - Practice, practice, practice, practice, practice
- Videotape the mock interview and review the recording with the student afterward, giving specific tips for improvement
- Teach students proper business attire and etiquette
- Remind students after the interview to send a thank you note to the interviewer



Tips on Writing Recommendations



- If you can't write an enthusiastic letter, suggest that the student seek a letter from someone else
- Review the selection criteria before writing the letter and tailor the letter to the award program
- Highlight specific examples, accomplishments and anecdotes to make candidate interesting
- Discuss what makes the candidate memorable, impressive, unusual, outstanding, superior
- Provide info/insights not available elsewhere
- Write at least a full page, possibly longer



Useful Resources



- Quick Reference Guide on Winning a Scholarship
www.finaid.org/scholarships/WinningaScholarship.pdf
- PowerPoint Presentation for Secrets to Winning a Scholarship
www.finaid.org/questions/20110419scholarshipsecrets.ppt
- PowerPoint Presentation on Top Ten Myths about Scholarships
www.finaid.org/scholarships/20110923scholarshipmyths.ppt
- Fastweb article about Top Ten Myths about Scholarships
www.fastweb.com/financial-aid/articles/3291-top-ten-myths-about-scholarships

