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Scholarship & College Coaching

From the Organization that Helped Students  
Win Over **\$3.5 Million in Scholarships**

# 5 SCHOLARSHIP SETBACKS

That Will Cost You Thousands of Dollars  
on Your Child's College Education



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# 5 Scholarship Setbacks

## That Will Cost You Thousands of Dollars on Your Child's College Education

I, probably, graduated college before your child was born and I can remember having conversations with my parents about how we would pay for college. I won some scholarships, chose to live at home and commuted to a local university, and still worked during college for other needs.

College was an investment, but not the huge expense it is today. The average student attending a 4-year public college or university can expect to be charged about \$25,000 per year – or \$100,000+ to earn a bachelor's degree.

With college costs at the highest levels we've ever seen, more and more students are scrambling for scholarships. As much as they know they need to secure scholarships to pay for college, there are five really big reasons why students aren't scoring as big as they can.

At Capture Greatness, we help students and families eliminate these setbacks to find real scholarship success. To date, we've helped students win over \$3.5Million in Scholarships. My hope is that this guide brings you and your child scholarship success, too.

Melissa Rowe, M.Ed.  
Founder, Capture Greatness

# Setback #1:

## Starting Too Late

The first mistake that most students and their parents make is getting started late on the scholarship process. Many students are waiting until their senior year of high school, after they have applied to college, to focus on scholarships. This is simply too late to make a real and significant impact on the amount of money your child will be able to secure to fund their college education.

The truth is, if your household income and savings won't allow you to pay at least ten thousand dollars, a year, or more towards your child's college education, you should start down the scholarship path even before your child starts applying to colleges. I mean a long time before, like in 9th grade.

The key to the students who win big in scholarships is that they had a scholarship focus much earlier than other students. It is possible to send your child to college for next to nothing, but the preparation starts way before their senior year of high school.

Bringing in major scholarship money is dependent on a number of factors:

- Your Child's Grade Point Average & Standardized Test Scores
- The types of Colleges your Child wants to Attend
- Their Scholarship Portfolio & Essays
- Your Household Income

While it would be great if all deserving students got scholarships because they want to attend college, that's not the case. Scholarship attainment is a competitive process and preparation for the best results starts when your child enters high school.

Two of the most important factors to scholarship eligibility is your child's Grade Point Average (GPA) and Standardized Test Scores. These numbers don't happen by chance, during their senior year of high school. They both are produced, largely in part, by how much effort your child puts into studying and execution.

# Setback #1:

## Starting Too Late

So often a high school senior will have a very impressive GPA and low standardized test scores. While the SAT and ACT aren't true indicators of how well your child will do in college, they are a gatekeeper to the biggest pot of scholarship money – merit-scholarships.

Most merit-scholarships are awarded directly through the college or university your child wants to attend. Often, the only thing they have to do to be considered for these merit scholarships is apply to the school. The college will then review every application and if the student has a GPA and Standardized Test Score combination that meets their merit-aid criteria, they will offer this scholarship along with their acceptance letter.

For most colleges and universities, to be considered for any type of merit-scholarship, students will need to have at least a 3.0 GPA and score 1,000 or higher on the SAT. These numbers are the baseline and the requirements can go much higher for more selective colleges and for more lucrative private scholarships.

So, as a parent, you want your child to know from the moment they enter high school that these two numbers are important and can determine how much FREE money they get to attend college. It's worth staying up late to complete assignments and seeking tutoring for standardized tests. Students with strong GPA / Standardized Test Score combinations are awarded the most scholarships and ultimately pay less for their college educations.

# Setback #2:

## Not Scheduling Time

Have you ever heard the saying, If it's not scheduled it won't get done?

This is absolutely true when it comes to your child's scholarship success. One of the biggest reasons so many Americans are in massive student loan debt is the mere fact that scholarship attainment was not prioritized and scheduled into their week.

Think about it, would you expect your child to make gains in an academic subject if they weren't assigned to a class on that subject? Would you expect to advance at work if you never had to dedicate time to your job? The answer is *NO*.

We don't excel at things that we don't devote sufficient time to execute on.

I want you to think about scholarship success like a sport. There is the game/event and there is practice/preparation. When you are setting a scholarship strategy for your child, it's important to schedule prep time and execution time. They don't both happen at the same time.

The first thing you want to do is identify the best times, in a typical week, for your child to devote to scholarship success. I suggest you designate a 90 minute or two-hour block of time, at least once a week. You should increase this as scholarship deadlines approach, that's when you will shift from "practice" to the "game."

To find the most success, you'll want to designate scholarship search time and scholarship application time. It's important that you divvy up your child's scholarship time into, at least, two components because searching for scholarships is a much different task than writing for scholarships.

Additionally, early on, in their high school career they will primarily be searching for scholarships that they will be eligible for in the latter half of high school. By the time they get to senior year, most of their time should be spent applying to the scholarships they found in the beginning of their high school career.

# Setback #2:

## Not Scheduling Time

\*If you are reading this and your child is already in their senior year of high school, don't fret. You can put this information into action today and end the year strong. Plus, this exact method works for attaining scholarships as a college student. Put this into practice and have your child search for scholarships they are eligible for now, as a high school senior and later as a college student.

Another reason, you want to start the search process early is that it sets the bar high for their performance in school and on standardized tests. If your child knows that 100 points on the SAT is standing between them and \$10,000, it's easier to find the motivation to study for the test through Khan Academy or a SAT prep class.

Personally, I think that students should aim to be scholarship-ready versus college-ready. All of the most lucrative scholarships have higher standards for eligibility than 90% of colleges or universities, in the country. If you prepare your child for scholarship success, getting into the best colleges will be easy.

# Setback #3:

## A Student - Not A Scholar

A lot of parents think that scholarships are awarded to good students. This is a big mistake. There are hundreds of thousands of “good students” in student debt up to their ears because they were not awarded the scholarship offers they expected.

Reality is, scholarships are for scholars, not good students.

What’s the difference?

A good student does what is expected of them to be successful in school. A scholar goes beyond those expectations and builds a student resume that is impressive. Scholars take advance classes in high school, participate in extra-curricular activities, takes on leadership roles and most certainly gives back to their community, through service.

### ***Advance Classes***

To avoid this mistake, you want to find out from your child’s school the range of classes that are offered. Most high schools will offer more rigorous classes, such as honors, Advance Placement (AP), or dual enrollment. It’s common that students will have to request these classes to be put on their roster, so you should know the offerings in advance to help your child choose the best classes.

### ***Leadership***

For many scholarships and selective colleges, they want to see leadership roles on your child’s resume. It’s not enough to simply participate in extra-curricular activities, your child should also take on a leadership role in one or two areas. It’s important to note that leadership can vary and can happen in different spaces. Your child can be a leader in school, at a community organization, or even on their own through an initiative they start.

# Setback #3:

## A Student - Not A Scholar

### ***Community Service***

There is absolutely no way around it. If you want your child to qualify for the highest amount of scholarships they will need a solid track record of serving their community. Scholarship panels are made up of people who value helping others (that's why they are raising money or giving away their money to help students pursue college). One criteria that many independent scholarship committees have is that eligible students must have proof of community service. Scholarship panels want to invest in students who they know will make an impact in their communities. There's no better way to prove that than based on what they've done in the past.



# Setback #4:

## Searching in the Wrong Places

Recently, I overheard a 12th grade student telling her peers that she stopped applying for scholarships because it was a waste of time. She had applied to “a lot” of them and won none of them. I asked her what type of scholarships she was finding and applying for? She had found a bunch of “no-essay required scholarships” online and signed up for every one she could find.

There is no wonder this young lady didn't have any success. Most “no-essay” scholarships that are floating around online aren't real scholarship opportunities. They are a way for the website to get a student's name and email address so that they can send them information in the future. The easy scholarships are like the car giveaways in the middle of a mall. I know I've never won one of those cars . . . have you?

While you might have suspected that the easy, enter-to-win scholarships wouldn't get a student much success, you might be surprised to know that most students don't do much better with large scholarship search engines, either. Websites like Fastweb, Chegg, and Scholarships.com are often promoted to students looking for scholarship dollars, but the results they yield are slim for a few reasons:

1. Most large scholarship databases are looking for awards that appeal to the largest segment of students. That's why many of the scholarships on these sites are for students who live in any state in the US and Puerto Rico.
2. Many of the scholarships promoted on these sites don't award enough scholarships to be viable options. While any US citizen might be eligible, there are 20,000 students all competing for one scholarship. Those are tough odds to beat.
3. They use internet search bots to find and compile scholarships online. Which means that if an organization doesn't have a high traffic website and the right key words they might not have their scholarship opportunities picked up by these bots.

# Setback #4:

## Searching in the Wrong Places

Instead of relying on these large scholarship databases, solely, it's best to diversify your search. You want to start with the scholarship sources that your child is most likely to win. For any student, the scholarship search should start with their high school and expand outwards, from places closest to home/home life to local organizations, foundations, and companies.

For instance, if your family belongs to a religious institution, look there. Check with your bank and credit unions, your employer and child's place of employment, then move on to your city's civic organizations and regional businesses. Starting closer to home will get you more scholarship results that your child has a good chance of winning because they will have less competition.

# Setback #5:

## Writing Weak Essays

Most scholarships require students to write an essay, some will even require students to answer multiple scholarship prompts. To win the Gates Millennium Scholarship, students were required to write eight distinct essays!

The essay serves as a way for the scholarship panel to get to know the applicants more deeply than what's presented in their application materials. It's impossible for scholarship committees to interview every student who applies, so to make an informed decision about who to select as a winner, they require all applicants to write on the same topic(s).

Scholarship essays hold a lot of weight. Most scholarship winners are selected based on their essay. Think about it – scholarships are super competitive because everyone applying already meets the other criteria: GPA, Test Scores, Leadership / Service etc. There's only one thing left to distinguish them from every other applicant - the essay.

A common mistake that students make when writing these essays is answering the prompt within infusing their own personal experiences into their essays. Scholarship essays should tell stories. The scholarship essay is not a research paper and therefore should not be treated as such. Your child should identify stories, of their personal experiences that relate to the scholarship prompt and incorporate their stories into their essay to help the panel learn more deeply about what they've experienced, in relation to the scholarship prompt.

A good scholarship essays should capture the reader's attention and end with a clear vision who the student will be in the future. Most students cut themselves short because they only talk about what they accomplished in the past. Remember, scholarship committees are investing in who your child is becoming and the difference they will make in the world or their communities. To end an essay with what the student has already accomplished doesn't allow the panel to "see" how investing in that student will bring a greater return on their investment.

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# Scholarship Success Made Simple

Capture Greatness is a non-profit organization dedicated to helping students get to and through college with no-to-very-low student debt. Our approach is multifaceted; we work directly with students to teach them how to write powerful scholarship essays and provide resources and seminars for parents.

Our mission is to make more students competitive college candidates so that a family's income does not hinder a student's educational outcome.

Based on our strategies and coaching we've helped students gain admission into some of the most selective colleges and universities in the country and four of our students are Gates Millennium Scholars, a scholarship that pays from their freshman year of college all the way through a Ph.D., Medical or Law School.

In total, our students have secured over \$3.5Million in Scholarships.

Let us help your child reach scholarship success, too.

[CaptureGreatness.org](http://CaptureGreatness.org)