

Scholarship Process for Seniors at Charlotte High School

At the beginning of the year, seniors should begin their search for scholarship money if they have a need for some financial assistance to attend post-secondary programs at a college, a university, or a technical center. Scholarships most often WILL NOT cover the cost for an ENTIRE post-secondary degree or program; they are merely SUPPLEMENTS which will help with book or tuition costs.

Federal financial aid is also available for families with the greatest need; this application for federal aid cannot be completed until **AFTER JANUARY 1 in the senior year** at www.fafsa.ed.gov. Parents are advised to complete their income taxes for the spring of their student's senior year BEFORE attempting to complete the FAFSA.

Please BEWARE! Seniors should never PAY for scholarship searches! Any requests for money for such searches with the promise of scholarship money are scams! All information that is available in the area of scholarships can be found for FREE. Read on for tips on how to search!

BRIGHT FUTURES SCHOLARSHIPS

How does a senior qualify for the FLORIDA BRIGHT FUTURES SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM?

The Bright Futures scholarship is one of the best scholarships that students can earn because it covers a portion of tuition charges for 2-4 years of post-secondary programs in the state of Florida.

Students, from the beginning of freshman year in high school, are encouraged to keep their academic grades high in order to qualify for Florida **Bright Futures** scholarships if they plan to attend a college, university, or tech center in the state of Florida. The state uses lottery money to fund these academic scholarships which are currently based upon academic grade point average (GPA) as calculated by the state computer system, ACT/SAT test scores, and volunteer hours.

At the conclusion of 8 semesters of high school, students earning these scholarships can supplement their TUITION COSTS for college or a tech center. The state legislature controls the REQUIREMENTS for these scholarships and can change the requirements at will. Each student who aspires to one of these awards must keep track of the possible changing requirements at <http://www.floridastudentfinancialaid.org/SSFAD/bf/>. There are also requirements to continue these scholarships each year as students progress through their post-secondary programs.

How to apply for Bright Futures

The CHS guidance staff takes all seniors to the Career Lab to fill out the "Florida Financial Aid Application" when it becomes available online at the beginning of December. It is each student's responsibility to make sure he/she earns the appropriate college entrance test scores and turns in the required number of volunteer hours by the end of senior year in order to be eligible.

Parents and students must complete the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid), www.fafsa.ed.gov, as a requirement to receive Bright Futures money even if they will not qualify for any additional federal aid from the program.

Additional information about Bright Futures can be found at www.flvc.org.

NOTE: Charlotte County sends senior transcripts to the state at the end of first semester in the senior year AND in JULY after seniors graduate because qualifying ACT/SAT test scores for seniors are still accepted from the June test dates AFTER graduation in May.

IMPORTANT SCHOLARSHIP INFORMATION FOR SENIORS

WHAT KINDS OF SCHOLARSHIPS EXIST?

- **Depending upon the student and the student’s family, scholarships MIGHT be available for seniors based upon disabilities, ethnicity, state of residence, military service, employer, etc.** Scholarships are awarded based upon achievement, need, or both. Many scholarships have other requirements – they may only be offered to students who live in a certain locale, are interested in a certain major, or who have a certain disability.
- **Scholarships are available from different sources at the national, state, college/university, and local levels.** Most scholarships have different requirements. Students must READ the specifics for each scholarship opportunity and comply with every requirement, e.g. an attached transcript or letters of recommendation or deadline date or requested essay. Many scholarship committees reject applications that are not completed as they request.
- **Students need to aggressively research scholarship opportunities.**
 - Florida Virtual Campus (FLVC) is a state operated site offering students several scholarship websites. Financial Aid information can be found under the Student Services Tab.
 - Some websites ask students to enter specific information about themselves so scholarship opportunities can be sent to them via email, for example:
 1. www.fastweb.com
 2. College Board Scholarship Search found at <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/pay-for-college/scholarships-grants>
 - The local newspaper often advertises scholarships available in the local community. Watch the Charlotte Sun especially during second semester.
 - Each college or university has a Financial Aid tab on its website pertaining to available scholarships and an explanation of the financial aid process. Students need to examine the websites of the schools to which they are applying or have been accepted. Deadlines are important in this process.
 - Parents should inquire at their places of worship and employment or from the organizations in which they participate to see if any scholarships exist for graduating seniors.
 - CHS maintains a “Tarpon Senior Info 2011” page on Facebook for seniors and parents where many scholarship opportunities – local, state, and national - are advertised. (Our apologies! This page was established in 2011 and is maintained for members of EACH senior class!)

- **Students might qualify for a local scholarship based upon their completion of the CHS Local Scholarship Application.** Any senior who wishes to be considered for local scholarships should complete the “CHS Local Scholarship Application” on the CHS website and submit it by January 31 to Ms. Denise Jordan-Sansone in the Career Center.

❖ **NOTE:** Completion of this application places the senior in competition for local scholarships. Completion does **NOT guarantee** that the student will be awarded local scholarship money.

The information provided on this 3-page application is compiled into a database indicating the senior’s reported need for financial aid, choice of post-secondary schools, choice of major, GPA, and extra-curricular as well as volunteer activities. Students are requested to write two paragraphs: the first one indicates their career interest, the second indicates why a scholarship is requested. Students must also attach a high school resume indicating participation in school / community activities, community service, and/or work experience.

HOW DO LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS AND LOCAL INDIVIDUALS AWARD SCHOLARSHIPS?

Charlotte High School has long enjoyed strong support from its alumni, local civic groups, the business community, and individual community supporters in the area of scholarship awards. Many local groups and individuals in Charlotte County offer scholarships to graduating seniors each year.

During **second semester**, the CHS Guidance Department acts as a liaison between these local groups/individuals and members of the senior class who have indicated an interest in pursuing scholarship opportunities by filling out the “CHS Local Scholarship Application.”

An inquiry is sent from the guidance department in January asking these local contributors if they wish to continue their participation in this program. At that time, they are asked to provide information about how they desire their scholarship recipient(s) to be chosen. Here are the many different ways that awards are distributed:

1. The scholarship committees of some local community groups provide CHS with a specific set of criteria and request the “CHS Local Scholarship Applications” of those seniors who **MEET** the criteria. Once they receive copies of those applications, they make their selection(s). If they request interviews with some of the candidates, CHS arranges those appointments. After they have made their selection(s), the local groups report their scholarship recipients to the CHS Guidance Dept.
2. Some local individuals who wish to present scholarships of their own or from their businesses provide CHS with a specific set of criteria and request the “CHS Local Scholarship Applications” of those seniors who **MEET** the criteria. When they receive copies of those applications, they make their selection(s). If they request interviews with some of the candidates, CHS sets up those appointments. They report their scholarship recipients to the CHS Guidance Dept.

3. Some community organizations provide their OWN scholarship application to CHS Guidance. Those scholarships are then advertised, and interested seniors must obtain a hard copy of the application from the Guidance Office. Seniors are responsible for meeting all deadlines and returning the completed applications to the appropriate organization. Once the organization's scholarship committee makes its determination, the recipient's name is reported to the CHS Guidance Dept.
4. Some community individuals who wish to present a scholarship choose a senior known to them or their family. They notify the CHS Guidance Office of their selections so that the award can be presented at Senior Awards Night.
5. Some organizations/individuals provide CHS with a specific set of criteria and request that the CHS Scholarship Committee select a senior who has completed a Local Scholarship Application and who fits their stated criteria. This committee, appointed by the principal, meets to review any applications of students who meet the criteria, and selections are made.
6. Some organizations provide CHS with names of seniors they wish to consider or interview for scholarship opportunities. CHS contacts these seniors and conveys the appropriate information to them so that they can pursue the scholarship if they choose.
7. The athletic department and several CHS organizations/clubs present awards and/or scholarships to CHS athletes or club members. The coaches / sponsors provide the CHS Guidance Dept. with the names of their recipients for announcement at Senior Awards Night.

WHO IS RECOGNIZED AT SENIOR AWARDS NIGHT IN MAY?

Seniors receive an invitation to Senior Awards Night if they have earned recognition from a local organization, business, or individual who is sponsoring a scholarship or an award; if they have signed up to join the Armed Services; and, if they are receiving recognition as an athlete or a member of a CHS Club or other organization. Seniors who have earned state or national recognition from an organization are recognized as well. Many local organizations do not reveal their selections until that evening so attendance by invited seniors is extremely important!

Community members participate in the evening as award presenters in order to congratulate and recognize the accomplishments of many members of the senior class. Parents, family, and friends of the award recipients are invited to join with all invited class members to share in the evening.