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Keep Your Scholarship

-- by *Kay Peterson, Ph.D.*

Winning scholarships is hard work, but the work doesn't end after the check is cut. Find out about the policies surrounding your award so you can keep your scholarship.

Renewable Scholarships

The first question you need to ask is whether or not your scholarship is renewable. Renewable awards can be extended beyond the initial award year—in some cases, for your entire college career.

"The bottom line is: renewable usually means that you still need to demonstrate or prove that you are a viable candidate from year to year," explains Angela Deaver Campbell, director of UCLA's Scholarship Resource Center. If your scholarship is renewable, find out about all the policies and procedures for renewal. Be sure to ask:

- How often is scholarship eligibility reviewed? When does the review occur?
- Do you need to reapply to ensure renewal? How often? What forms do you need to submit?

General Eligibility Requirements

Renewable or not, your scholarship may carry ongoing eligibility requirements. If you fail to fulfill these requirements, you may lose funding. Typical requirements include:

- Designated expenditures. What does your scholarship cover? Tuition? On-campus room and board? General living expenses? School-related supplies?
- GPA. You may need to maintain a minimum GPA in order to remain eligible (often, the same GPA that won you the scholarship). Find out when your GPA will be reviewed and whether you will need to supply transcripts.

- Satisfactory academic progress. You may also be required to meet standards for academic progress, including completion of general education requirements or the degree within a designated time frame.
- Full-time status. Scholarships frequently require a minimum level of enrollment. If you fall below the minimum or fail to enroll, you may lose the award. Check with your school for its definition of "full-time." You should also find out what happens if you drop a course (and drop below full-time status for a term). Will you lose the award, or will you be granted a grace period to make up the units?
- Time off from school. What happens if you take time off in order to work, study abroad or attend to personal responsibilities? Will your scholarship be waiting for you when you return? Can the scholarship be applied to study abroad?
- Study within a designated field of study. Can you lose the award if you change majors?
- College choice. Some awards apply only to enrollment at a particular college. Can your award be moved if you enroll at a different school or transfer?
- Service requirements. Certain awards require a set number of community service hours. Find out how to document and report your service.
- Progress reports. Some providers require periodic reports on your progress. Regardless of the requirements, you should always write a progress report and thank-you note. "End of the year updates (via letter) are a nice touch and demonstrate sincere appreciation and respect for donors," Campbell suggests. "Donors love to know about your progress; it's further confirmation that they selected the right candidate for the award."
- Military service. ROTC funding and scholarships for military academies require service after graduation as well as military training during college.
- Participation in sports. Athletic scholarships often require participation in sports. Anything that impedes your participation (injury, unsatisfactory academic performance, etc.) may put your funding in jeopardy.

Eligibility Reinstatement

To avoid disaster—and to help you get a "leg up" if you lose your award—ask about your scholarship's reinstatement policies. Under what circumstances can you get the

scholarship back after losing eligibility? Is there a probationary period prior to losing it? What procedures do you need to follow?

Plan ahead, and get your provider's/school's renewal and eligibility policies in writing in advance. Keep records on these policies, as well as any conversations you have with staff members regarding eligibility issues. A scholarship worth winning is worth keeping!