

Top 10 Hamilton Southeastern Education Foundation Scholarship Tips

1. **Never miss a deadline.** No exceptions. Don't call or write if you do. Scholarships applications are typically open for weeks or months. If your computer crashes in the 3 minutes before the deadline, the selection committee likely will not have any empathy and to protect the integrity of their process for all students they rarely, if ever, make exception. If you do miss it, chalk it up to a lesson learned and move on.
2. Research what is available. Visit www.hsefoundation.org to view all scholarships involved with the Uniform Application for Community Scholarships. Visit your guidance office for more details. Make sure you follow HSE Foundation on **Facebook** and **Twitter** for ongoing or last-minute scholarship opportunities! Your parents or guardians might want to follow HSEF too.
3. Apply for several applications – but don't just **chase dollars**. If you don't fit the eligibility requirement, completing the application is not a good use of your time.
4. **Stand Out!** Spend time with your application. In many cases selection committees are reading hundreds of applications. What makes you different from the others? And **sell yourself!** If you have a resume, make sure all extra curriculars, work history, volunteer experience, awards listed are also included in your application. Don't have a formal employment history, but have been babysitting since you were 12? Add it to the application.
5. **Focus on the essay.** The essay normally is the section that wins the award. This is your chance to show both your personality and your communication skills. If appropriate, show how you align with the group or scholarship goals. You could even look into the awarding organization to learn about their values. Essays need to be as short and concise as possible while still covering the prompt. You've been told to proofread for years, in this case it could cost you thousands of dollars. Recycling past essays is okay and can be a time saver, but for best results try to customize each response.
6. **Optional may mean extra credit.** Many scholarships have a scoring matrix or rubric. While not answering an optional question won't "hurt" your application, you may be able to pick up a couple "bonus" points by going the extra mile. Similarly, if a video/photo submission is allowed, try to use that format.
7. **Choose references wisely.** A lukewarm reference letter will do you more harm than good. Select someone that knows you well and can give specific examples of why you are the perfect fit for the scholarship. Make sure to notify the reference and **follow up regarding deadline**. It is your responsibility to follow up on the status of your reference letters. Additionally, reference letters will likely not be ready if you make the request to your reference too soon before the application deadline.
8. Competition pools are typically less for scholarships **under \$2,000** and any that require an **essay**.
9. Many applications are now done through portals. If you want a copy of your application, consider writing your answers in word and then copying and pasting into the platform.
10. Complete the applications **yourself**.