Tips for Dollars for Scholars First-time Applicants

Creating Your Account

After you complete the first step of this process, the DFS system will send you an email with additional instructions. If you do not receive this email shortly after creating your account, check your spam/junk mail filter. This e-mail, and others sent through the DFS system, sometimes get flagged as spam. Check these filters at least weekly.

As you go through the application, please note that double starred items are required, single starred are optional.

Eligibility Questions

These questions make sure that students align with the correct DFS affiliate and scholarship programs (for example, keeps students from TX from being in the scholarship pool for a DFS chapter in NJ). Please be careful answering these questions. They may be as basic as state, county, and school district – or ask what your career goals are.

If the DFS system tells you there are no scholarships you can apply to, or you get to the end and have no scholarship matches, the first thing you should do is go back and check these questions.

'Schools' page

Please list your college choices in order of priority

Level of study – if you'll be in college for the first time, this should be associate degree, bachelor's degree, trade or technical study. Please do not list graduate or professional school.

Graduation Date – Please project out based on the program you'll be in the next year. For an associate's degree, that could be 5/2023; for a bachelor's 5/2025; for a 1 year program 5/2022.

Degree program – please list the first degree you'll receive, even if you expect to earn multiple degrees.

College start date – chances are you don't know this yet. Here are dates you can use: Fall Start – 9/1/2021; Spring Start – 1/15/2022. This item can be updated later if need be.

College ID # Question

Please ignore this question.

GPA Screen

You'll need to express your GPA in a college-type 4.00 GPA scale. DFS provides a chart to help you with this. Where you are asked to list the GPA and scale, please be sure both are listed in 4.00 format, for example 3.50 for GPA and 4.00 for scale.

Transcript/Recommendation Requests

If you are going to do half your application and come back to it at a later date, this is a good screen to complete before stopping. Once you list the school counselor and recommender contact info, the DFS system will send an email to those persons with instructions. Getting to this point before stopping allows those processes to start, even as you take a break before finishing up the application.

Activities

Please list your in-school and out-of-school activities during grades 9-12.

Work

Please list both your formal (e.g. McDonalds) and informal (e.g. babysitting) work. Also, if your family has a family farm or business and you contribute your time to this please list that, even if you are unpaid.

EFC

If your parents do not have this information on hand, they can use an online estimator. You can find a good one at finaid.org. Later, when they've filed the FAFSA and have an exact figure, they can update this.

If your EFC is zero, please enter a zero, rather than leave the item blank.

Essays

300 words is 2/3 of a page, single spaced, in a 12-point font.

Scholarships Page

If you are 100% complete and do the search for scholarships function and do not match to an award, go back and check your eligibility questions, and make sure you have done all required essays. If still no match, contact your local DFS coordinator.

Above the box listing your scholarship possibilities you'll see a button that says Verify Eligibility. Please click on this as it may bring up more eligibility questions.

Note that if you make changes to your application you may need to do the search for scholarships function again to have those changes considered in the screening for scholarships (e.g. add EFC, or college major).

Nov. 2020