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[What is Whatcom Dollars for Scholars?](#)

Whatcom Dollars for Scholars (WDFS) is a nonprofit program that provides scholarships to seniors who are graduating from any Whatcom County High School. The scholarships can be used for secondary education at any accredited university, college or technical school. Funds for the scholarships come from a variety of places: local service clubs, local businesses, and caring community members. Some of the scholarship money comes from endowment funds that were set up to ensure that we could provide scholarships for years to come. WDFS is a program of Whatcom Community Foundation (www.whatcomcf.org) and is also affiliated with Scholarship America (www.scholarshipamerica.org.)

[Who can apply for scholarships with WDFS?](#)

Eligible applicants are graduating seniors in Whatcom County who are planning to attend an accredited secondary institution. The bulk of our scholarship offerings are for Bellingham and Ferndale School District, but we do offer scholarships to students graduating from other area high schools including private, parochial and home-school programs.

[What is the average award size?](#)

Most of our scholarships are \$1,000 awards. However, we also award larger, renewable scholarships. Our largest scholarship is \$10,000.

[What percentage of applicants receive scholarships?](#)

On average, 33% of students that apply receive a scholarship.

[Are all the scholarships need-based?](#)

None of our scholarships are awarded based solely on need. Our awards committee considers several different aspects of a student's application for each of our scholarships. Our scholarship offerings change every year because the individual scholarship criteria depend greatly on the will of the donors who participate. In 2019, 61% of our scholarships considered need and the remaining 39% were solely merit-based or activity/interest based.

Can the scholarship be used at any school?

Scholarships from WDFS can be used at any nationally accredited school providing secondary education, unless the individual scholarship criteria places a restriction on use for a particular school.

Does everyone who applies get a scholarship?

No, our scholarship round is competitive. Over the past 8 years, we have averaged an award rate of 33%. The application process is “blind,” meaning applicants are given an ID number and award committee members do not see names.

What attributes and/or experiences are most important and impactful for my scholarship application?

It really depends! Our scholarship program is made up of lots of individual scholarships. Each of these scholarships have a different donor who has an interest in supporting a particular type of student. This means our scholarships have lots of different criteria; some consider what you plan to study, some are restricted to a particular high school, some are based on answers to essay questions, and some want you to have participated in a certain sport for example. Our best recommendation is to review the list of available scholarships (generally posted at the end of January on the Students & Parents log in page) and see what scholarships might work for you. Then, be sure to include the relevant information when you are filling out your student profile!

How are recipients selected?

Awards Committee decisions are based on several things. First, the committee must adhere strictly to the criteria of each scholarship. When students fill out the student profile, the information entered is what determines eligibility for each scholarship. Second, the committee carefully reviews the major components of the student application. These components are: Work Experience, Activities, Primary Reference, Scholastic Performance, Scholastic Aptitude, and two essays: Goals and Aspirations, and Unusual Circumstances. Some scholarships may require additional references or essays and those are considered on a case by case basis.

Who is part of the award decision-making process?

The Scoring and Awards Committee members are a cross-section of our community. Many members are either current or former teachers or counselors, or WWU students planning to become teachers. Additionally, we welcome the participation of business leaders and volunteers who are caring members of the community. The awards decision-making process requires a substantial amount of time, and great care is taken to give thorough and kind consideration to the students who apply.

When will I know if I received a scholarship?

Scholarship recipients are notified by email in mid-April. Students who do not receive a scholarship are notified by email around the same time.

I've been awarded a scholarship; how do I access the funds?

Once you have been notified that you are a scholarship recipient, you must log back in to your application (we call it the student profile) and “accept” your scholarship, which means you fill out an online form that is a gift agreement, photo waiver, and is also how you let us know what school you are attending. You must provide confirmation of registration at that school in the form of a student ID#. The scholarship check is mailed directly to the school, typically in mid-August, and the funds are then disbursed to your student account. It is a good idea to let your financial aid counselor at your university or college know, as far in advance as possible, that you are receiving a scholarship from us.

Who can I contact with further questions?

Please feel free to contact Shannon Elmendorf at selmendorf@whatcomcf.org or 360-671-6463 with any of your scholarship questions.

How can I contribute to the program/start a scholarship?

We welcome scholarship contributions both large and small! We would love to talk to you about your giving interests and believe that as your community foundation, Whatcom Community Foundation is uniquely positioned to help you achieve maximum impact with your philanthropic goals. Please call our office at 360-671-6463 to schedule a meeting, email Rachel Myers, Philanthropic Advisor & Program Manager at rachel@whatcomcf.org, or simply check out our website at www.whatcomcf.org for more information.