

Hi!

If you're reading this, you're probably a high school student who's a potential PEF scholarship applicant. Great! This short monologue is for you, and is intended to guide your success in this endeavor. In it we'll give you some insights about PEF and provide some useful hints in writing a winning scholarship application. In addition, we'll give you some brief guidance on choosing a career and an educational institution.

The first thing you should know about the PEF is that ***we want you to succeed***, both as a scholarship applicant and in your future academic career. We're basically a group of people who've been spending their spare time scraping up financial resources for scholarship purposes, and we look at this as an investment in Pasco's young people and our community's future. If you succeed, so will our investment, and we'll have a win-win situation. We're all in this together!

Unfortunately our resources are limited. We have only a finite number of scholarships and the associated dollar amounts are small in relation to total college costs. In recognizing this we hope that our limited contributions will at least provide incentives for pursuing a college education despite the challenges involved.

Your appropriate choice of career and educational institution is important, not only for your long-term success, but also because it will be reflected in the quality of your scholarship application. Obviously there are a lot of personal factors influencing this decision: your career aspirations, your financial situation, your scholastic record, and so forth. ***It really helps to think strategically in making this choice.***

Two things are particularly important for this decision strategy. First, ***look at the job market out there, and think about how saleable you'll be upon emerging from college.*** While lots of college majors lead to rewarding careers, there are plenty of others that lead to dead-ends when you hit the job market. We want you think hard about this and your future "marketability" before plunging in! And speaking of marketability, we know from our own professional experience that employers frequently look at summer job history as an important hiring criterion. College graduates who have worked at summer jobs are generally judged to have greater practical skills, and thus are better hiring risks, than those who have not. We recognize that most of you don't have a choice: You have to work summers to make ends meet. But if you do have that option, work summers. It'll do lots to fill up your tool-box of skills and add significantly to your out-of-college marketability.

The second important strategic consideration is to ***be realistic in the context of your own capabilities and your personal financial situation***. Not everyone has the wherewithal to go to Harvard or become a brain surgeon. For some of us, starting out at CBC may be a great choice. You can always move to a larger institution later, if things work out. On the other hand, don't make the mistake of being too modest, either. Have great expectations; but again, be strategic and realistic when thinking about how you're going to achieve them.

A few things to think about when preparing your application form: First, you should recognize the variety in our portfolio of scholarships. Some scholarships emphasize career paths such as math and science, while others focus on cultural background and/or financial need. A good way to get some perspective on this is to review our previous-year's scholarships and our list of endowments, which are posted on the PEF Web site. You should think about targeting your application accordingly, if it makes sense for your own personal situation.

Second, you should let your application reflect your strategic planning, as discussed above. We're looking for you to be as systematic and as focused as possible in this regard, and to demonstrate this in your application.

Third, you should emphasize your career aspirations, your background, and the strong points of your past high-school and community performance; but you should do so in a concise manner. We discourage extremely lengthy applications. Remember that our proposal panel will be reviewing between 50 and 100 applications. You don't want to make yours so wordy and/or unfocused that their eyes will glaze over!

That's about it. You can download a scholarship application form from the PEF Web site, or you can pick one up from your high school counselor. Due dates change from year to year, but the deadline is typically around mid March.

Here's wishing you lots of success in your college plans. We hope to be hearing from you in the future!