

# Frequently Asked Questions for Scholarship Administrators



## General Information

### **Can the committee award a scholarship to a student attending a for-profit institution?**

NCCF scholarship awards are only issued to not-for-profit institutions and government entities such as public colleges or universities.

### **Can the committee consider a hard copy application that I received?**

Scholarships using NCCF's Universal Scholarships Application may not accept paper or hard-copy applications.

Other scholarships may accept hard-copy applications, but the administrator must maintain a copy of the hard-copy application and all supplemental documents, including transcripts and letters of recommendation. All the documents must be submitted to NCCF to award a scholarship.

### **What is the minimum scholarship award amount?**

The minimum scholarship award amount is \$1,000.

### **Are scholarships sent to the recipients or to the school where they are enrolled?**

All scholarship funds will be sent directly to the recipient's college or university, with payment split equally between the fall and spring semesters.

### **Can the committee award a scholarship to a student that is studying abroad?**

No, NCCF scholarship funds can only be awarded to domestic institutions.

### **May students apply for more than one NCCF scholarship?**

Yes! Scholarships are awarded independently, so students can be awarded more than one scholarship.

### **Do students have to provide an official transcript?**

Graduating high school seniors must provide an official transcript. College students may upload a copy of an official transcript, or an "unofficial" transcript, which can usually be obtained free of charge from the Registrar's Office or by downloading it from the college's website. However, unofficial transcripts are only acceptable if the student's name, school ID number and school name are printed on them.

### **Can non-traditional students apply for NCCF scholarships?**

Yes! While some scholarships are only available to graduating seniors or incoming college freshmen, many scholarships are open to anyone attending college, regardless of age or time off.

### **How is FAFSA (Free Application for Student Aid) changing for the 2024 Season?**

FAFSA stands for “Free Application for Student Aid” and is the form students use to apply for federal student aid. The form collects information that is universally used by financial aid offices and scholarship providers to assess a student’s financial need. Congress passed legislation in 2020 to simplify FAFSA that led to a significant overhaul. The revisions were designed to create a more streamlined process, expand eligibility for federal student aid, and improve the experience for applicants. The [revised FAFSA](#) is being implemented for the first time in 2024.

Generally, changes were made that streamlined the FAFSA application form and improved the process for students. Additionally, the changes expanded federal Pell grant eligibility for students based on family size and federal poverty level.

The most important change that may impact you and the scholarship you administer is the change to the Expected Family Contribution calculation. The “Expected Family Contribution” or EFC has been replaced with [the “Student Aid Index” or SAI](#). The SAI is an evaluation of a family’s financial resources that may be available to help pay for college. The needs analysis formula no longer includes the number of family members in college. The SAI number has a minimum of negative 1500; the lower the score, the greater the financial need the student has. As a reference point, students with an SAI between zero and negative 1500 qualify for the maximum Pell Grant amount.

### **How should we evaluate applicants that have been affected by FAFSA delays?**

On Jan. 31, 2024, FAFSA announced delays in providing Student Aid Index (SAI) information. This means that many students who have completed the FAFSA may not receive their official SAI until March or later and therefore may not be able to include their SAI when completing their scholarships applications. This delay affects students and scholarship providers nationwide.

To address these delays, NCCF has modified its Universal Application to include a required “Financial Statement” question that allows a student to provide a written statement about their financial need. The question gives students an opportunity to share about their family situation in order to give the scholarship selection committee more insight in lieu of an SAI number.

Applicants should not be penalized if they do not provide an SAI.

### **Can I change the deadline for my scholarship?**

[All scholarships using NCCF’s Universal Scholarships Application](#) close on March 15 and cannot be extended or closed early. For scholarships not using the universal application, a

deadline change can be requested by emailing [scholarships@nccommunityfoundation.org](mailto:scholarships@nccommunityfoundation.org). Changing deadlines is not recommended.

### **How do I make a change to my scholarship committee membership?**

If you have submitted your Scholarship Committee Form that named all committee members and need to make a change to your scholarship committee, you must notify us immediately via email at [scholarships@nccommunityfoundation.org](mailto:scholarships@nccommunityfoundation.org). Please provide the name(s) of anyone no longer serving on the committee and any new members added to the committee for NCCF's review and approval.

### **Can donations be made to the scholarship fund I administer to boost this year's scholarship?**

Yes, but contributions intended for the current year's scholarship awards must be sent to NCCF **before the closing date of the scholarship** with a letter specifying that they are "pass-through" donations.

### **How can I find my scholarship's page on the NCCF website?**

Type the exact name of the scholarship in the search bar on the NCCF website to locate your scholarship's page. You can also search for scholarships by county at [nccommunityfoundation.org/scholarships](http://nccommunityfoundation.org/scholarships). Contact us at [scholarships@nccommunityfoundation.org](mailto:scholarships@nccommunityfoundation.org) if changes are needed.

### **Will students still need a scholarship code or access code to apply for scholarships?**

Students will no longer need to use an access code to apply for an NCCF scholarship, including scholarships not on the universal application.

## **About the NCCF Universal Scholarships Application**

### **What is the NCCF Universal Scholarships Application?**

The universal application is an online application form that allows students to apply for multiple North Carolina Community Foundation scholarships using a single application beginning in January 2024. The universal application is being used by more than 130 NCCF scholarships and will provide students with an easier and more efficient scholarship application experience.

### **Why is NCCF moving scholarships to a universal application?**

Previously, students had to research all NCCF scholarships individually to determine the ones for which they may be eligible, potentially missing opportunities. Students had to complete a separate application for each scholarship, including submitting transcripts and letters of recommendation for each.

As a result, many applications were abandoned or incomplete, leading to fewer applicants for scholarships and missed opportunities for students. We anticipate the universal application will lead to an easier and more efficient scholarship application experience for students and their references, an overall increase in scholarship applications, and a more diverse candidate pool.

### **How does the universal application work?**

The universal application improves and simplifies the scholarship research and application process for students. It will match student details with scholarship criteria, alerting students to all scholarships for which they are eligible, relieving them from the burden of researching and applying individually to each scholarship.

With the universal application, students complete one application that looks the same as the application NCCF previously used. However, the universal application will use information submitted on the application (e.g., county of residence, GPA, intended major) to scour scholarship opportunities and present students with additional scholarships for which they qualify, noting those that may have a custom question or supplemental essay.

- If a student is eligible for scholarships with no supplemental questions, their application will automatically be submitted into the pool for those scholarships.
- If a scholarship requires supplemental questions, the student will have the opportunity to submit those.

### **What are the benefits of the universal application?**

We anticipate use of the universal application will increase applications to NCCF scholarships that have historically experienced low application volume and/or have very specific criteria. The universal application may also lead to an overall increase in scholarship awards. In addition, the management and administration process will be streamlined for students, NCCF staff and scholarship administrators.

The universal application also makes it easier for guidance counselors, teachers and others submitting transcripts and letters of recommendation. They upload one letter per student and the system then applies those documents to all scholarships for which the student has applied.

### **The scholarship that I administer has unique criteria and questions. Are those questions included in the universal application?**

Yes, the universal application is a single application that allows for unique criteria to be included. After a student completes the general questions in the application, it matches them to a variety of opportunities they are eligible for, and they answer supplemental questions that are specific to individual scholarships.

**Will my scholarship receive more applications due to the universal scholarship?**

Some scholarships may receive more applications, which may result in additional review for administrators. Some scholarships may receive fewer, but better aligned, applications because the universal application will filter in only those students who qualify; this will reduce the time needed to cull applications.

**If my scholarship is using the universal application, can I extend my scholarship deadline?**

No, all scholarships using the universal application have a deadline of March 15 and application deadlines will no longer be extended. However, because the universal application will improve the application process and is expected to lead to an increased pool of applicants or stronger pool of applicants, we do not anticipate there will be a need to extend deadlines.

**Do I have to change the time of year that my committee meets?**

There will be one deadline for all scholarship applications using the universal application. However, administrators can schedule scholarship committee meetings based on convenience and committee availability.

**Can I use the NCCF Scholarships Portal to view scholarship applications?**

Yes, you can use the portal to view and download applications only. You cannot score applications from within the system.

**What if my scholarship is not on the universal application?**

About 20 scholarships administered by NCCF will not use the universal application. Students can review a [listing](#) of those scholarships and apply for scholarships they may be eligible for through the NCCF Scholarships Portal. Students will need to submit a separate application for each of these scholarships and will need to individually upload transcripts and recommendation letters for each application.

**How can I learn more about the universal application?**

- [Learn more](#) about the universal application from the perspective of a student, a donor, a guidance counselor, and a scholarship administrator.
- [Watch this six-minute video](#) to view the universal application from a student's perspective.