

Developing an Educational Scholarship Program

One of the most pressing needs in higher education today is funding for scholarships. Scholarships allow deserving students to attain their educational goals, meet their professional objectives and succeed to their fullest ability. In addition, scholarships enable practicing professionals to take advantage of opportunities for continuing professional development.

Scholarships are an effective tool to improve recruitment and encourage retention in the radiologic sciences. For example, a hospital in Texas created a scholarship for staff members who want to move into radiologic technology from their current job. In return for their education, the students promise to work for the hospital for at least two years following graduation.

Anyone can establish a scholarship — a hospital, a medical association, a school, a group of coworkers or even a private individual. With adequate funding and proper planning, the process of developing a successful scholarship program is fairly simple. The following guidelines will assist you in organizing your scholarship development process.

Determine Funding Available for Awards

A generous funding base is the key to the successful development and maintenance of an ongoing scholarship program. If your institution is willing to fully fund a scholarship program, your first hurdle is overcome. If not, don't despair. You can establish a scholarship fund by collaborating with a supportive corporate sponsor or by soliciting donations from individual contributors. Of course, you'll want to ensure that your program complies with all federal and state tax laws.

Once you've amassed enough capital to establish a scholarship program, determine the amount available to be paid annually in scholarships. You can specify a minimum award amount for the scholarship or you may prefer that the award be determined annually, thus providing more flexibility regarding the number of scholarship recipients each year.

Annual scholarships may be a one-time gift or they may be replenished each year through an endowment. Endowments are large funds that are invested. Only a portion of the earnings is awarded each year for scholarships. An endowment fund works like a permanent savings account. The amount invested (the "principal") is never spent. Only the earnings are spent, and only for the purposes you specify. The principal is invested as part of a consolidated fund. Your fund is always accounted for separately within the fund. As the principal grows through investment, a portion of these earnings are transferred into a separate "spending" account for your fund and used as you have specified. An investment broker can advise you on the best ways to invest the endowment.

Duration of Award

You must decide whether the scholarship will be a one-time award or renewable. If the scholarship is renewable, you may want to recommend a maximum number of years a student may apply for and be awarded a renewal. As you address this issue, you will want to consider whether or not it is important that a new scholarship be awarded each year. Scholarship

guidelines that have a provision for renewal generally require that the scholarship recipient complete an application annually, rather than permitting an automatic renewal of the scholarship.

Establish Scholarship Criteria

The selection criteria are the specific standards used to identify qualified applicants who ultimately will be recommended as scholarship recipients. Once the selection criteria have been identified, it is recommended that you prioritize them so that the profile of the scholarship recipient is clearly defined.

The founding scholarship document, often called the trust document, is the place that sets forth the eligibility and selection criteria. It also describes the award's duration and provisions for renewal.

Foundations that handle a lot of scholarships recommend the trust document be as flexible as possible. For example, instead of suggesting that the student maintain a specific grade point average, a donor might specify an acceptable range.

Many factors must be considered when establishing scholarship criteria for applicants, including financial need, achievement, geographic distribution and demographic characteristics. The criteria selected should support the purpose of the scholarship and must be free of restrictions or discriminatory provisions by law. You may wish to consider one or more of the criteria listed below. (This list is not meant to be all-inclusive; you may have criteria more specific to the goals of your program.)

Primary award criteria

- Financial need.
- Academic achievement, including grades, rank in class, standardized test scores and achievement test scores.
- Community/extracurricular involvement.
- Leadership.
- Participation in specific activities.
- Awards and recognition.
- Work history.
- Personal or family attributes.

Eligible applicants

- Geographic restrictions.
- Demographic restrictions.
- Other eligibility restrictions (e.g., only graduating high school seniors, only current employees, only radiographers studying to become radiation therapists).

Award restrictions

- Renewable or nonrenewable.
- Restricted to certain area of study (e.g., radiography, radiation therapy, nuclear medicine, sonography).
- Degree or non-degree.
- Full-time attendance or part-time attendance.

Fiscal considerations

- Program funding level.
- Scholarship value.
- Number of scholarships per year.

You also might like to recommend that any one or a combination of the following be required:

- Personal interview.
- Letter(s) of reference.
- Character evaluation form.
- Student essay.
- Letter of acceptance from the educational program director.
- High school or college transcripts.
- Financial information summary form.

Administration

Administration of the scholarship is a very important consideration, as it is the ongoing process that will ensure the success and perpetuity of the program. Administration may be the most time consuming part of the program. As such, you must ensure that adequate resources are available to support the process.

Many groups use third-party agencies to handle all aspects of the scholarship program. Using an outside agency may be necessary if insufficient staffing is an issue. A few organizations that administer scholarships for third parties include Scholarship Program Administrators, <http://www.scholarshipadministrators.com/>, the Citizens Scholarship Foundation of America, <http://www.csfa.org/>, and Career Opportunities Through Education Inc., www.scholarshipadministrators.com . Many other agencies are available.

Outlined below are the major components involved in the administrative process.

Application procedures

The information requested on the application should be a reflection of the selection criteria designated for the scholarship program. You will want to address the following questions for first-time applications as well as for renewal applications if the scholarship is renewable:

- Where and when are applications available?
- Where should applications be sent? How many copies are needed?
- When are applications due?
- What additional information/documents must accompany the application?
- How and when will the award winners be notified?
- How and when will the awards be disbursed?

Selection procedures and policies

It is common for scholarship funds to set up committees to select recipients and set policies. Selection of recipients must be made up of individuals independent from the private foundation,

institution or corporation concerned. Often final approval for fund disbursement comes from the organization's board or executive directors.

Monitoring student progress

The level with which you will want to get involved with your award recipients will depend upon personal choice and the established eligibility criteria of the program. For example, if the program criteria call for the maintenance of a minimum grade point average or allow for reimbursement for mentoring and tutoring, then a process for periodic reporting may be necessary.

Administrative and fiscal reporting

IRS rules are designed to make sure that scholarship programs benefit a broad charitable class of beneficiaries and that the process is nondiscriminatory. For example, you can't set up a scholarship fund to award a family member or restrict your eligibility requirements so that only your favorite neighborhood student qualifies. The penalty for noncompliance could be a hefty excise tax or a loss of tax-exempt status. For more information on IRS tax laws, visit the IRS Web site at www.irs.gov.

Promotion/publicity

You must determine the most effective way to reach the desired population for your specific scholarship program. You might use brochures, newsletters, direct mail, scholarship directory listings or a combination of one or more of these.

A large number of national publications list scholarships and how to get them, and there are many Internet-based resources where students can look for leads to scholarship funds. Foundations with scholarships say these listings do indeed get the word out, but they recommend exercising some caution about what will reach the appropriate applicant pool. If a given scholarship funds only locally, for example, a good strategy might be to get listed in statewide directories rather than national ones.

Application design

You may want to look at government-established scholarship applications that closely match the criteria you've decided upon to use as a template. Visit www.fedmoney.org for a full listing of U.S. government sponsored scholarships. You also can look at scholarship applications designed by the [ASRT Education and Research Foundation](#) and use them as a template in designing your own forms.

Program timeline

It is helpful to map out a program timeline for internal use by the scholarship development and administration team. You will want to include all activities, starting with the program development and ending with the award announcement.

Scholarship timeline example		
Activity	Begin date	Deadline
Program development	Summer	Late fall
Fund-raising	Summer and fall	Spring
Advertising	January	April 15
Application period	January through March	April 15 or 30
Award announcement	May 1	May 8

Conclusion

Unfortunately, many students who are interested in studying radiologic technology are deterred purely for financial reasons. The profession sorely needs more scholarship programs to help educate future radiologic technologists and to allow current technologists to further their educations. To help ensure the continued success of the radiologic sciences, consider establishing a scholarship program. It will serve as a lasting contribution to the profession and its practitioners.