

THE Scholarship Foundation OF ST. LOUIS

2026-27 STUDENT REFERENCE MANUAL

Including Info on:

- Contact Information
- Student Programs
- Awards and Renewals
- Campus Resources
- FAQs and more!

 (314) 725-7990

 www.sfstl.org

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The Scholarship Foundation of St. Louis, a nonprofit organization founded in 1920, is based upon the conviction that an educated society is essential to a healthy democracy.

The Scholarship Foundation provides access to postsecondary education to members of our community who otherwise would not have the financial means to fulfill their educational goals.

ABOUT US

The Scholarship Foundation of St. Louis was founded in 1920 on the belief in the transformative power of higher education to improve individual lives, uplift families, strengthen communities, and ensure the vitality of society. The Scholarship Foundation provides access to postsecondary education to members of the community who otherwise would not have the financial means to fulfill their educational goals.

The Scholarship Foundation provides direct financial support in the form of renewable grants and interest-free loans to students throughout the St. Louis community and beyond. Additionally, the Foundation provides non-financial support through its Student Advising Program, which helps high school students prepare to go to college and supports college students to successfully complete their degrees. The Scholarship Foundation collaborates with community and educational partners, with a focus on ensuring that all students, regardless of financial circumstances, have access to postsecondary education and the necessary financial support to attend, and graduate, from school.

The Scholarship Foundation is funded through donations from individuals, foundations, and corporations as well as through the repayment of interest-free loans.



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ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENT PROGRAMS

All Scholarship Foundation programs, including those it operates in partnership with other organizations, are based upon the following [principles](#):

Identity and Personal Information

The Foundation will:

- Treat students fairly and consistently, and not discriminate on the basis of race, gender, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or membership in any protected class.
- Hold personal and identifying information as confidential and not attribute or share it with third parties without permission of the student.
- Safeguard identifying and financial information.
- Invite but not require students to participate in publicity or media appearances, without the student's decision whether to participate having an impact on award decisions.

Student Stories

The Foundation will:

- State transparently the intention and goal(s) when borrowing a student's story, returning to the student to ask permission each time the story is shared anew.
- Make clear to students that they are under no obligation to share personal stories, will experience no repercussions for declining, and have the final editing authority.
- Provide training, skill-building, and support for student storytellers, always providing compensation to students for their time.
- Ensure informed consent, which includes discussing risk and safety and always placing student well-being first.
- Not dictate, prescribe, or script anyone's story; commit to storytelling from a point of strength and not victimization.

Funding

The Foundation will:

- Select students on the basis of financial need, academic potential, and character.
- Disburse interest-free loans and grants directly to students and/or safeguard against displacement.

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- Provide annual opportunity to apply for renewal in all student funding programs until degree completion or up to ten semesters (depending on program), at minimum.
- Review each complete application carefully, thoughtfully, and in consideration of the context and circumstance of the applicant.
- Exercise due diligence in financial aid packaging, so that awards are not made if excessive debt would result and/or the student will be insufficiently funded.
- Select students on the basis of qualifications without influence from other considerations such as donor input or personal relationships.

Advice/Guidance

The Foundation will:

- Seek open, honest communication with students.
- Encourage students to practice self-determination and to learn self-advocacy.
- Treat students as unique individuals.
- Offer advice and guidance to help students succeed but not obligate students to follow such advice.
- Discourage students from unnecessary borrowing.
- Respect student's choice of school of attendance; however, the Foundation will not fund students attending schools not within the eligibility guidelines or students whose financial aid packages at their school of choice leave them insufficiently funded or in excessive debt.
- Provide students with clear information about repayment and debt management options, both in groups and individually, that will serve them throughout college years and beyond.

Relationship

The Foundation will:

- Keep information learned from the student in advising conversations separate from award decisions, provided that information does not affect the student's eligibility for any Foundation program(s) in which the student is participating.
- Discuss a student's information with the student only unless the student gives permission for a third party to be involved.
- Provide opportunities for a student to regain good standing when the student loses funding due to insufficient academic progress or a failure to meet deadlines.
- Seek to establish and maintain relationships of respect, trust, clear communication, and mutual accountability with students.
- Maintain primary relationship with the student, though that relationship may also be initiated or strengthened in concert with nonprofit community partners.

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ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS



Students must meet and maintain the following eligibility requirements:

Academic Potential: A minimum cumulative 2.0 GPA is required. In addition, the transcript needs to show evidence of academic ability in the selected major, progress in increasingly rigorous coursework, and focus. If your GPA falls below 2.0 GPA, you may be considered for funding provided you ***submit a statement explaining your circumstances and a plan to improve your grades. Your Student Advisor may also be able to help you understand your options and support you.***

Strength of Character: Applications are reviewed for evidence of honesty, forthrightness, responsibility, sense of community, and judgment.

Financial Need: With the increasing cost of education and decreasing sources of financial support, St. Louis area students are demonstrating increased levels of financial need. The Scholarship Foundation offers financial support to these students, but we also want to ensure that students and their families don't take on excessive debt. For this reason, The Scholarship Foundation is very intentional about determining financial need. We use a simple formula:

DETERMINING YOUR AWARD

Cost of Education	\$23,578	Tuition, fees, books, room and board, living expenses, etc.
Student Aid Index (SAI)	– \$2,315	Amount you and your family are expected to pay towards your education for the year
Grant Aid	– \$16,500	Federal, state, private, institutional scholarships and grants**
Unmet Financial Need	= \$4,763	Amount remaining to fulfill cost of your education

Award amounts from the Foundation are based on each individual student's cost of attendance, SAI, and grant aid. The amount a student is awarded for an academic year is expected to cover the remainder of unmet need, ***without the student borrowing elsewhere***. If you think you need to borrow beyond the amount calculated by the Foundation or if extenuating circumstances affect your ability to afford the family contribution (SAI) indicated above, please contact your advisor at The Scholarship Foundation. We can help you review your award and explore any available sources of funding to cover your expenses. It's important to us that you understand the calculations and get your questions answered.

Our commitment to college affordability is a priority. Unlike other loans you may be offered, student loans funded by the Foundation remain interest-free and fee-free during the life of the loan. You will only repay the Foundation the amount you borrow to complete your education. Students can turn down other loans, including Federal Stafford Loans, ***even after you have accepted them***¹.

*The SAI (Student Aid Index) is the amount you and your family are expected to pay towards your education for the year. The figures are determined by the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or an alternate Needs Assessment Form. It is also used by financial aid offices to determine your eligibility for federal, state, and some institutional financial aid.

** Historically, schools have reserved the option of publishing work study awards on financial aid award letters without guarantees for placement. This could result in insufficient financial resources needed to cover the full cost of attendance. Therefore, if a student can secure and verify a work study assignment for the academic year, the award amount will be included within the calculations to determine the unmet need.

¹ If you need assistance with declining Federal Direct Loans that have already been accepted, or even disbursed, please contact your Student Advisor for support and guidance.

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The Scholarship Foundation's Funding Policy

Unlike most scholarship providers, The Scholarship Foundation provides direct funding to our students. Our objective is to provide the final dollar for Foundation students, helping them avoid the need to take on federal or private interest-bearing student loans. Excessive student loan debt can become a serious financial burden, particularly for students pursuing higher education.

To support students effectively, funds provided by The Scholarship Foundation must be used strictly for required educational expenses such as tuition, fees, room and board, books, and travel costs.

Important:

Failure to utilize these funds appropriately may result in a loss of funding eligibility and could lead to a temporary withdrawal from college.

It is essential that students prioritize applying these funds toward their educational-related costs. If you have concerns about insufficient funding or how to utilize your scholarship or interest-free loan funding, please contact your student advisor immediately for support.

THE RENEWAL PROCESS

All interest-free loans and grants provided by The Scholarship Foundation are renewable. This means you can continue to receive a grant and/or interest-free loan each year, as long as you continue to meet our eligibility criteria and complete the renewal application **every** year you are in school. *Scholarship Foundation scholarship grants are typically renewable through the completion of a bachelor's degree or up to 10 semesters.*

How does the renewal process work?

Each January you will receive instructions on how to renew your funding for the following academic year. Eligibility for renewal is based on the three elements mentioned previously (academic potential, strength of character, financial need) and enrollment for the following academic year.

Renewal applications require the following documentation for consideration and must be submitted by April 15:

- **Renewal Application:** Must be completed online every year.
- **FAFSA Submission Summary (FSS)** Download from the FAFSA website.
 - Or **Needs Assessment Form** (only use this form if you are unable to file the FAFSA. Please reach out to liliana@sfstl.org if you have questions and to obtain the form).
- **Official Academic Transcript:** Order from your school. Unofficial transcripts will **NOT** be accepted on any renewal applications.

These documents are also required for consideration, but may be submitted separately to The Scholarship Foundation after April 15:

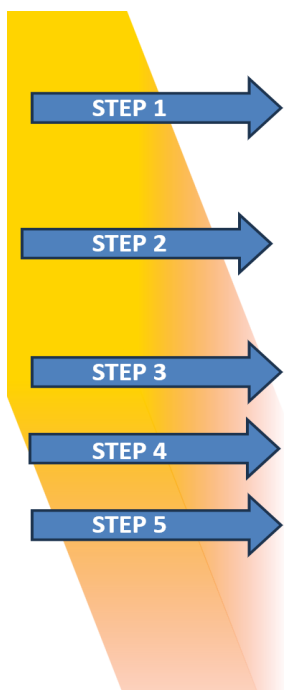
- **Financial Aid Offer Letter:** For the following academic year (due August 1)
- **Final Spring Semester Grades:** For the current school year (must be received before your check can be issued)

It is important to stay in touch and notify us of updates or changes to your contact information, your enrollment plans, or your financial circumstances.

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LIFE CYCLE OF AN INTEREST-FREE LOAN



Life Cycle of an Interest-Free Loan

Apply for Funding

- Interest-Free Loan Orientation and sign Master Promissory Note
- Receive first disbursement

STEP 2

Annual Promissory Note Review and Signing (late fall)

- At the end of the fall semester, sign your annual promissory note.
- Receive remaining disbursement

STEP 3

Apply for Renewal (January 1-April 15th)

STEP 4

Repeat Steps 2 and 3 while Enrolled In School

STEP 5

Enter Repayment

- Graduates
 - Review and Sign Final Promissory Note*
 - 12-month grace period
- Borrowers who have withdrawn or enrolled in less than 6 credit hours
 - Repayment begins one month after occurrence

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What happens to my loan if my funding is not renewed?

- You are eligible to defer payments on your interest-free loan if you are enrolled in at least six credit hours or more each semester, even if you are not receiving funds from The Scholarship Foundation in that academic year.
- If you find yourself in this situation, you must submit enrollment verification (i.e., enrollment letter, transcript, class schedule, etc.) each semester showing your credit hours by completing an Educational Deferment Request via <https://sfstl.org/educational-deferment-request/> or from the Forms tab in your online portal at <https://sfstl.my.site.com/portal/login>.
- If you do not submit proof of enrollment, or you withdraw from school, your loan will go into repayment **immediately**.

When do I have to start making payments on my loan?

- You are eligible for a one-year grace period on your loan after graduation, only after signing a final promissory note. If you do not sign the promissory note, your loan will go into repayment **immediately** without the grace period.
- One month before your grace period ends, you will receive a reminder via email and a letter will be mailed to your permanent home address. *It is your responsibility to make sure your contact information with us is current.*
- Payments are due the 15th of each month. Monthly payment amounts are individualized for each student and are based on your total loan balance, degree program and institution, and anticipated salary two years after graduation.

What do I do if I cannot afford my monthly payments?

- If you are experiencing financial difficulties, we are here to help! Start by going to <https://sfstl.org/repayment-assessment-instructions/> for complete instructions on how to fill out our online Repayment Assessment Form.
- We will review your information and work with you to determine a temporary monthly payment that is manageable based on your income and monthly expenses, but also satisfies your obligation to repay your loan.
- Contact Scholarship Foundation Repayment Manager, Terri Brown, with questions or for assistance. She can be reached at terri@sfstl.org.

What happens if I go back to school after I've started paying on my loan?

- You are eligible to defer payments on your interest-free loan if you re-enroll in at least six credit hours or more each semester. Simply fill out the [Educational Deferment Request](#) form along with proof of enrollment (i.e. enrollment letter, transcript, class schedule, etc.) and send it to the Foundation. That's it!

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Relationships are important to us!

1. **Advisor's Role:** Each advisor has personal experience as a student and professional experience as an advisor. Please consider us your first point of contact should you encounter any academic, financial, and/or personal questions or concerns.
 - a. Your advisor is here to advise you; *you retain the right to make your own decisions.*
 - b. Your advisor would like to hear about successes as much as challenges you encounter. The better we know you, the better we can support you!
2. **Student's Role:**
 - a. Know your rights (see page 2).
 - b. Stay in touch. Find ways to connect with your advisor, even if only once a semester.
 - c. Ask for help when you need it.
 - d. Take care of yourself and practice self-care. Balance school and your extracurricular life. Take breaks. Be kind to yourself.
3. **We strive to be transparent:** There is a bright line between advising and awarding at the Foundation. This bright line means advisors do not make or influence awards decisions; in addition, student conversations with advisors are **confidential**. Students can feel confident speaking honestly about their questions, concerns, and experiences. We want you to know what we know. There is no magic behind a curtain. If you have questions, please do not hesitate to ask your advisor!
4. **Renewal:** All funds are renewable!
 - a. Renewal requires only two documents (**official** academic transcript and FAFSA Submission Summary²), which must be uploaded to an online renewal application. The renewal application is available for three-and-a-half months: January 1-April 15.
 - b. ***The deadline of April 15 is a hard deadline for all Foundation students.***

² Or alternate Needs Assessment Form.

- c. *Students who successfully meet the April 15th deadline are required to submit two additional documents for final consideration. Please refer to page 6.*

We are here to answer your financial questions!

1. **Award Math: *Your Scholarship Foundation award was calculated for you***, to cover your unmet need. The Scholarship Foundation calculated your award using the cost of *your* school, *your* Student Aid Index (SAI) calculated by the FAFSA, and all *your* gift aid, awarded by all sources:

Cost of Attendance (Including tuition, book, food and housing, personal expenses, etc.)	
– SAI	(Student Aid Index, calculated by FAFSA)
– Gift Aid	(Pell, Access Missouri, need-or merit-based grants/scholarships)
= UNMET NEED	

2. **Outside Borrowing: *Please do not borrow federally, in either your or your parent's name. If you find yourself with expenses that you cannot cover, please call us first.*** Remember, Scholarship Foundation loans are interest-free, fee-free always. If you have already accepted federal loans, know that you can return them. *Your Advisor can help.*
3. **Make us your first stop:** Have a financial emergency? Please call your advisor first. The Foundation may be able to help – even if it is just to identify additional and better resources.
4. **Renewal:** All Foundation funds are renewable! Renewing your aid – institutional aid, federal/state aid (if eligible), and your Scholarship Foundation funds matters for ongoing affordability. What does this mean?
 - a. **If you file the FAFSA, be ready to renew the FAFSA each year as soon after October 1st as possible. Remember, some aid is first-come, first-served.** Find FAFSA resources at fafsa.gov or contact your Student Advisor for assistance!
 - b. The Scholarship Foundation's renewal application opens each year on January 1st and is due April 15th. Renew your Scholarship Foundation funds at <https://stlouisgraduates.academicworks.com/>.
5. **Repayment Portal:** For information related to your account, you may visit [this link](#). To log in for the first time, click the blue **Sign-Up** link found beneath the login button. Enter your email address, and you'll receive a verification code. Be sure to use the email address that matches our records. Once received, enter the verification code to gain access to your portal where you will be able to review payment history, make payments, submit requests, and view your balance.

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Create an environment that fosters academic success!

1. **Create a support system:** Identify the individuals, organizations, and groups that will help support you through college and consider what type of support you anticipate receiving. Remember, your Advisor is part of this network! In addition, there are opportunities at the Foundation for additional support:
 - a. **Flourish:** If you are interested in learning more about the Foundation's mental health program, which pays for the cost of therapy, please email flourish@sfstl.org.
 - b. **Affinity Groups:** If you are interested in learning more about the affinity groups offered by the Foundation, please speak with your advisor for more information and a current schedule.
2. **Practice Self-Advocacy:** The Foundation encourages you to actively participate in all aspects of your educational experience. This includes but is not limited to speaking with professors after class and during office hours, identifying resources on campus that support your continued learning and growth as a student, and developing relationships with individuals on campus who can mentor you.
3. **Understand the connection between academics and finances:** Your academic success in college will impact your continued eligibility for financial aid and ability to renew financial support, including that of The Scholarship Foundation. Here are some things to know:
 - a. **Grade Point Average:** Virtually all aid has a GPA requirement for continued eligibility.
 - i. Federal Aid: 2.0 Cumulative GPA
 - ii. Access Missouri: 2.5 Cumulative GPA
 - iii. Scholarship Foundation: 2.0 Cumulative GPA
 - b. **Credit Hours:** How many credit hours you successfully complete can also impact aid eligibility.
 - c. **Percentage of courses successfully passed:** Even withdrawals and incompletes can impact this percentage.
 - d. **Lifetime Pell Eligibility:** Students may receive Pell Grants for no more than 12 semesters.
4. **Get Involved:** Engage in the courses, as well as the extracurriculars, organizations, and relationships that challenge your thinking; promote growth; and expand your knowledge, as your schedule allows.

We want you to succeed and are here
to support you any way we can!

CAMPUS RESOURCE SHEET

School: _____

Academic Resources

Resource	Location (Building & Room)	Hours	Phone Number	Notes (e.g., contact person)
Math Lab/Center				
Writing Center				
TRIO/Student Support Services				
Library				
Access Office/ Disability Services				
Career Services				
Tutoring Resources				

Financial Resources

Resource	Location (Building & Room)	Hours	Phone Number	Notes (e.g., contact person)
Financial Aid Office				
Registrar				
Bursar				

Personal Resources

Resource	Location (Building & Room)	Hours	Phone Number	Notes (e.g., contact person)
Housing/Residence Life				
Student Health				
Counseling				
Food Pantry				
Public Safety				
Transportation Services				

For additional resources and information visit <https://sfstl.org/for-students/resource-library>.

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Opportunities for Connection and Growth

Fellowship Programs

The Foundation's Student-Led Advocacy Programs consist of four paid fellowships in different, but related content areas. This hands-on fellowship program consists of fellowships advocating at the federal, state, and institutional policy level to increase college access and affordability. Fellows are equipped with the resources, training, and context to advance a student-led agenda for higher education in Missouri. Students will be able to learn how historical, financial, and systems issues have impacted college accessibility and then explore campaigns that seek to get closer to equity in higher education. Fellows are trained by expert leaders in policy, advocacy, campaign building, race and racism in education, and much more. The overall goal is to ensure students who are primarily left out of these types of discussions are not only included in them, but able to lead them.

Contact Director of Advocacy and Pedagogy, Karina Arango, at karina@sfstl.org for more information.

Edward Jones Financial Futures Internship Program

In collaboration with Edward Jones, and a group of community organizations participating in Financial Futures, students supported by The Scholarship Foundation have the opportunity to apply for paid, project-based internship opportunities. Financial Futures is a strategic initiative led by Edward Jones that brings together a cohort of 10 community-based organizations, including The Scholarship Foundation, to drive lasting change, empower communities affected by systemic inequities, and promote wealth-building that transforms lives across generations.

Students who are currently receiving, or have received, funding from The Scholarship Foundation within the past year are eligible to apply.

Contact Lead Student Advisor, Dominesha Newton, at dominesha@sfstl.org for more information.

Designated Scholar Loan (DSL) Program

Designated Scholar Loans (DSL) are established by donors in memory or in honor of someone important to them. These donors share the Foundation's passion and commitment to education and want you to succeed as much as we do. The Foundation matches students with donors and connects them through written correspondence. As a Designated Scholar, you provide a personal link between our donors and their support of opportunities for higher education. By getting to know you, they gain more appreciation for the value of their support. Each DSL (over 300 in total) has a unique story to tell — of family, of commitment to the community, or in celebration of a loved one.

Volunteering to be a Designated Scholar is an opportunity to tell your story to those who have supported your education. You will have an opportunity to share your educational interests and

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activities, highlights or challenges you've experienced over the past semester, and any other information you choose to include. That's it! And as a token of our appreciation, if you are selected to write a personal letter, we will send you a \$25 gift card to Target or Starbucks!

This is not an additional loan or grant; it is connected to the loan you are already receiving from The Scholarship Foundation. It is important to note that participation in the Designated Scholar Loan Program does not impact your future funding from The Scholarship Foundation and it does not change the terms of your loan or repayment.

Please contact info@sfstl.org for more information or to volunteer. [OBJ]



You can take charge of your finances and your life by setting financial goals, planning a budget, and sticking to it. The Scholarship Foundation's staff can help you with this.



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NOTES:

We invite you to share these materials with students and families. Please attribute these materials to The Scholarship Foundation of St. Louis and link back to the original source on the Foundation's website to ensure students and families have the most accurate, up-to-date information.