

## **How to Juggle Scholarship Opportunities and Narrow it Down WISELY**

By: Leobardo Espinoza Jr., Student at Topeka High School in Kansas

Now that I've finished college applications, I'm transitioning to searching and applying for scholarships. The more I search, the better I've become at finding them and the more I realize that there is an abundance of scholarships for which I qualify.

Now, is that good or bad?

Most teenagers would probably say that it's absolutely wonderful to have so many doors of opportunity open. That may be true, but having a lot of scholarships to consider can be a double-edged sword.

On one side, it means that there are more opportunities to earn free money. **On the other side, however, a student who applies for too many scholarships may not devote enough time to personalize each of the applications.** Once I figured out where to search, the number of scholarships for which I qualified seemed to quadruple. I was ecstatic about having so many opportunities to earn money, but I also began to feel overwhelmed.

Looking at what seemed to be an endless list of scholarships to apply for, **I felt an urge to apply for all of them.** I've never let an opportunity go to waste, so I figured that I wouldn't let any of these applications go unfilled, either. I just hoped that, out of the many scholarships that I would apply for, I'd win at least a few of them.

**When I started working on the first scholarship application, I realized that I had — once again — underestimated the amount of work it took to write an essay that was worth submitting.**

**Though I originally planned to apply for as many scholarships as I could, I soon figured out that it wouldn't be smart to do so.** The chances of winning them weren't the same across the board.

Statistically speaking, **my success rate seemed to depend on two factors: deadlines and requirements.**

When there are more scholarships due either the same day or within the same time frame, it gets harder and harder to **personalize each scholarship packet.** The time constraints are too demanding.

I also have to keep in mind the application requirements of each scholarship. Some scholarships ask applicants to write an essay, create a movie or develop some sort of

visual representation. While it is important to understand the requirements of each scholarship, **it is even more important to understand how good I am at doing each of those tasks.**

**I decided to narrow my list of scholarship applications and focus on those that required a task that I felt the most comfortable with: writing essays.**

My new, narrowed-down list was still too long; it was still impossible to complete them all efficiently. So **I had to narrow the list even more.**

**I created a spreadsheet and wrote down the required essay topics of each scholarship. After identifying the topics I felt catered to my writing strengths, I chose to apply to those scholarships and not the rest.**

**Bottom Line:**

**My advice? If you're going to apply for a lot of scholarships, be selective. And, as always, keep yourself organized!**

-Leobardo Espinoza Jr.