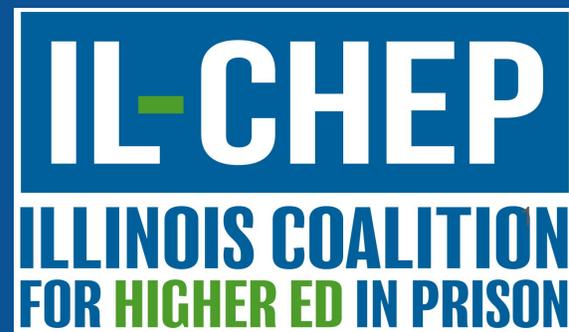
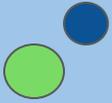


# IL-CHEP Scholarship Resource Guide

for formerly incarcerated  
students and children of  
incarcerated people





Dear IL-CHEP Community,

We hope that this resource guide will support you in your search and process of applying for a scholarships.

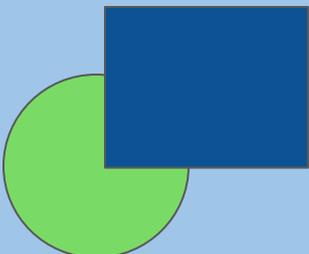
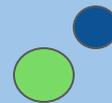
College can be difficult to fund, especially if you have been recently released from prison, have an incarcerated parent, or will soon be released. Increasingly, the stigmas of incarceration are lifting and opening the door to higher education for many.

This guide offers valuable information about scholarships, grants and loans. We include some steps of how to apply for financial support to further your education and we highly encourage you to apply. Further, we provide a short list of grants and scholarships currently available.

You have the option to disclose, or not, your experience in the carceral system, and it's also up to you on how much information you would like to disclose to scholarship providers.

We thank you for reading this resource guide and we value your input. Please do not hesitate to contact us or visit our website with follow up questions or additions to this guide. We are here to support you along the way, cheer you on as you take the next step in pursuing your college education.

Sincerely,  
Illinois Coalition for Higher Education in Prison



# Table of Contents

Types of Funding.....	4
Getting Started.....	5
• FAFSA	
Examples of Grants.....	6
Types of Scholarships.....	7,8
Federal Work Study Loan.....	9
About Private Loans and Out of Pocket Costs.....	10
Developing a Scholarship Action Plan.....	11
• Scholarship Action Plan Chart.....	12
Scholarship Application Tips.....	13
• Letter of Recommendation Example.....	14
• Tips for Writing a Scholarship Essay.....	15
• Tips for Writing a Scholarship Resume.....	16
• Most Common Application Mistakes.....	17
How to Spot a Scholarship Scam.....	18
What's Next After you Apply for a Scholarship?.....	19
Active Scholarships To Apply For.....	20-22

# Types of Funding

## Scholarships:

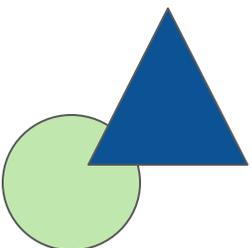
A scholarship is when a student is given money from the government or other organization to pay for college and college related expenses that **do not need to be paid back**. Scholarships are more commonly awarded based on merit and not a need basis. Merit would be based on specific qualities such as good academics, athletic ability, or creativity.

## Grants:

A grant is essentially the same thing as a scholarship, but is usually given to students who show a financial need. Grants also **do not need to be paid back**.

## Private Loans:

A private loan comes from somewhere such as a bank, credit union, or other organization. Private loans have a higher interest rate than loans you would receive from FAFSA. Private loans tend to be harder to get and require more information when applying. Note: Be sure to review subsidized v/s unsubsidized loans in the “How to Apply for FAFSA Guide.”



# Getting Started

The first step in applying for financial aid is to apply for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)

## What is FAFSA?

FAFSA is run by the federal government and it evaluates and provides financial aid on a need-based and non need-based basis for students.

When you apply for FAFSA, a determination will be made of what kinds and how much funding you eligible for. The determination is based on your income and student status. You could be eligible for a range of offerings including Pell Grants, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants, subsidized federal loans, unsubsidized federal loans, federal work study, state-based financial aid, and school-based merit aid. The financial aid office at the schools you are applying to will help you access these and other opportunities based on your FAFSA application.

## Who can Apply for FAFSA?

People who are eligible to apply for FAFSA are students pursuing an undergraduate education such as at an accredited associates program, bachelors program, masters program, or doctoral program. Applicants should:

- Be U.S. Citizen or eligible noncitizen
- Have a valid social security number
- Be enrolled or plan to be enrolled at least half-time (specifically for direct loan program funds),
- Be enrolled or accepted in a eligible degree or certificate program
- Have a high school diploma or GED certificate

# Examples of Grants

Grants are offered by state and federal entities, as well as private foundations.

## Federal Pell Grant

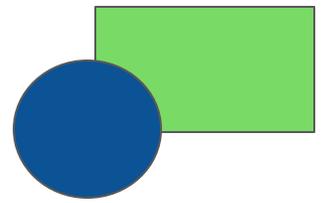
This specific grant from the federal government given to students who fill out FAFSA and show “exceptional financial need”. The amount of the grant awarded is determined by the amount it costs to attend the specific school the student applied to and the EFC. In 2021, the maximum award students were able to receive for this grant was \$6,495 and does **NOT** need to be paid back.

## Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant

This grant is only available at certain universities and the amount awarded ranges between \$100 to \$4,000 a year.

## Monetary Award Program (MAP)

MAP grants are available to eligible Illinois residents who attend approved Illinois colleges and demonstrate financial need, based on the information provided on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid. Applicants are not required to submit high school grades or test scores when applying for a MAP grant. MAP grants are not limited to traditional college-aged students. If all eligibility requirements are met, adult and non-traditional students (older than recent high school graduates) may also qualify. MAP grants can be applied only toward tuition and mandatory fees.



# Types of Scholarships

Scholarships are offered by a range of entities. Remember to ask the financial aid office staff at your college or university for any public or private scholarships you might be eligible for.

## ★ **School Specific Scholarships:**

- These are individual scholarships that will be offered solely by the school you have applied to or been accepted to. They can be both need based and merit based

## ★ **Local Scholarships:**

- Local scholarships can be found among the student's own community. For example, from the local township or chamber of commerce

## ★ **Academic Scholarships:**

- These scholarships are given based on students academics, a GPA, and/or standardized test scores, such as the ACT and SAT

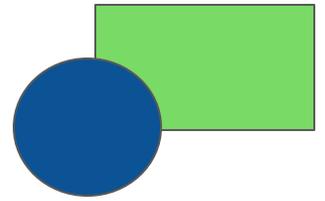
## ★ **Community Service Scholarships:**

- These scholarships are based on a persons volunteering within the community. Community Service scholarships might be useful for students who may not have the best academic record

## ★ **Scholarships on Student's Identity (Race, Ethnicity, Gender Identity, Etc.):**

- These scholarships have a large range, such as race, gender identity, ethnicity, heritage, and more. They are most common for students of underrepresented populations

## Types of Scholarships Continued...



### ★ **Employer and Military Scholarships:**

- These scholarships are found through your employers or an employer of your family member. Employers such as Chick-Fil-A, CVS, Starbucks and many workers union offer scholarships

### ★ **Need Based Scholarships:**

- These scholarships are for people who show they have financial need. Often students must show a lot of eligibility criteria and submit more documents than other types of scholarships

### ★ **Scholarships for Athletics, Hobbies, and Extracurriculars:**

- Athletic scholarships are mostly available at D1 and D2 schools for students who play a sport on one of their teams, however a full ride is rare
- The hobby and extracurricular related scholarships tend to be very random but include activities such as participating in plays, musicals, knitting, making a duct tape dress, and more

### ★ **Creative Scholarships:**

- These are for students who have artistic talent
- They are very competitive and artwork has to be submitted or presented

### ★ **Unusual Scholarships:**

- These scholarships can also be very random because they are truly based on anything that is unique to people
- For example, having red hair may get you a scholarship

# Federal Work Study Loans

The federal work study program is run through the federal government and is applied to through FAFSA. This program provides students who qualify (those with financial need) with a part time job at or near the university to help them pay for college. Students are provided with a specific amount of money they will make from their work study. If a student is interested in applying for work study, there is a question on the FAFSA application where the student can indicate they would like to be considered.

The award amount depends on:

- how early the student applied for FAFSA
- how much financial assistance is needed
- the amount of funding the student's school has available

## **Tips when Considering Work Study**

If you are considering doing the work study but are not certain, indicate that you are interested on your FAFSA so that they can still calculate your potential award amount. When you accept your financial aid award and decide that you do not want to participate in the work study program, you can just decline the federal work study loan amount given. If you do get a work study position, students should not work more than the hour amount outlined in their work study contract. If the student works extra hours, overtime hours will not be paid.

\*For more information, see [ILCHEP FAFSA Guide](#)

# Private Loans and Out of Pocket Costs

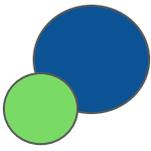
Private loans should be your last resort. You should consider taking out a private loan once you have maximized the amount of FAFSA loans you are allowed to receive and do not have funds to pay remaining costs for college or university.

## What are Out of Pocket Costs?

After all financial aid has been awarded, the school will provide the student with an 'out of pocket' cost. The number provided is the amount of money the student owes for the semester or year that must be paid by the student's own means. This means that the school or federal government's award money has already been applied and the remaining cost is up to the student to pay. This payment can be from the student's bank account, family member's bank account, etc. or from a third party loan provider such as a bank.

Most schools provide payment plans that are broken down by month, by semester, or by year. It is recommended that the student pay for the out of pocket cost with money that does not need to be paid back, such as that from their own bank account. If that is not possible, check if FAFSA will allow the student to request more money. If that is not possible, the student may resort to obtaining a private loan from a third party provider, such as a bank.

# Developing a Scholarship Action Plan



## **Step 1: Create a list of what types of scholarships you could possibly be eligible for**

Take a look back at the scholarship directory on page 3 to find the “types of scholarships” section and write down every type of scholarship that may apply to you

## **Step 2: Create a Scholarship Plan**

We recommend gathering all the information listed in the chart example on next page. Feel free to use the chart on the next page to print and fill out.

## **Step 3: Fill in the chart**

Fill in all the information on the chart thoroughly so that you have a complete action plan. You should apply to the scholarships in order starting from greatest importance. This will keep you organized and on track to ensure you do all the requirements and meet the individual scholarship deadlines.

### **Tip:**

Write down scholarships as you come across them or hear about them from others. Write down as many scholarships as possible to begin, then fill in the rest of the information.

# Scholarship Action Plan Chart

Scholarship Name	Due Date	# of Letters of Recommendation Needed	Types of Letters of Recommendation (academic, professional, mentor, etc.)	Name(s) and contact info of people writing letters	Other materials needed	Link to scholarship application or website
1.						
2.						
3.						
4.						
5.						
6.						
7.						
8.						
9.						
10.						

# Tips for a Successful Scholarship Application

- Read all of the application instructions before you start it
- Start the application processes as soon as you can, even if it feels too early to start, it never is
- Make a list of recommenders who can attest to your professional character, abilities, talents, and any experience. To view an example of a letter of recommendation, check out the next page
- When you have all of the information for where you are going to apply, ask your recommenders to write your letter as soon as possible. Try to ask at least 1 to 2 months in advance
- Apply to scholarships even if they don't have large awards because small awards add up fast
- Don't get discouraged if you don't win anything in the beginning of your application process
- Apply to as many scholarships as possible
- Apply to scholarships even if you have to write an essay
- Follow your scholarship action plan and follow it closely
- Use a professional email address, such as [firstname.lastname@gmail.com](mailto:firstname.lastname@gmail.com)
- Make sure you are eligible to apply to the scholarship
- Think about who will be reading your application/who the application is going to
- Think about who will be competing for the same scholarship as you
- Talk about your strengths and do not ignore your weaknesses, talk about how you have overcome your weaknesses or how you are working toward making them strengths
- Make sure your social media presence is professional and if it is not, clean up your profiles
- Do a google search of your name and see what shows up

# Sample Letter of Recommendation

March 20, 20XX

Michael Thomas  
English teacher  
Nevermore High School  
12 Lewis Street  
Bridgetown, CA, 90210

**Dear Sir/Madam,**

I am writing this letter to support Sam Green's application for [.....scholarship]. I got the chance to teach her in her 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade English literature class at the Nevermore High School. She always amazed me with her remarkable ability to understand dense texts and concepts and articulate them unmistakably. Her sensitivity to nuances within literature and passion for reading and writing makes her a notable student and writer.

In the 12<sup>th</sup> grade, Sam wrote an extraordinary paper on the development of creative identity. She compared cultural-historical perspectives of three different time periods and created her analysis. As expected, she was also successful in eloquently presenting her thesis in front of the peers. As an art student, she has the utmost love for poetry and publishes her poetry in the school's magazine and other online magazines.

Her active, caring personality makes her a perfect fit for teamwork. I have always seen her respecting other opinions and presenting hers in a very polite way. Her strong observation power and empathy for others make her an outstanding and influencing literature student.

I am confident that Sam will be doing some great creative activities in the future. Her work speaks to how deep a sense of art she has. You can contact me at [Email address] to ask any question.

**Sincerely,**

**Michael Thomas**

# Tips for Writing a Scholarship Essay



## 5 Steps to Write a Standout College Scholarship Essay

### Read the Instructions

A good scholarship essay cannot simply be well-written – it must also have the proper formatting, follow the prompt and fit within the word count. It's critical to read the instructions and address the topic presented to you. You may need to research the topic or talk to friends and family for inspiration.



### Create an Outline

A proper outline goes a long way when crafting an organized and thoughtful essay. Good outlines include your thesis statement, body paragraph statements, and supporting evidence that is written out clearly and with proper citation if needed.



### Write with Enthusiasm

Try to channel yourself into what you write. Bring your personal experience with the topic to the forefront, and don't be afraid to share your feelings, history and successes with the audience. Your enthusiasm in the topic you are writing about will shine through.



### Avoid Grammar and Spelling Errors

Make sure your grammar and spelling are impeccable. Try printing your essay out to get another perspective on how it reads. Typos that you skim by on the screen might pop out on paper. If you can, ask someone with strong editing skills to proofread your work.



### Tap Your Creativity

Be sure to allow yourself plenty of time to complete the essay and application so you can really get into the topic and approach it in a way that is unique. Remember that this essay is celebrating you, your accomplishments and your future goals – and can win you real money for college tuition!

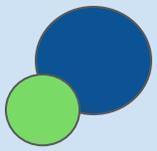


 For a free college scholarship search and more information, visit [www.scholarships.com](http://www.scholarships.com)

 Download and print more resources at [www.scholarships.com/resources](http://www.scholarships.com/resources)

# Tips for Writing a Scholarship Resume

- Only put relevant information such as achievements, jobs, skills, etc. on your resume
- Do not lie about any skill, especially those such as being bi-lingual if you only speak a little bit of another language or knowing how to use Excel if you do not know its deeper, more complicated functions
- Make sure your resume can fit on one page
- Always use action words instead of “I did” “I worked” “We organized” etc.
  - Instead say “Participated in”, “Helped with”, “Completed”, “Created”, “Evaluated”, “Organized”, etc.
  - To the best of your ability, do not repeat the action word more than once, and especially not directly in a row. For example, do not say in one line “Completed daily office tasks” and in the next say “Completed a data analysis”
- Organize your resume into categories and keep the formatting consistent (Google resume or Microsoft Word offer good templates)
- What to include on your resume: Contact information (name, email, phone number, address), objective statement (optional to do, but it states what you are looking for “I am looking for a job in...”), education level, experience (jobs, volunteer work, etc.), achievements, skills, and any other relevant unique abilities



# Most Common Scholarship Application Mistakes

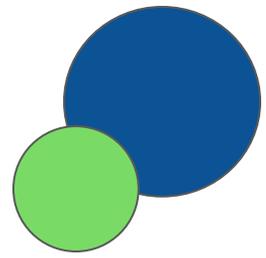
- Missing the application deadline
- Failing to follow ALL of the application instructions
- Failing to proofread the application
- Not putting down all of the required information
- Waiting too long to ask someone to write you a letter of recommendation (if possible, ask 1 to 2 months in advance)
- Applying for an award you do not qualify for or are not eligible for

# How to Spot a Scholarship Scam

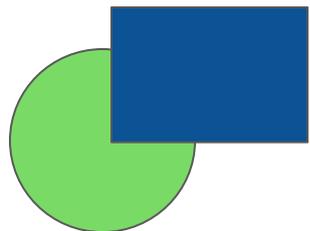
- Any site that requires you to pay a fee for a scholarship before you are able to get your award money are red flags
- If a scholarship matching website guarantees you will win a scholarship or they will give you your money back, those are scams. Example: if scholarship website asks you for your credit card information, social security number, or other important information, OR indicates you will win money right away
- Scholarships that ask you for a ton of personal information like credit card information, bank account information, or social security numbers are most likely a scam

**Tip:** There are so many free scholarship resources, we believe you should never pay for a scholarship service such as paying a fee to have a website find you scholarships, paying a fee to apply for a scholarship, or paying a fee to receive an awarded scholarship.

# What's Next After you Apply for Scholarships?



- Send the scholarship organization a follow up email or call them to check on the status of your application
  - Common phrases to say in your follow up: “thank you so much for the opportunity”, “Thank you for considering me for the scholarship”, “I look forward to hearing from you”
- Check your spam email consistently for any emails from the scholarship organization or personnel, they commonly end up in the spam folder
- If there is going to be an interview for the scholarship, practice!!
  - Common interview questions: “What are your strengths and weaknesses?”, “When was a time you overcame a challenge and how?”, “How well do you work under pressure?”
  - Be convincing, sound confident, and if you struggle in a specific area, for example working under pressure, talk about how you have struggled in the past but also share what you have done to overcome that
  - Write down practice questions and keep them with you if you have trouble answering questions on the spot
  - NEVER say you have no weaknesses
  - Have a few questions to ask your interviewers at the end because it shows you are engaged, interested, and care about getting the scholarship
  - Dress appropriately for the interview (even if the interview is over Zoom or any other video service), either business professional or business casual
  - Be on time for the interview
  - Be conscious of your behavior during the interview, keep it professional



# Scholarships For Incarcerated or Formerly Incarcerated Students

Scholarship Name/Website	Organization	About	Award Amount	Application Opens	Deadline	Scholarship Requirements	Illinois State/ National
The Cappex Scholarship <a href="https://new.cappex.com/register/scholarship/info/?scholarshipID=gp&amp;code=HO1149-5-470eb9c3-c033-4c34-a60f-a2a95d325ba6&amp;utm_source=1149&amp;utm_medium=Affiliates&amp;utm_campaign=5">https://new.cappex.com/register/scholarship/info/?scholarshipID=gp&amp;code=HO1149-5-470eb9c3-c033-4c34-a60f-a2a95d325ba6&amp;utm_source=1149&amp;utm_medium=Affiliates&amp;utm_campaign=5</a>	Cappex	For anyone, not much info is required so perfect for previously incarcerated students and others who may hesitate to give out info	\$1,000	now	November 30th, 2021	Student must be in high school, college, or planning to enroll in college in the next 12 months	National
The Charles W. Colson Scholarship <a href="https://correctionalministries.org/colson-scholarship/">https://correctionalministries.org/colson-scholarship/</a>	Wheaton College	Provided to previously incarcerated individuals who want to use their faith in christianity to help other incarcerated people and work within the community and to better the criminal justice system. There is an application for both undergraduate and graduate formerly incarcerated students	Covers tuition and room and board (they have 2 students who won this scholarship this year)	January 1st	February 1st	High school diploma or GED, person must be accepted to Wheaton College and have applied to the Institute for Prison Ministries Certificate Program, be a christian, be a US citizen, have a felony record but not a sexual offense, arson, or repeat violent offenses, be a part of a local church, and get a reference letter.	Illinois- person must be accepted to Wheaton College and have applied to the Institute for Prison Ministries Certificate Program
Quintana Last Mile Scholarship <a href="https://www.instituteonpublicsafetyandsocialjustice.org/">Institute on Public Safety and Social Justice   Adler University</a> (under "partnerships", click the "+" sign next to "Quinatana Last Mile Scholarship")	Adler University: Institute on Public Safety and Social Justice	For students who are currently or formerly incarcerated. It can be used toward school or loan debt that is stopping the person from finishing their degree.	Up to \$10,000 annually	Open all year	July 23rd each year	Preferred that the individual is 2 semesters, or in their last year of school.	National
Dr. Ervin "Vinny" Caraballo Scholarship <a href="https://info.haceonline.org/scholarships?utm_campaign=Caraballo%20Scholarship%202022&amp;utm_content=197335070&amp;utm_medium=social&amp;utm_source=linkedin&amp;hss_channel=lcp-68437">https://info.haceonline.org/scholarships?utm_campaign=Caraballo%20Scholarship%202022&amp;utm_content=197335070&amp;utm_medium=social&amp;utm_source=linkedin&amp;hss_channel=lcp-68437</a>	HACE	For Latinx college students who want to further their education and be involved in their community	\$2,500	Open all year	March 4th	Student must be enrolled full-time in an undergraduate or graduate program, be of Hispanic heritage, and although not required, 1st generation college students are encouraged to apply	National

# Scholarships For Incarcerated or Formerly Incarcerated Students

Scholarship Name/Website	Organization	About	Award Amount	Application Opens	Deadline	Scholarship Requirements	Illinois State/ National
Education Justice Project Scholarships* <a href="https://educationjustice.net/resources/#scholarships">https://educationjustice.net/resources/#scholarships</a>	Education Justice Project (EJP)	Scholarships for a family member of an EJP student, for a family member of an IDOC or IDJJ staff person, for a family member of an incarcerated person, for formerly incarcerated people released from an IDOC adult facility and one to a formerly incarcerated juvenile from an IDJJ facility.	\$1,000	Open all year	November 15th each year	Many people affected by the system can apply such as previously incarcerated adults and juveniles, their family members, correctional staff family members, and people formerly incarcerated in Mexico or deported to Mexico after an incarceration in the US.	National
Education Justice Project Mexico Scholarships-NEW!! <a href="https://educationjustice.net/resources/#scholarships">https://educationjustice.net/resources/#scholarships</a>	Education Justice Project (EJP)	4 of these scholarships are awarded each year.	\$10,000 each	Open all year	March 15th each year	2 are awarded to people who were formerly incarcerated in a U.S. or Mexico prison. 2 more are awarded to individuals who were deported from the US to Mexico or to the family members (immediate family) of someone who was deported to Mexico.	National
Gates Millennium Scholars Program <a href="https://gmsh.org/">https://gmsh.org/</a>	The Gates Foundation	Gives scholarships to previously incarcerated people who were previously denied a higher education and minority students who face financial hardships	Up to \$13,000	July 15th each year	September 15th each year	Requirements: High school senior, Pell-eligible, US citizen, national, or permanent resident, minimum cumulative weighted GPA of 3.3 on a 4.0 scale (or equivalent), student must plan to enroll full-time, in a four-year degree program, at a US accredited college or university.	National

# Scholarships For Incarcerated or Formerly Incarcerated Students

Scholarship Name/Website	Organization	About	Award Amount	Application Opens	Deadline	Scholarship Requirements	Illinois State/ National
<p>The Thurgood Marshall College Fund: Completing the Dream</p> <p><a href="https://www.tmcf.org/students-alumni/scholarship/tmcf-sallie-mae-fund-completing-the-dream-gap-scholarship/">https://www.tmcf.org/students-alumni/scholarship/tmcf-sallie-mae-fund-completing-the-dream-gap-scholarship/</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.salliemae.com/about/scholarship-opportunities/">https://www.salliemae.com/about/scholarship-opportunities/</a></p>	Sallie Mae Fund	<p>Sally Mae has scholarships for high school students, college students, and graduate students.</p> <p>The Thurgood Marshall College Fund has paired with Sally Mae to specifically assist people who are having a large financial issue in terms of academics. Their goal is to assist diverse students financially who are in a two year, four year, or vocational/technical program.</p>	up to \$2500	Open all year	December 31st each year	<p>Uploading a professional image, enrolled in accredited post-secondary school or continuous education program, be enrolled in your final year of school (this year, meaning your degree/program ends Fall 2021 Semester), 2.75 GPA, US citizen or legal permanent resident, be a diverse applicant, demonstrate leadership abilities, have good moral character across all areas of persons life.</p>	National
<p>The Thurgood Marshall College Fund: Bridging the Dream</p> <p><a href="https://www.salliemae.com/landing/bridging-the-dream-for-graduate-st/">https://www.salliemae.com/landing/bridging-the-dream-for-graduate-st/</a></p>	Sallie Mae Fund	Helps graduate students of underrepresented populations achieve their educational goals	\$10,000	expired for 2021-2022 school year (check back for 2022-2023)	Expired for 2021-2022 school year (check back for 2022-2023)	<p>Eligibility requirements can be found here: <a href="https://www.salliemae.com/content/dam/slm/writtencontent/Research/bridging-the-dream-2021-grad-contest-official-rules.pdf">https://www.salliemae.com/content/dam/slm/writtencontent/Research/bridging-the-dream-2021-grad-contest-official-rules.pdf</a></p>	National
<p>Davis-Putter Scholarship Fund</p> <p><a href="https://davisputter.org/application-process-for-incarcerated-student-activists/">https://davisputter.org/application-process-for-incarcerated-student-activists/</a></p>	Davis-Putter Fund	For people who participate in movements of social and economic justice	\$15,000 per year	Open all year	April 1st each year	<p>Requirements found here: <a href="https://davisputter.org/apply-for-scholarships/">https://davisputter.org/apply-for-scholarships/</a></p>	National
<p>Federal Pell Grant</p> <p><a href="https://studentaid.gov/understand-aid/types/grants/pell">https://studentaid.gov/understand-aid/types/grants/pell</a></p>	The Federal Government	Awarded only to those pursuing their undergraduate degrees.	\$6,345	October 1st each year	June 30th each year	Not available to people actively incarcerated. Must fill out FAFSA application	National

# Resources

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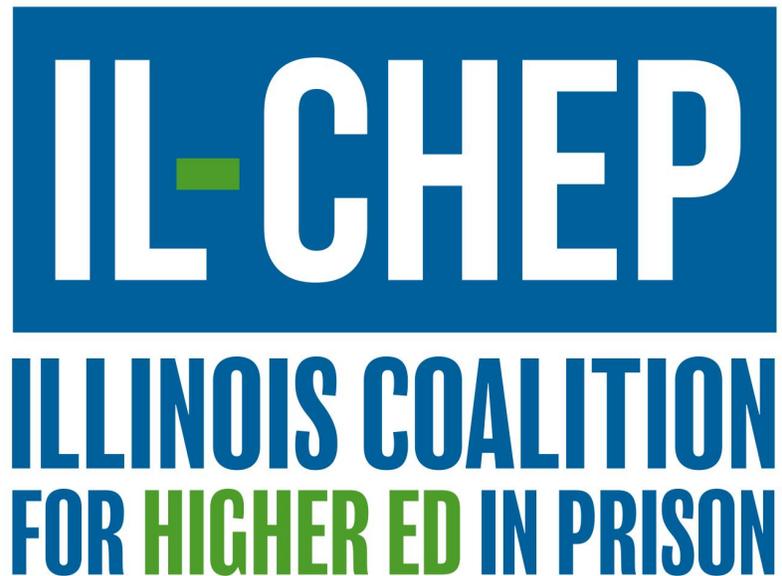
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# 2022 Scholarship Resource Guide



**Thank you to Alaina Hanke for  
research and design support.**

**If you need support filling out  
a scholarship application  
please reach out to us!**

**Illinois Coalition For Higher  
Education in Prison**

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