



2026 Youth Career & College Excellence Summit

"Back to the Future with Technology"

Day 1 – August 8, 2026

10:00 am – 3:00 pm EST



Dr. Christie Intro Video



Link: <https://youtu.be/ksit4r8oABE>

Welcome

2026 Youth Career & College Excellence Summit

Excited to have you join the 6th annual summit!



High school students, college students, & parents!



Boys & Girls Club families



Antioch Baptist Church families



Repeat attendees!



Special guests





Logistics



Mute your lines to minimize disruptions.



Use the chat or come off mute to ask questions.



This event is being recorded.



Slides & recordings available on website after summit.



All times are based on EST.



Those interested in scholarships must have cameras on and engage.

Day 1 Agenda

01 Opening Remarks

02 The Excellence Roadmap: Setting Future-Ready Career & College Goals

03 Industry Insights: Mapping Your Path to Career Excellence

04 Break for Lunch

05 Funding Your Career and College Dreams: Financial Aid & More

06 Beyond the Cap & Gown: Life and Leadership Insights

07 Crafting Compelling Essays & Securing Scholarships

08 Closing Remarks & Scholarship Application Instructions

Day 2 Agenda

01

Welcome & Logistics

02

From Good to Unforgettable Interviews:
Strategies to Command the Conversation

03

Future-Proof Your Wellness: Balancing
Mind, Body, and Ambition

04

Break

05

Tech Power Up: Essential Tech Habits of
the Future

06

Scholarship Winner Announcements &
Closing Remarks

Acknowledgements

Scholarship Sponsors



Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Washington



Buffy Foundation, Inc.



Magnus Temple No. 3



Antioch Baptist Church (Fairfax, VA)



Ultimus IT



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YOUTH CAREER & COLLEGE EXCELLENCE SUMMIT

“Back to the Future with Excellence”



August 8, 2026

Opening Remarks



Mr. Eddie Koen

President & CEO

Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater
Washington

Pastor Kevin B. Taylor

Senior Pastor

Antioch Baptist Church
Fairfax Station, VA



Virtual

YOUTH CAREER & COLLEGE EXCELLENCE SUMMIT

“Back to the Future with Excellence”

The Excellence Roadmap: Setting Future-Ready Career & College Goals

August 8, 2026

FEATURED SPEAKER



Dr. Christie Wilson

Award-winning Author

Director of the Center of Transformation

Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Washington

What Brings You Joy?

Making a Difference



Books & Templates



New AI App

Sons – College Grads

Class of 2026



B.S. in Business
Administration



B.S. in Computer
Science

Objectives

Share impactful post-secondary career & college information & resources to help you:



Assess Your Career Options

Evaluate interests, skills, and values to discover post-secondary career paths.



Explore Training & Education

Discover educational and specialized training opportunities to build essential skills.



Build Your Roadmap

Develop a future-ready career plan and setting goals to achieve excellence.

4-Step Career Exploration (High School, College Students, & Professionals)



Understand your skills, interests, and professional values.



Explore industries, job descriptions, and market demand.



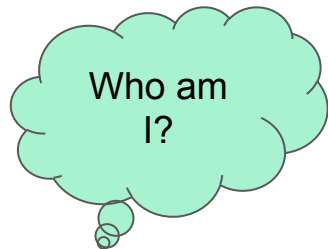
Create your career
roadmap with training and
education goals.



Acquire needed trade schools, college, & other other education.

01. Assess: Personality, Skills, Interests, & Values

Career exploration begins with self-awareness (most important step)



01. Assess: Personality, Skills, Interests, & Values

The Questions Behind the Questions



Personality Traits & Strengths

- What makes you energized or engaged?
- What do friends & family say you're good at?
- What challenges excite you rather than stress you out?



Skills

- What soft skills do you have (leadership, problem solving, communication, critical thinking)?
- What hard skills do you have (artistic, technical, analytical)?
- What skills do you want or need to develop?

01. Assess: Personality, Skills, Interests, & Values

The Questions Behind the Questions



Interests

- What subjects do you enjoy?
- What you choose to learn in your free time?
- What world problems do you want to solve?

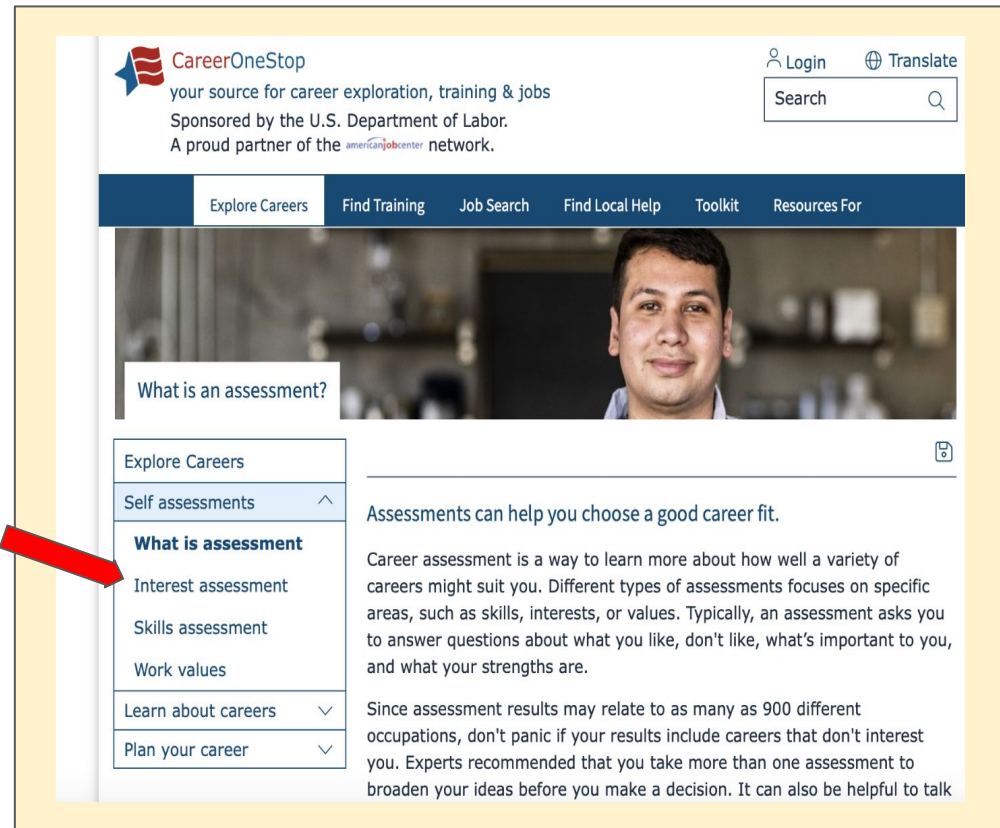


Values

- What makes you energized or engaged?
- What do friends & family say you're good at?
- What challenges excite you rather than stress you out?

The Excellence Roadmap: Setting Future Ready Career & College Goals

01. Assess: Personality, Skills, Interests, & Values



CareerOneStop
your source for career exploration, training & jobs
Sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor.
A proud partner of the [americanjobcenter](#) network.

Login Translate

Search

Explore Careers Find Training Job Search Find Local Help Toolkit Resources For

What is an assessment?

Explore Careers

Self assessments ^

What is assessment

Interest assessment

Skills assessment

Work values

Learn about careers v

Plan your career v

Assessments can help you choose a good career fit.

Career assessment is a way to learn more about how well a variety of careers might suit you. Different types of assessments focuses on specific areas, such as skills, interests, or values. Typically, an assessment asks you to answer questions about what you like, don't like, what's important to you, and what your strengths are.

Since assessment results may relate to as many as 900 different occupations, don't panic if your results include careers that don't interest you. Experts recommended that you take more than one assessment to broaden your ideas before you make a decision. It can also be helpful to talk

CareerOneStop Assessment (30 questions; 5 min)

careeronestop.org

Ready to take the Interest Assessment?

Visit the [Interest Assessment](#) where you can:

- Answer questions about what you like to do, and what you prefer not to do
- Create a list of careers that fit your interests

Learn about the six groups of career interests and work environments below.

- Realistic Career Interests v
- Investigative Career Interests v
- Artistic Career Interests v
- Social Career Interests v
- Enterprising Career Interests v
- Conventional Career Interests v

01. Assess: Personality, Skills, Interests, & Values



Review Career Matches

- Outlook (in-demand jobs & markets)
- Education & Training Requirements
- Median Salary & Wages

Interest Assessment



Identify Careers

Create a customized list of careers that stand out to you.

Use assessment results to narrow down options aligning with your personality and goals.

02. Research Career Options

Make informed career decisions by exploring **roles**, **education/training**, and **salary**.



Leverage Technology

Utilize modern tools like AI, specialized platforms, and apps to discover and analyze paths.



Talk with Professionals

Connect with industry mentors to gain firsthand insights and understand day-to-day realities.



Gain Job Experience

Build hands-on experience through internships or apprenticeships.

02. Research Career Options



Pro Tip

Leverage Technology

Utilize modern tools like AI, specialized platforms, and apps to discover and analyze paths.

AI Tools

- ChatGPT
- Google Gemini
- MS Co-pilot
- Claude
- Perplexity

Five Sample AI Prompts

- 01.** "Based on my interests in **[your interests]**, what are 10 careers I should consider that I might not have thought of?"
- 02.** "What are the fastest-growing careers in **[specific field]** and what skills do they require?"
- 03.** "Create a comparison chart of careers in **[field]** showing education requirements, salary ranges, and growth outlook"
- 04.** "What are the typical career progression paths for someone starting as a **[entry-level position]**?"
- 05.** "What are gaps in my current skills and abilities and the requirements in the **[target career]**?" **(share from your resume)**

02. Research Career Options



Pro Tip

Talk with Professionals

- Mentoring or Job Shadowing
- Informal discussions

Day-to-Day Reality

What does a typical workday look like?

What tasks and responsibilities fill most of the time?

Career Progression

What's the typical career path?

How do people advance in this field?

Work-Life Balance

What are typical work hours?

How much travel is required?

How stressful is the environment?

Geographic Factors

Where are jobs in this field located?

Will you need to live in specific cities or regions?

Industry Trends

Is this field growing due to technology or demographic shifts?

What challenges might affect it?

Compensation

What's the starting entry-level salary range?

What's the realistic long-term salary range?

02. Research Career Options

(High Schoolers & College Students)



Apprenticeships

- **A Paycheck:** Get paid from day one, increases with skills
- **Hands-on Training:** Receive on the job experience
- **A Career:** Leads to long-term competitive salaries
- **Certification:** Receive industry-recognized credentials



 **Pro Tip**
Gain Job Experience



Internship

- **Paid and Unpaid:** Short-term employment opportunities
- **Networking:** Gain practical experience & develop networks
- **Exploration:** Explore different career fields & environments
- **Interview Skills:** Develop and refine application and interview skills

02. Research Career Options

(High Schoolers & College Students)



Military (different branches)

- **ROTC:** Can take courses in high school
- **A Paycheck:** Get paid from day one (medical & dental benefits)
- **Enlisted:** Perform hands on tasks (no degree needed)
- **Officers:** Leaders who plan missions and direct operations (4-year degree needed)
- **ASVAB Test:** Skills and career assessment
- Physical, Basic Training, limit tattoos



💡 **Pro Tip**
Gain Job Experience

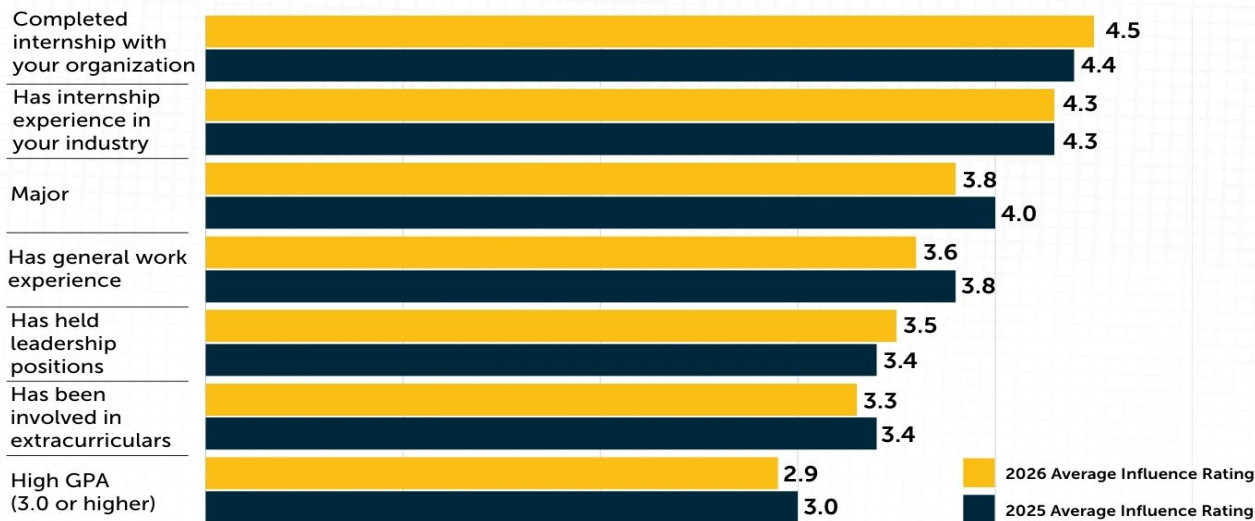


Volunteer

- **Paid and Unpaid:** Short-term employment opportunities
- **Networking:** Gain practical experience & develop networks
- **Exploration:** Explore different career fields & environments
- **Interview Skills:** Develop and refine application and interview skills

02. Research Career Options

Choosing Between Equally Qualified Candidates - Influence of Attributes



Note: 5-point scale, where 1=No influence at all, 2=Not much influence, 3=Somewhat of an influence, 4=Very much influence, and 5=Extreme influence.

Source: *Job Outlook 2026*,
National Association of Colleges and Employers

nace
national
association
of colleges +
employers

Key Takeaway

Internships are Decisive

When candidates are otherwise equally qualified, employers rank **internship & leadership experience** as the most influential attributes.

Securing an internship provides the ultimate competitive advantage.

Speak to this on interviews!

03. Plan - Create Your Career Roadmap

Timeline (8-10th Grade)

ACADEMICS

- **Graduation Requirements**

Understand high school courses and key graduation requirements.

- **Transcript Reviews**

Review your academic transcript each semester.

- **Stay Involved**

Participate in sports, extracurricular activities, and community service.

EXPLORATION

- **Career & Training Programs**

Explore future careers and relevant training/education options.

- **Research Majors**

Actively investigate college majors and career pathways.

- **Campus Visits**

Begin visiting college campuses and specialized schools.

PLANNING & ACTION

- **Scholar Profile**

Develop, update, and refine your personalized Scholar Profile.

- **Recommendations**

List teachers or mentors who could write recommendation letters.

- **Financial Planning**

Discuss and formulate plans on how to pay for your college education.

03. Plan - Create Your Career Roadmap

Timeline (11th Grade)

ACADEMICS

- **Graduation Requirements**

Verify high school courses and key graduation requirements..

- **Keep Grades Up**

Maintain a 3.0 GPA & above to stay competitive.

- **Transcript Reviews**

Understand your transcript process and review it each semester.

EXPLORATION

- **Careers & Majors**

Research and list your potential careers and college majors.

- **Campus Visits**

Visit colleges or specialized schools to explore requirements and costs.

- **Stay Involved**

Continue participating in extracurricular activities and community service.

PLANNING & ACTION

- **Scholar Profile**

Update and refine your Scholar Profile with new achievements.

- **Standardized Tests**

Prepare for and take both the SAT and ACT exams.

- **College Prep**

Research financial aid, scholarships, and list recommendation letter writers.

03. Plan - Create Your Career Roadmap

Timeline (12th Grade)

PREPARATION

- **College vs. Workforce**

Decide if you want to go to college or workforce.

- **Admissions & Transcripts**

Understand admissions requirements and request official transcripts.

- **College & Scholarship Essays**

Write essays (if applicable) early in the fall semester.

APPLICATIONS

- **Apply to Colleges**

Apply to colleges/schools and track all application results.

- **Recommendations**

Obtain official letters of recommendations.

- **Scholar Profile**

Update your Scholar Profile.

NEXT STEPS

- **FAFSA & Financial Aid**

Complete the online FAFSA in Fall and review financial aid offers.

- **Final Decisions**

Choose a college, pay required deposits and housing fees. **(by the deadline)**

- **School Physical**

Schedule your school physical early for the Spring semester.

03. Plan - Create Your Career Roadmap

Timeline (College Students)

ACADEMICS

- **Graduation Requirements**

Understand and verify your graduation requirements clearly.

- **Official Transcripts**

Request official transcripts after each academic semester.

- **FAFSA & Financial Aid**

Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) each academic year.

CAREER PREP

- **Update Your Resume**

Keep your professional resume updated after each semester.

- **Interview Skills**

Continuously refine your interview and professional skills.

- **Internships & Jobs**

Apply for competitive internships or jobs and track results.

SUCCESS STEPS

- **Stay Involved & Lead**

Participate in sports, extracurriculars, and community service.

- **Scholarship Strategy**

Apply for external scholarships to stay fully funded.

- **Recommendations**

Proactively obtain strong letters of recommendation.

03. Plan - Create Your Career Roadmap

Customize your career road map with training and education goals.

Career Roadmap/Plan - Training and Education Goals					
No.	My Goals	Budget	Start Date	End Date	Status
1	Develop a Scholar Profile or Resume	\$0	June/Dec	Aug/Jan	75%
2	Research career & colleges and requirements	\$0	Ongoing	Ongoing	10%
3	List career programs & top 5-10 schools or colleges	\$0			
4	Visits schools & colleges (tours) or attend job fairs	\$0	Sophomore Year	Junior Year	25%
5	Order Transcripts (high school & college students)	\$10.00	As needed	As needed	25%
6	Write Essays	\$0	Summer of Senior Year	Ongoing	0%
7	Register & take the SAT and/or ACT	\$70.00	Sophomore Year	Senior Year	0%
8	Apply to Colleges or for Jobs	\$100-500	Fall of Senior Year	Ongoing	
9	Apply for Financial Aid (FAFSA)	\$0	October Senior Year	Every year in school	
10	Search & Apply for Scholarships	\$0	Summer of Senior Year	Ongoing	

04. Act - Training and Education



Professional, Certification, or License

Some careers value industry certifications as much as formal degrees (IT, cybersecurity, real estat, etc.). May require taking an exam and other requirements.



Trade or Tech Training

Focused programs to prepare for specific careers often in less time to complete and with less expense than traditional college.



Community College

Two-year associate degree that could lead to a career or provide affordable general education credits that transfer to four-year universities.



Four-Year College or University

Obtain a bachelor's degree. Generally more expensive than other training pathways but offers extensive long-term career benefits.

Colleges - Know the Difference

Public and Private Colleges & Universities

Public Institutions

- Primarily funded by federal or state government.
- Generally larger student bodies than private schools.
- In-state students benefit from lower in-state tuition.
- Out-of-state students likely pay more tuition.

Private Institutions

- Often operate as educational, non-profit organizations.
- Do not receive primary funding from government.
- One tuition rate regardless of residency (in-state vs. out-of-state).
- Usually more costly than public schools.

Know the Difference

PWIs & HBCUs



Predominately White Institutions (PWI)

- Institutions of higher learning.
- Whites make up roughly 50% of PWI students..
- Can be public or private.
- Over 9 million students attend PWIs each year.
- Offer quality and affordable education.



Historically Black Colleges & Universities (HBCU)

- HBCUs have existed for almost 200 years.
- Created to provide quality education when access was restricted.
- There are 107 HBCUs in the United States.
- African Americans make up roughly 73% of HBCU students.
- Can be public or private.
- Over 213,000 students attend HBCUs each year.
- Offer a quality and affordable education.

Factors to Consider

When Choosing the Right College/School



1. Research & List

Compile a list (**5-10 recommended**). Review programs, admissions, costs, and requirements.



2. Personal Fit

Find a college or school that fits your unique personality, interests, and future goals.



3. Affordability

Consider the total cost of attendance and plan how much you can realistically pay.



4. Campus Visits

Visit college campuses using both virtual tours and in-person visits.



5. Rank Factors

Rank key criteria: courses, distance from home, student-teacher ratio, and campus size.



6. Search Tools

Leverage specialized online search tools to quickly discover and research colleges.

Protect Your Brand

You are a Brand... Set the Tone

How you show up matters!

- **In person** – Physical presence and attitude
- **On paper** – Resumes, applications, essays
- **Online** – Social media and digital footprint
- **In school** – Academic dedication and integrity
- **On the court/field** – Athletic sportsmanship

Scholars Must:

- **Have a positive attitude**
- **Practice self-discipline & balance**
- **Set the example** as a leader
- **Be respectful** to everyone
- **Communicate well** and clearly
- **Accept** constructive feedback

How Will You Differentiate Yourself from the Competition?

Build Your Scholar Profile

Every scholar should have one!

What is a Scholar Profile?

One-page summary (tells your story)

- Brag sheet
- Self-reflection
- Resume

Tells your story on paper.

Helps others get to know You!



Build Your Scholar Profile

Key Sections & Practical Applications

Profile Sections

1. **Professional picture** (optional)
2. **Name, address, contact info**
3. **Objective** (career/college/major)
4. **Educational history** (current)
5. **Honors and accomplishments**
6. **Employment experience**
7. **Extra-curricular activities** (leadership)
8. **Community service activities**
9. **Relevant courses**
10. **Interests/hobbies**

How You Can Use It

- **College applications**
- **Scholarship apps**
- **Letters of recommendation**
- **Essay writing**
- **Employment opportunities**



Build Your Scholar Profile

Download the Scholar Profile (Template)

Template Preview



John Doe
12345 College Bound Drive
City, State Zip Code
Home: (123) 456-789; Mobile: (123) 911-4111
Email: john.doe@yahoo.com

Objective: To attend XX university and obtain a degree in XX.

Education: High School: XX High School, City, State (Graduation: 06/13/20XX)
Current GPA: 3.6; Rank: 29/283
ACT Scores: Composite: 24; English (24); Math (30); Reading (21); Science (20)
College Plan: Hampton University (Accepted on 1/20/20XX)
Enrollment Date: Fall 2018
Intended Degree/Major: Bachelor of XX in XX

Honors and Awards:

- Honor Roll, (20XX - Present)
- National Honor Society Induction, 20XX
- Top Alternate Current/Direct Current Student, (20XX-20XX)

Employment Experience:

- Cashier, McDonalds, City, VA (20XX-20XX)
- Walmart Cashier, City, VA (20XX)

Student Organizations/Extracurricular Activities:

- Student Government Association Class Representative, (20XX-Present)
- National Honor Society, (20XX-Present)
- Future Business Leaders of America Member, (20XX-20XX)

Community Service Activities:

- Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated, Adopt a Highway Project, (20XX)
- Volunteered at Galleria Mall on Summer Family Nights, (20XX)
- Volunteered at the XX Community Center, (20XX)

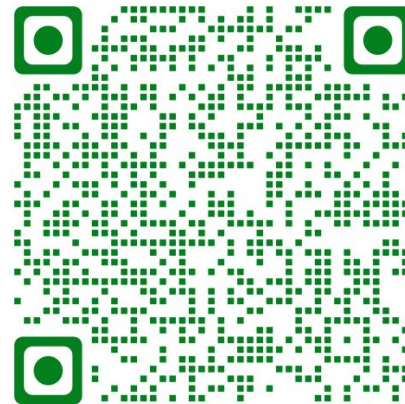
Relevant Courses:

- Algebra II
- Graphics Design I
- Oceanography

Interests/Hobbies:

- Cooking
- Reading

Scan to Download



Or access directly via link:

<https://www.edexinc.com/2026ycces>

Applying to Schools & Colleges

Application Parts

- 1 Application
- 2 Official Transcript
- 3 Essays
- 4 Letters of Recommendations
- 5 Test Scores



Timing & Deadlines

Apply during the **FALL** of senior year (Sept - Dec). Follow each college's unique instructions and deadlines.



How to Apply

Submit applications online/electronically via college sites, web portals, or by mail.



Application Portals

Common App: www.commonapp.org

Common Black College App: commonblackcollegeapp.com



Application Fees

Fees vary for each college, typically ranging from **\$0 to \$100**.

The Common Application (App)

www.commonapp.org

Massive College Network

- Submit a single application to over 1,000 participating colleges.
- Research and apply to multiple schools through one portal.

Streamlined & Reusable

- Create one profile; information is reused across applications.
- Search colleges and apply when the cycle opens on August 1st.

Cost & Application Fees

- The Common App platform itself is 100% free to use.
- Roughly 45% of participating schools do not charge any fee.



The Common Black College Application (App)

www.commonblackcollegeapp.com

Unified Application Network

- Students can submit one college applications to 67 HBCUs.
- Research and apply to multiple colleges through one website.

Affordable & Reusable

- Create an account and apply to multiple colleges for about \$20.
- Reused when applying for multiple colleges on the site.

Simple Setup

- Select your top HBCUs to apply.
- Upload your test scores.

The graphic is a promotional poster for the Common Black College Application (App). It features three students on the left and the founder, Robert Mason, on the right. In the center, there is a logo for 'GET EDUCated! EDU, Inc.' and the text 'COMMON BLACK COLLEGE APPLICATION'. Below this, it says 'Apply to any number of the 67 HBCUs below, at the same time, for only \$35.' and 'MEMBER INSTITUTIONS'. A list of 67 member institutions is provided in two columns. Social media handles for @commonblackapp are listed at the bottom.

MEMBER INSTITUTIONS

Alabama A & M University	Grambling State University	Rust College
Alabama State University	Harris Stowe State University	Saint Augustine's University
Allen University	Huston-Tillotson University	Shaw University
Acorn State University	Jarvis Christian College	South Carolina State University
Bethune-Cookman University	Johnson C. Smith University	Southern Union and ABM College
Benedict College	Kentucky State University	Stillman College
Bennett College	Lane College	Talladega College
Bowie State University	Lincoln University (MO)	Tougaloo College
Central State University	Livingstone College	Tuskegee University
Charles R. Drew Univ. of Med & Sci.	LeMoyne-Owen College	Univ. of Arkansas Pine Bluff
Cheney University	Mississippi Valley State University	Univ. of Maryland Eastern Shore
Clark Atlanta University	Morris College	Univ. of the Virgin Islands
Coppin State University	Morgan State University	Virginia State University
Dillard University	Norfolk State University	Virginia University of Lynchburg
Edward Waters College	Paul Quinn College	Voorhees College
Florida Memorial University	Paine College	Wilberforce University
Fort Valley State University	Philander Smith College	Wiley College

Robert Mason, Founder

Take One or Both SAT / ACT Tests

Core Purpose

Measures what you learned in high school to determine potential academic readiness and success in college.

Regional Preferences

Some regions predominantly require the **ACT**, while others heavily favor the **SAT**.

The Test-Optional Landscape

More colleges are shifting to test-optional admissions. In these cases:

- High school GPA and academic essays will be weighted heavier.
- Scores **may still be required** for merit-based scholarships.

Key Strategy

Always send your official SAT/ACT scores to **all** the colleges you are applying to.

US Test-Taking Prevalence Map

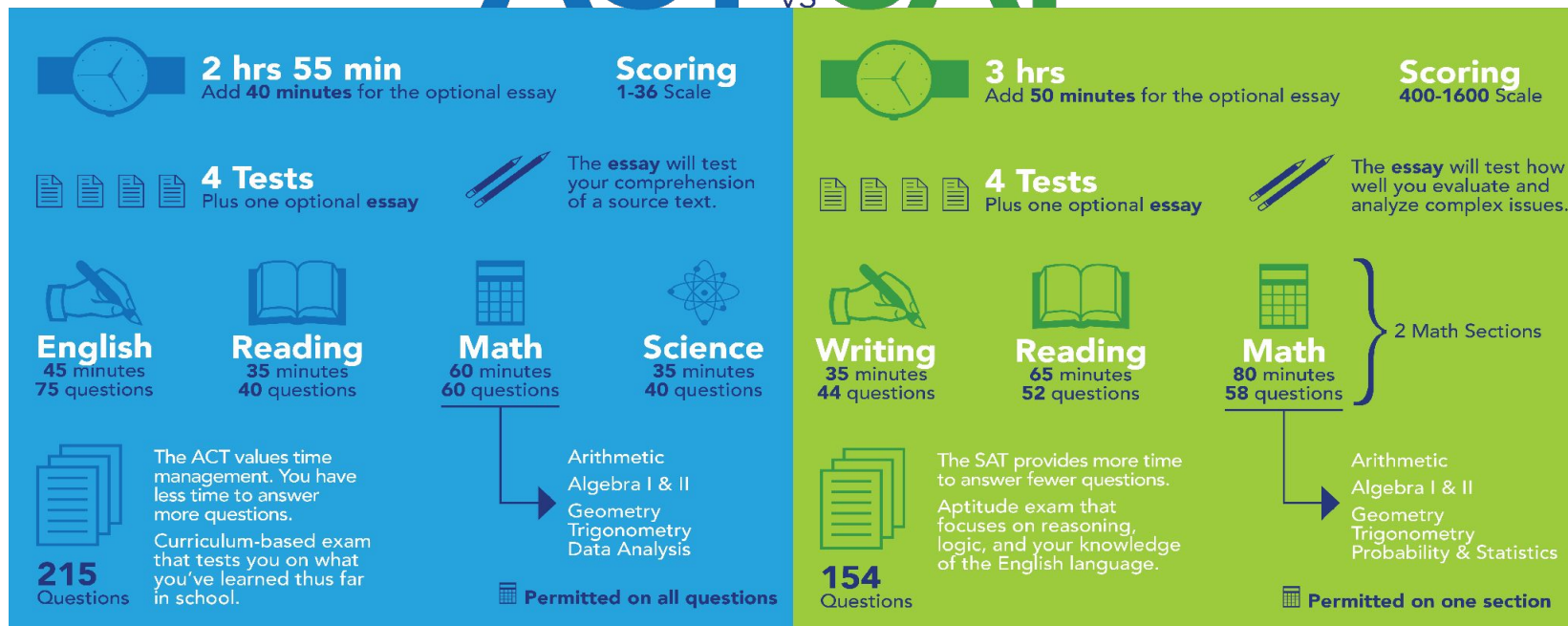


Historically, coastal regions leaned toward the **SAT**, while the Midwest and South favored the **ACT**.

SAT/ACT Test Differences

ACT vs SAT

Key Differences Between the Two Exams



Upcoming ACT Dates

Register: <http://www.act.org/>

Cost: \$68 (\$93 with essay)

ACT Test Date	Regular Registration Deadline
September 6, 2025	August 1, 2025
October 18, 2025	September 12, 2025
December 13, 2025	November 7, 2025
February 14, 2026	January 9, 2026
April 11, 2026	March 6, 2026
June 13, 2026	May 8, 2026
July 11, 2026	June 5, 2026

ACT Website



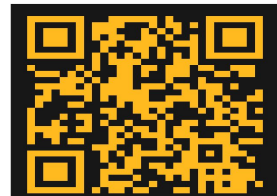
Upcoming SAT Dates

Register: <https://www.collegeboard.org/>

Cost: \$68

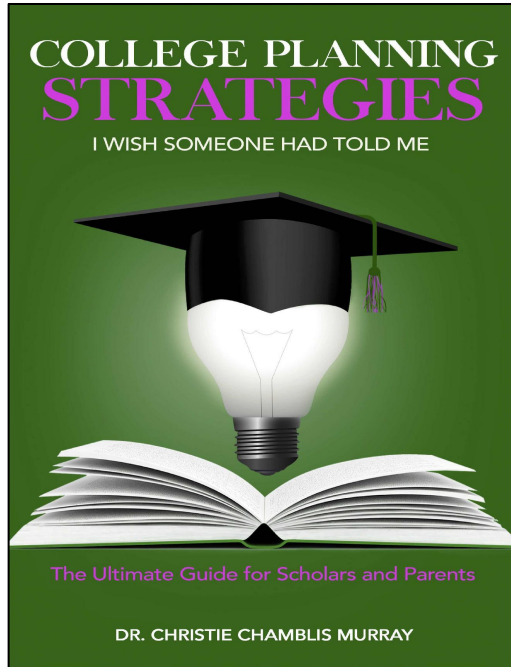
SAT Test Date	Registration Deadline
August 22, 2026	August 7, 2026
September 12, 2026	August 28, 2026
October 3, 2026	September 18, 2026
November 7, 2026	October 23, 2026
December 5, 2026	November 20, 2026
March 6, 2027	February 19, 2027
May 1, 2027	April 16, 2027
June 5, 2027	May 21, 2027

SAT Website



Give-A-Ways (2)

College Planning Strategies I Wish Someone Had Told Me



Share **two goals** that you would include on your **Career Roadmap**.

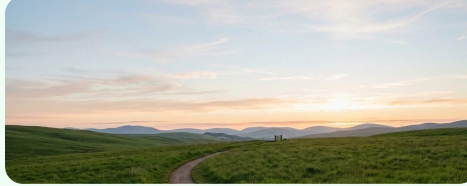
The Excellence Roadmap: Setting Future Ready Career & College Goals

Closing Remarks



Self-Assessment

Take time to assess where you are, your interests, values, and professional goals.



Lifelong Journey

Career exploration is a lifelong process. Stay open to shift and pivot as you grow. **Refine your plans.**



Skills Growth

Every path requires active skill development through training, education, or certification.



Entrepreneurship

Keep business ventures on the table to cultivate multiple streams of income.



Seek Support & Resources

Share your career aspirations with others and actively ask for help and resources.



Do the Small Things Well

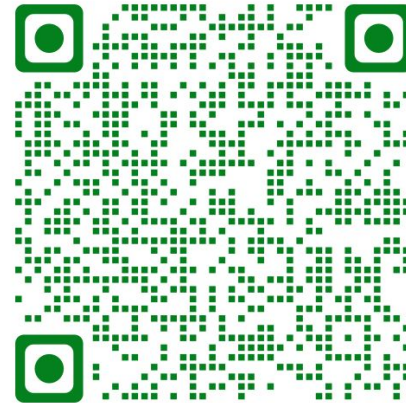
Check your email, respond promptly, comply with deadlines.

Questions?

Dr. Christie Wilson



Scan to Download



Or access directly via link:

<https://www.edexinc.com/2026ycces>



Virtual

YOUTH CAREER & COLLEGE EXCELLENCE SUMMIT

"Back to the Future with Excellence"

Industry Insights: Mapping Your Path to Career Excellence

August 8, 2026

MODERATOR



JADA HOLLOWAY

NORFOLK STATE
UNIVERSITY

PANELISTS



KEONA HOLDEN

BOOZ ALLEN



KOURTNEY HAYES

AMAZON WEB
SERVICES



QUEEN MCKNIGHT

QUEEN ENERGY
CONSERVATION



YOUTH CAREER & COLLEGE EXCELLENCE SUMMIT



Break of Lunch

Return at 12:30 PM EST



Virtual

YOUTH CAREER & COLLEGE EXCELLENCE SUMMIT

"Back to the Future with Excellence"

Funding Your Career & College Dreams: Financial Aid & More

August 8, 2026

FEATURED SPEAKER



Jacquelyn Cottom

**Director of Online Education
National Association of Student
Financial Aid Administrators**



Virtual

YOUTH CAREER & COLLEGE EXCELLENCE SUMMIT

"Back to the Future with Excellence"

Beyond the Cap & Gown: Life & Leadership

August 8, 2026

PANELISTS



HANNAH PAIGE
HOWARD
UNIVERSITY



EMMANUEL BASKERVILLE
HAMPTON
UNIVERSITY



SKYLAR HURST
UNIV OF ALABAMA
BIRMINGHAM



DIONNE YOUNG
HARVARD
UNIVERSITY



Virtual

YOUTH CAREER & COLLEGE EXCELLENCE SUMMIT

"Back to the Future with Excellence"

Crafting Compelling Essays & Securing Scholarships

August 8, 2026

FEATURED SPEAKER



Dr. Christie Wilson

Award-winning Author

Director of the Center of Transformation

Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Washington

Topics Covered



- 01 What Are Scholarships
- 02 Who Offers Scholarships
- 03 Types of Scholarships
- 04 Finding Scholarships
- 05 Applying for Scholarships
- 06 Writing Compelling Essays
- 07 Leveraging AI in Essays

Over \$1.7 Trillion in U.S Student Loan Debt

U.S. Department of Education



GOAL: WIN SCHOLARSHIPS!!!

Reduce or Eliminate Student Loans

What Are Scholarships?

What Are Scholarships?



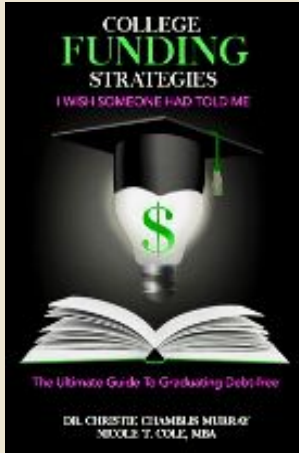
**Gift aid or free money to help
fund your education
you DO NOT have to pay back!**

**Who Do You Know...
Has Won A Scholarship?**



Book & Workbook Templates

“College Funding Strategies I Wish Someone Had Told Me”



Workbook Templates

- Template 1. Funding Situation Assessment
- Template 2. Calculate Your EFC
- Template 3. Customize Your Funding Approach
- Template 4. Scholar Financial Aid Checklist
- Template 5. Sample Award Letter
- Template 6. Scholar Profile
- Template 7. Sample Letter of Recommendation
- Template 8: Scholarship Essay Prompt
- Template 9: Funding/Scholarship Tracking Spreadsheet
- Template 10. Timeline Checklists by Funding Stages
- Template 11. College Funding Plan

<https://www.investnothers.com/college-funding-book-templates>

These Strategies Work!

College Education Debt-free Success Stories



~\$150,000 in Scholarships

**Hampton University
Graduate**

Navy ROTC Scholarship
Commissioned Naval Officer
Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.



~\$130,000 in Scholarships

**Norfolk State University
Class of 2026**

Computer Science Major
Division 1 Football Scholarship
Academic Scholarships

Who Offers Scholarships?

Who Offers Scholarships?



Colleges/University



Non-profits



Companies



Community Groups

Types of Scholarships

Many Types of Scholarships

Need-based

Merit-based

Interest-based

Military

Athletic

Major/Career

There's a scholarship for *Everyone*!!

Major

Grades/Test Scores

Gender

Career Interests

Ethnicity

Talents

Disability

Low Income

First Generation

Location



Finding Scholarships

Search for Unique & Low Competition Scholarships

Small award amounts.

Few people know they exist.

Few people apply for.

Few people are eligible for.

Few people want to write essays.

Few people want to obtain letters of recommendation.

No one is You!
Focus on what make you different/unique.

Expanding Your Scholarship Search



**Explore What Makes
You or Your Situations
Unique**



**Leverage School
Resources**



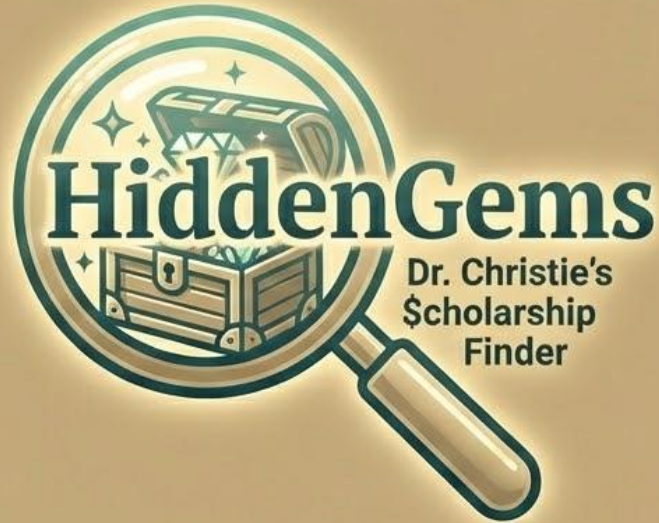
**Prioritize Local
Scholarships**



**Use Dr. Christie's
Scholarship Finder:
HiddenGems**

New Scholarship Finder

DEMO



An AI-powered Scholarship Finder

www.investNothers.com/hiddengems

HiddenGems \$cholarship Finder

Downloadable Spreadsheet (.csv or .pdf)

STUDENT PROFILE									
Name	John Doe								
Location	Stafford, Stafford County, Virginia								
GPA	3.2								
Academic Level	Graduate								
Major	Computer Science								
Interests	Graduate School, Photography								
Ethnicity	African American / Black								
#	Name	Description	Amount	Match Confidence	Organization Homepage	Deadline	Essay (Y/N)	Letter of Recommendation (Y/N)	Test Score (Y/N)
1	BDPA Northern Virginia Chapter Scholarship	For African American students in the DC/NoVA area pursuing careers in Information Technology or Computer Science. Honors technical proficiency and chapter involvement.	Varies	High	https://bdpa.org/				
2	CBCF Spouses Education Scholarship	Available to students in the congressional district of a CBC member (includes Stafford area). Open to graduate students of all majors; focuses on community involvement and leadership.	Varies	Medium	https://www.cbcfinc.org/				
3	Fredericksburg-Stafford Alumni Chapter Kappa Alpha Psi Scholarship	The Kappa Foundation provides educational grants to minority male students from the	Varies	High	http://www.fredericksburgkappas.org/				

Dr. Christie's Scholarship Tracking Spreadsheet

<https://www.investnothers.com/college-funding-book-templates>

Helps you **manage scholarships effectively**. It's a powerful tool for staying organized.

[illegible]

Staying on Top of Deadlines with the Spreadsheet



Time Management:



Use the **spreadsheet** to create a timeline for applications



Set **reminders** for upcoming deadlines



Break down tasks into smaller, manageable steps

Prioritization:



Identify scholarships with the highest award amounts and best fit



Focus your efforts on the most promising opportunities

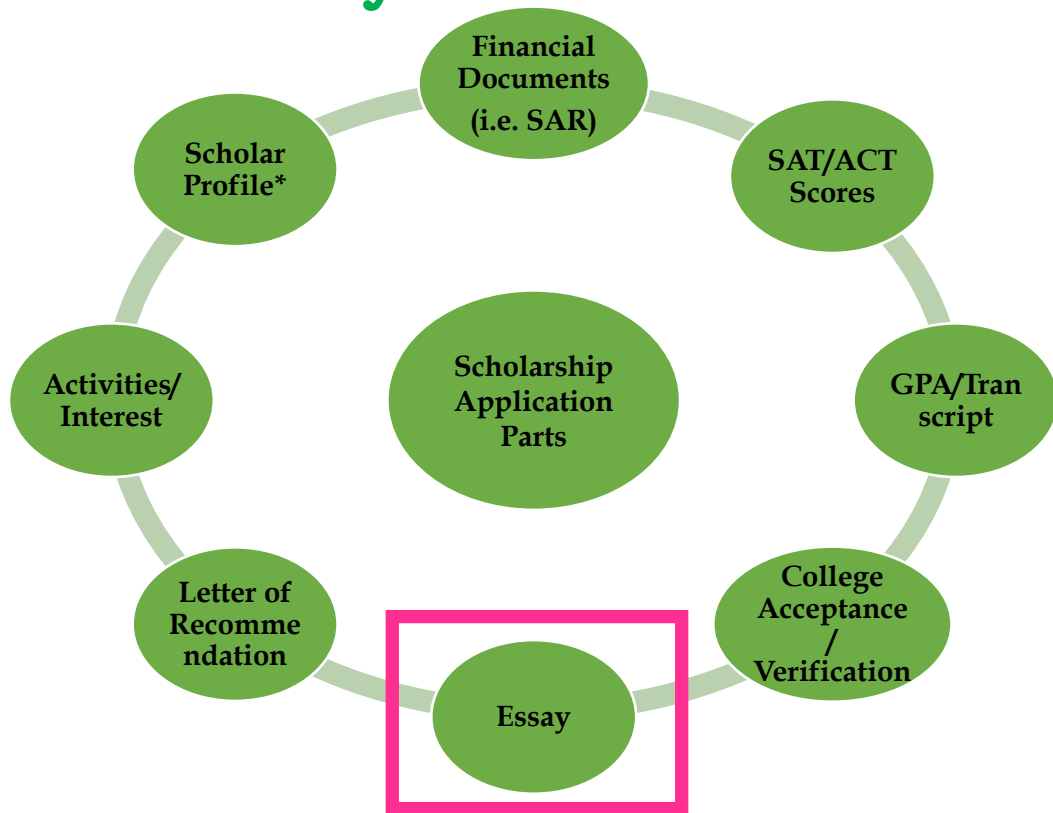


Avoid spreading yourself too thin

Applying for Scholarships

Scholarship Application Parts

Essays Are Critical!



Scholarship Application Guidance

- ❖ Read the scholarship application instructions thoroughly.
- ❖ Follow the instructions (word counts, deadlines, essays, LORs).
- ❖ Submit the scholarship application ON TIME!
- ❖ Save all content **BUT** customize your applications to the scholarship.
- ❖ Focus on writing a compelling essay.

Writing a Compelling Essay



Scholarship Essays Matter!



Stand out from other applicants.



Tell your story in a compelling way.



Demonstrate **self-awareness** and passion.



Share how you want to **make a difference** (community, society, etc.).

The Power of AI in Scholarship Success

If used appropriately, AI can be your secret weapon! It helps you:



Amplify your
unique qualities



Refine essays to
highlight your strengths



Find relevant
scholarships quickly



Organize application
materials efficiently



Using AI Tools: Ethical and Effective Practices



Use AI **responsibly**:



Ensure **originality**: Don't plagiarize!



Fact-check AI content: Verify information.



Avoid over-reliance: AI is a tool, not a replacement for your brain.

Maintaining Your Authenticity with AI



Your authentic voice matters!



Use AI to **enhance**, not replace, your personal stories.



Preserve your genuine voice and perspective.



Let your **personality** shine through.



Create your **narrative** or approach before leveraging AI.

Avoiding Over-Reliance on AI in Essays



Critical Thinking

- ✓ Always **evaluate** AI-generated suggestions critically.
- ✓ Don't accept AI content at face value; **fact check!**
- ✓ Ensure your essay reflects your own **independent thinking, voice, and experiences.**



Creativity

- ➔ Use AI as a tool to **spark** your creativity, not replace it.
- ➔ Embrace your own **unique ideas** and insights.
- ➔ Avoid becoming overly dependent on AI for content generation.

Breaking Down Scholarship Essay Prompts

Understanding the Question



Identify the **key words** and **themes** in the prompt to understand what the scholarship committee is looking for. Brainstorm relevant **experiences** and **insights** to gather ideas.

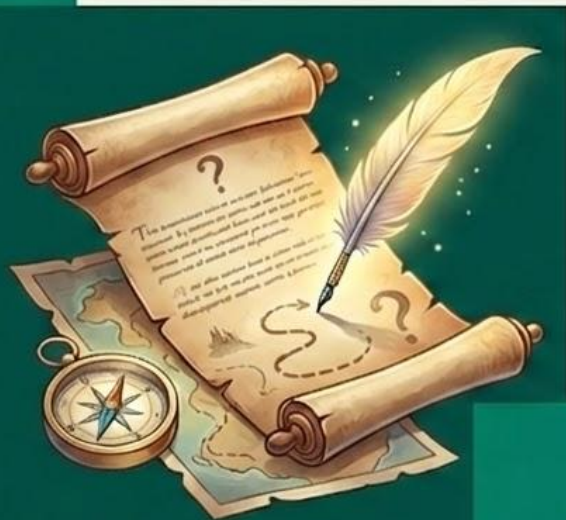
Answering All Parts



Address every aspect of the prompt fully, providing specific **examples** to support your claims. Stay **focused** and avoid rambling to maintain **clarity** and coherence.

Essay Prompt

"The lessons we take from obstacles we encounter can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you **faced a challenge**, setback, or failure. How did it **affect you**, and **what did you learn** from the experience?" *2025-2026 Common App Prompt*



Understand the Question

- Demonstrate self-awareness.
- Ability to adapt to different situations.



Answer All Parts

- Explain your challenge.
- Share how it affected you.
- Discussed what you learned.

Write a few sentences
Use Google Slides or MS Word

Crafting Your Personal Narrative

Key Elements:

- A **compelling opening** that grabs the reader's attention.
- Clear **challenges** you've overcome.
- Significant **achievements** that demonstrate your potential.
- Alignment of your **goals** with the scholarship's mission.



Using AI for Brainstorming Ideas

Generating Ideas

- Use AI to explore different angles on the essay prompt.
- Identify potential themes and topics, and get inspiration for your opening and closing statements.
- This can help broaden your perspective and uncover new possibilities.



Maintaining Originality

- Use AI-generated ideas as a starting point, not the final product.
- Infuse your essay with your own unique voice and experiences.
- Avoid simply copying and pasting AI content to ensure authenticity.



Refining Essay Structure with AI

Enhancing Clarity



- ✓ Ask AI to summarize your main points and identify areas where your essay is unclear or confusing.
- ✓ Revise and rewrite those sections for better understanding and precision.

Improving Coherence



- ➡ Use AI to create a **logical flow** of ideas, ensuring each paragraph connects to the **overall theme** of the essay.
- ➡ Use transition words to guide the reader through your argument and maintain a smooth narrative.

Human

AI Brainstorming, Enhancing, & Refining Tools

Google Gemini



- Great to assist with brainstorming
- Used for paraphrasing
- Research tool
- Integration with Google apps

Website: <https://gemini.google.com/>

Claude



- Ethical writing.
- Paraphrasing
- Summarizing and analysis.

Website: www.claude.ai

Perplexity



- Provides accurate, trusted
- Used for paraphrasing
- Summarizing from multiple sources.
- Provides inline citations.

Website: www.perplexity.ai

Enhancing Grammar and Style Without Losing Voice

Overview:



Proofreading with AI

- Use AI to identify and correct grammar errors, typos, and punctuation mistakes.
- Ensure your essay is polished and professional.



Style Suggestions

- Use AI to suggest alternative word choices and sentence structures.
- Avoid overly complex language that obscures your message.
- Keep your phrasing natural and authentic.

AI Grammar Tools

Grammarly

(<https://www.grammarly.com>)



Grammar, spelling checker



Tone and clarity suggestions



Plagiarism Checker



AI Checker

QuillBot

(<https://quillbot.com/>)



Paraphrasing



Summarizing



Grammar Checker

Human

Get Help with Proofreading



-  • **Never submit** an essay that was not proofread by someone other than you.
-  • **Find a trusted person** to review your essay to gain different perspectives.
-  • **Minimizing Blind Spots:**
 - Identify areas where your essay is **unclear or confusing**.
 - Combine AI insights with personal feedback for a **stronger, more persuasive essay**.

Final Checklist for Winning Scholarship Essays



Authenticity:

- Does your essay reflect your **true self**?
- Does it convey your **unique voice** and perspective?

Structure:

- Is your essay **well-organized** and easy to follow?
- Does it have a clear **introduction, body, and conclusion**?

Grammar:

- Is your essay **free** of grammatical errors and typos?
- Is it **polished** and professional?

Responsiveness to Prompt:

- Does your essay **fully answer** the prompt?
- Does it address all aspects of the question?

Alignment with Scholarship Goals:

- Does your essay demonstrate your **passion** for the scholarship's mission?
- Does it showcase your **potential** to contribute to the field, community or society?

Closing

Key Points



Use AI as a **companion** or tool. Use AI **ethically** and **effectively** to support your applications.



Organize your scholarship search with **Dr. Christie's Scholarship Tracking Spreadsheet**.



Strengthen your essays while keeping your **authentic voice**.



Remember to always **credit** your **sources** and maintain **academic integrity**.



Recommended AI Tools



Grammarly



Perplexity



Claude



Quillbot

Resources



HiddenGems \$Scholarship Finder App:

<https://www.investnothers.com/hiddengems>



Scholarship Tracking Spreadsheet:

<https://www.investnothers.com/college-funding-book-templates>



Book & Workbooks:

www.investnothers.com/shop



Stay Connected



Facebook Group
Scholarship for Scholars



Instagram
@ScholarshipsforScholars



TikTok
@docchristie



YouTube
@investnothers6550



Questions?



Dr. Christie Wilson

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www.investNothers.com



Virtual

YOUTH CAREER & COLLEGE EXCELLENCE SUMMIT

“Back to the Future with Excellence”

August 8, 2026

Closing Remarks & Scholarship Instructions



YOUTH CAREER & COLLEGE EXCELLENCE SUMMIT

Scholarship Instructions

Submission Deadline: Tonight by 11:59 PM EST!

Eligible Scholars

- **High school** (9-12th)
- **College students** (Freshman-Senior; Graduate)
- **Vocational, Trade School, & Community College**

Summit Requirements

- **Attendance:** Attended both days of the summit
- **Engagement:** Camera on and actively participate



YOUTH CAREER & COLLEGE EXCELLENCE SUMMIT

Scholarship Instructions

SUBMISSION DEADLINE

**Tonight by
11:59 PM EST!**

Please ensure all materials are successfully uploaded before the system closes.

What You Need to Submit

- ✓ **Online application**
- ✓ **Academic Verification:** College acceptance, or enrollment letter.
- ✓ **GPA:** Report card or unofficial transcript.
- ✓ **Scholar Profile:** Develop & upload profile (template on website)
- ✓ **Headshot Photo:** Clear headshot (.jpg/.png).
- ✓ **Essay:** 500-word written essay.
- ✓ **Personal Video:** 60-90 second video.



YOUTH CAREER & COLLEGE EXCELLENCE SUMMIT

Essay & Video Details

Essay (500 words)

Provide a 500-word essay on one career aspiration you are interested in pursuing. Include (1) a school or college that offers a training or career program that you are interested in, (2) describe the cost of attending that school or college and whether you have a plan to cover the cost, (3) share what or who inspired you to choose that career, and (4) one way you will make a difference in that career. Feel free to share any statistics or facts that highlight the importance of your career field. using AI is not acceptable

Video (60-90 sec)

Create a personalized video sharing key takeaways from the first Day of the YCCES (Aug. 8th) and share goals you would include in your Career Roadmap. Please be creative and innovative with your video.



YOUTH CAREER & COLLEGE EXCELLENCE SUMMIT

Essay & Video Details

Essay (500 words)

Write about one career aspiration you are interested in pursuing, including:

- 1. Program:** A school/college offering relevant training
- 2. Cost:** Program cost & your plan to cover it
- 3. Inspiration:** What or who inspired this career choice
- 4. Impact:** How you will make a difference with this career

Feel free to include statistics or facts highlighting your field.

⚠ AI usage is strictly prohibited

Personal Video (60-90 sec)

Create a personalized video sharing key takeaways and future plans:

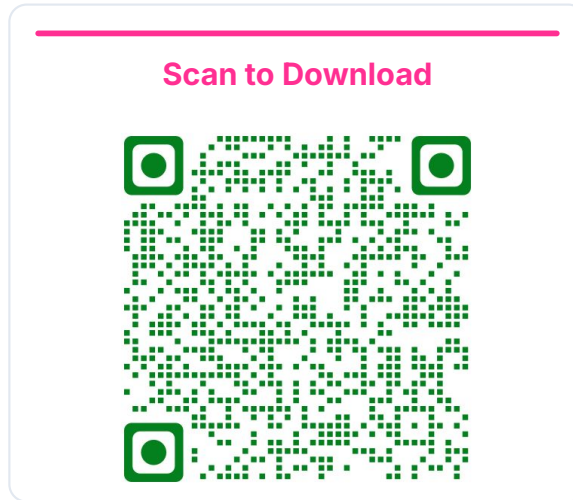
- **Day 1 Takeaways:** Share key learnings from the first day of the YCCES (Aug. 8th).
- **Career Roadmap:** Outline the specific goals you would include in your Career Roadmap.

Be creative and innovative with your video!

Links Scholarship Application & Scholar Profile Template

educationalexcellenceinc@gmail.com

Submit by 11:59 PM EST



<https://www.edexinc.com/2026ycces>

See You Tomorrow at 3:00 pm EST (same link)