



Bright Minds Scholarship Planning

Individuals, families, or organizations set up scholarship funds for a variety of reasons, such as to honor or memorialize a loved one, support educational opportunities and college attainment, establish a family or organizational legacy of giving, or support an educational institution. As the Howard County public schools education foundation, Bright Minds has awarded more than \$60,000 in scholarships to 50 students since its founding. These scholarships make post-secondary education possible for many recipients and more accessible for all recipients.

Bright Minds provides staff assistance, fundraising and community expertise, resources and tools, and a variety of services that help donors set up and award scholarship dollars to students.

Where to Start

Establishing a scholarship fund can be done easily and quickly based on family or organization needs. Bright Minds can set up a customized donation page for the scholarship fund with information about why the scholarship is being established and who it will support. If the scholarship is established in honor or in memory of a loved one, the donation page will include a photo and information about that person. This page can be customized and updated to support the scholarship over time.

Other Planning Steps

During the setup process, Bright Minds work with families and other relevant stakeholders to determine how a scholarship will be defined and administered. This includes:

1. Name and purpose

Scholarship funds can be created to honor or memorialize someone special, to honor the passions or interests of an individual, or on behalf of a business or organization. Whatever the reason, the scholarship name will be defined by those who establish the scholarship. If a donor prefers anonymity through the foundation, a name can be chosen that reflects its charitable purpose.

2. Who to support

An important step to set up a scholarship fund is identifying the students who will be supported by the scholarship. The profile of students to be supported can have any number of diverse and unique characteristics. Bright Minds scholarships are often tied to a particular school community, and we work in close partnership with school teams to define and award scholarships. Memorial scholarships in particular have deep ties to each school community, and schools help deliver scholarships that honor the unique life and legacy of a former student, staff member, or community member.

3. What to give

Scholarships are established and maintained with donations contributed to Bright Minds by families, schools, organizations, and other donors. Donations may be contributed annually or over time, and they are held and managed by Bright Minds in designated fund accounts in accordance with good accounting practices established for 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations. Scholarship funds are assessed a small fee

annually for administration and management. Memorandums of Understanding define the terms and details of each scholarship. All donations received to a scholarship fund are acknowledged and receipts are provided. Bright Minds provides annual fund status reports to families or fund owners.

4. Eligibility requirements

Bright Minds and school teams will recommend scholarship eligibility requirements and selection criteria that reflect the priorities and goals of each scholarship. For some scholarships, this means establishing an application and process that collects a range of materials used to identify the most qualified students. For other scholarships, school teams are relied upon to identify or recommend candidates that best match the scholarship requirements and criteria.

5. Selection process

The scholarship selection process is developed in coordination with families, school teams, and other relevant stakeholders. Families may choose to select the scholarship recipient from all applicants or a shortlist of candidates, or school and community review teams can make the selection. In both instances, Bright Minds anonymizes candidates so the review and selection process maintains fairness and integrity. Bright Minds scholarship platform is available to support the application and review process where useful.

6. Timeline

Most scholarships are administered in the Spring and are awarded during end-of-school-year award ceremonies. Families may present the award to recipients at this ceremony, or Bright Minds and school teams can do this on behalf of a family or organization. Scholarship payments are made directly to matriculating institutions during the summer. In some instances, scholarships are designed to support students who will not matriculate and these awards may be paid directly to students.

7. Recognition

Bright Minds will assess with families or organizations their interest in promoting and enhancing the scholarship fund or highlighting the scholarship and students supported. Bright Minds and the school system may request to make appropriate announcements through internal and external publications and to give appropriate recognition.

Bright Minds Scholarship Examples

Charlotte Spitalnic Memorial Scholarship

The Spitalnic family established the Charlotte Spitalnic Memorial Scholarship in 2022 to honor the life and legacy of their daughter Charlotte, a 9th grader at Centennial High School. The scholarship will support college access for students who embody Charlotte's values, commitment to helping others, and demonstrated passion for choir and/or theater.

Matthew Murphy Memorial Scholarship

The Murphy family established the Matthew Murphy Memorial Scholarship in 2021 to honor the life and legacy of their son Matthew, a 2020 graduate of Glenelg High School. This scholarship seeks to promote mental health awareness and pay tribute to Matthews's love of engineering and empathy for others by "surprise recognizing" a student who is interested in pursuing an engineering career and has persevered through adversity. The \$1200 scholarship is paid in two parts: \$1,000 to a student's matriculating institution and \$200 directly to a student after they submit a short checkin after their first semester.

Sydney L. Cousins Memorial Scholarship

The Sydney L. Cousins Memorial Scholarship was established in 2018 to honor the life and legacy of Dr. Sydney Cousin, Superintendent of the Howard County Public School System from 2004 until his retirement in 2012. The scholarship helps HCPSS graduates who have demonstrated their commitment to become an educator by completing a teacher education program at Howard Community College or through acceptance to a teacher education program at an accredited college/university.

Anne Marie DeWitt Viking Courage Scholarship

Established in 2016, the Viking Courage Award honors brain cancer survivor and Mt. Hebron High School graduate, Anne Marie DeWitt. The annual award recognizes a graduating senior who has demonstrated grace, humility, and resiliency despite experiencing enormous adversity. A student who, through their actions and character, epitomizes the term: courage. The DeWitt family funds the annual award.

Laura Wallen Memorial Scholarship

The Wallen Family established the Laura E. Wallen Memorial Scholarship to honor the life and legacy of Wilde Lake High School social studies teacher, Laura Wallen. This scholarship embodies Wallen's values and her belief in the power and potential of students. The scholarship helps Wilde Lake High School graduates who plan to major in one of the social sciences at a two- or four-year institution. Recipients receive between \$1,000 and \$2,500, which can be used to pay tuition, fees, or the cost of books. Scholarship applications are released each year on Wallen's birthday.

HCPSS Academy of Finance Scholarship

The community advisory board of the Academy of Finance contributes each year to a scholarship fund that supports 3-5 graduates who participated in this HCPSS career academy. The scholarships support students who have demonstrated hard work and commitment to their education and career exploration in this academy. Award amounts and the number of recipients is determined in partnership with the Academy of Finance each year based on contributions received.

About Bright Minds

As the education foundation of the Howard County Public Schools System (HCPSS), Bright Minds works to ensure each student has access to the education, resources, and opportunities needed to succeed in school and in life. We bring together community support for programs and initiatives that respond to urgent and ongoing needs of students in 4 areas: 1) literacy and school readiness; 2) digital inclusion and access to learning; 3) education innovation and teacher support; and 4) college access.

For more information, contact Bright Minds Foundation:

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