

SCHOLARSHIP FUND HANDBOOK



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Introduction and Purpose

About Bright Minds

As the Howard County Public Schools education foundation, Bright Minds Foundation works to ensure each child attending the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) has access to the support, resources, and opportunities they need to succeed at school and in life. Howard County Public Schools Educational Foundation, doing business as Bright Minds Foundation, is a 501(c)3 public charity (Tax ID: 20-4840080) established in 2006 with the purpose of increasing access to resources necessary to address student needs that would not be possible through public education funding alone.

Bright Minds serves all 57,633 students in 78 public schools, along with preschoolers and educators in Howard County. By securing funding through donations, grants, and sponsorships, Bright Minds provides essential programs and support to reduce educational inequities, improve student learning outcomes, increase educational engagement, and strengthen classroom instruction. Since our founding, Bright Minds has raised nearly \$4 million in support for children in our community.

Bright Minds Scholarship Program

Bright Minds has hosted and managed scholarship funds since 2016, and we have awarded scholarships to hundreds of HCPSS graduates. Scholarships relieve financial pressure on students and their families; enable a greater focus on studies and a lower student loan debt burden after graduation; and are encouraging and can promote successful degree completion. They also help contribute to a more diverse, inclusive, and productive society – helping to level the playing field for low-income students, recent immigrants, students of color, women, and those who have suffered from historic disadvantages.

Scholarship funds managed by Bright Minds are established in honor or memory of an individual, to support students from a specific school or program, or to recognize particular interests or achievements such as academic excellence, leadership, community service, or career aspirations. Bright Minds professional staff offer guidance to help craft scholarship criteria, application language, and review processes that align with donor intent while ensuring compliance with legal and charitable standards.

Bright Minds serves as the administrator and fiscal steward of all scholarship funds under its care, which includes managing fund accounting, application or nomination processes, selection procedures, award disbursement, compliance documentation, and reporting to sponsors and donors. Each scholarship fund is governed by a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and supported through annual Letters of Intent, which allow scholarship sponsors and Bright Minds to confirm scholarship details, update contact information, and make any appropriate adjustments based on funds available or program experience.

Appendix 1 contains examples of Bright Minds scholarship funds, and **Appendix 2** contains an MOU framework for Bright Minds scholarship funds.

Intended Audience

This handbook is designed to ensure that scholarship sponsors, reviewers, partners, and recipients can rely on clear parameters and expectations for the administration of Bright Minds' scholarship program. These policies and procedures apply to:

- Bright Minds team members responsible for scholarship administration
- Scholarship sponsors establishing one-year or multi-year scholarship funds
- Donors contributing to scholarship funds
- HCPSS school system partners
- Reviewers serving on scholarship selection committees
- Student applicants and scholarship recipients

Establishing a Scholarship Fund

Process for establishing a scholarship

All inquiries about establishing a new scholarship fund should be directed to Bright Minds staff at scholarships@brightmindsfoundation.org or 410-313-8992. Interested individuals are also encouraged to complete our [New Scholarship Interest Form](#). Following initial discussions, and once a sponsor confirms their intent to move forward, Bright Minds will work with a sponsor to establish a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) outlining the scholarship's purpose, criteria, structure, and administration.

Scholarship Funds

Scholarships are established through dedicated scholarship funds managed by Bright Minds Foundation. Individuals, families, companies, or organizations may establish a scholarship fund by making a minimum gift commitment of \$5,000, with a minimum annual award of \$1,000 per year.

Contributions may be made in full at the time the fund is established or through annual donations aligned with the award schedule. Memorial scholarship funds and related donation pages can be established quickly to accommodate inclusion in obituaries and memorial services.

Fund Structure

Details of each scholarship fund—including the number, amount, and criteria for scholarship awards—are defined in partnership with scholarship sponsors and, where appropriate, in collaboration with Howard County schools. The number and amount of awards may be adjusted annually based on sponsor input and funds available.

Communications

Each scholarship fund must have a designated primary contact. Sponsors are asked to keep contact information current through the Letter of Intent or as changes occur. Scholarship-related communications should be directed to scholarships@brightmindsfoundation.org or 410-313-8992. Bright Minds manages a growing number of scholarships, and response times may vary throughout the year.

Scholarship Design & Criteria

Scholarship criteria are developed collaboratively between Bright Minds and the scholarship sponsor. Criteria may include academic achievement, financial need, leadership, service, school affiliation, intended field of study, or other measurable characteristics. All criteria must be objective, reasonable, and nondiscriminatory. Bright Minds works with scholarship sponsors to ensure scholarship criteria are compliant with Internal Revenue Service (IRS) regulations and aligns with Bright Minds' standards for equitable scholarship administration.

An example of scholarship criteria might include:

1. Graduating seniors at SCHOOL NAME.
2. Current or former participants in [academic program / activities / sports] at SCHOOL NAME.
3. In good academic standing with a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or better
4. Identified as demonstrating or able to demonstrate [Qualities or other criteria, such as leadership, compassion for others, perseverance, etc.].

Bright Minds works with scholarship sponsors to ensure the criteria are broad enough to yield a pool of students eligible for a scholarship and large enough to assure a fair and unbiased selection process. If the scholarship fund does not have sufficient applicants, scholarship sponsors will be asked to broaden the criteria for applicants during the following year.

Federal Rules & Compliance

Bright Minds administers scholarship funds in accordance with federal rules governing charitable scholarship programs. These rules are designed to ensure that scholarships further charitable and educational purposes and are awarded fairly and transparently.

Under IRS guidelines, scholarships must be awarded using objective, nondiscriminatory criteria, such as academic achievement, financial need, leadership, or service. While scholarship sponsors play an important role in shaping a scholarship's purpose and criteria, the IRS requires that Bright Minds retain full discretion and control over the selection process. Sponsors may not select or approve individual recipients or direct awards to specific students (see Review & Selection Process for more information).

Bright Minds uses documented application or nomination processes, independent review committees, and conflict-of-interest safeguards. Award decisions are based on the established criteria and are recorded to ensure accountability. Scholarship funds are paid directly to educational institutions, or in limited circumstances, directly to recipients and are restricted to qualified educational expenses such as tuition, fees, books, and required supplies.

Bright Minds maintains records related to applications, selection decisions, awards, and fund use and monitors renewable or multi-year scholarships over time.

Scholarships vs. Awards

Bright Minds administers both scholarships and awards in support of students. While these terms are sometimes used interchangeably, they are treated differently under IRS rules and have distinct requirements and tax considerations for recipients.

Scholarships are financial assistance for qualified educational expenses (tuition, fees, books, and required supplies) and are generally not taxable to recipients when these IRS requirements are met. Awards or prizes are typically given in recognition of achievement, service, or participation and are not necessarily restricted to educational expenses. As such, they are generally considered taxable income to the recipient, and Bright Minds is required to issue an IRS Form 1099 to recipients receiving awards valued at \$600 or more in a calendar year.

Bright Minds structures and administers scholarships and awards carefully to ensure regulatory compliance and transparency. Scholarship or award recipients are encouraged to consult a tax professional with questions about their individual tax obligations.

Federal Requirements Affecting Scholarship Recognition (Effective 2025)

Recent federal regulatory changes implemented in 2025 have affected how privately-funded scholarships may be publicly recognized when administered in partnership with public schools. These requirements are based on updated interpretations of federal civil rights laws applicable to schools and educational programs that receive federal funding.

Under these requirements, scholarships that limit eligibility based on race, sex/gender, or other protected characteristics may still be legally awarded and administered by Bright Minds Foundation, provided they comply with applicable IRS and Foundation policies. However, these awards may no longer be presented or publicly recognized through school-based end-of-year award ceremonies or similar school-sponsored events.

Bright Minds remains committed to honoring donor intent and supporting students in meaningful ways. For scholarships affected by these requirements, Bright Minds will continue to:

- Award scholarships directly to selected recipients
- Disburse scholarship funds in accordance with Foundation policies
- Coordinate private or alternative forms of recognition, including direct notification to awardees and their families
- When appropriate and welcomed by families, recognize recipients through personal or small-group celebrations, including surprise visits or other individualized acknowledgments

These changes reflect federal compliance requirements rather than Bright Minds' values or preferences, and they apply specifically to school-based recognition settings. Bright Minds will work closely with scholarship sponsors to ensure awards are administered thoughtfully, respectfully, and in compliance with all applicable regulations. Fund partners with questions about how these requirements affect their scholarship are encouraged to contact Bright Minds to discuss appropriate recognition options.

Application or Nomination Process

Bright Minds offers two primary approaches to scholarships which are designed to honor both sponsor intent and equitable access for students.

Option 1: Educator-Nominated

Students are identified / nominated by educators. For many scholarships, Bright Minds strongly encourages the Educator-Nominated model. This approach helps recognize deserving students who might not otherwise apply to scholarships. It also reduces barriers for students, promotes equity, and celebrates the insight of educators who know their students best.

In this model, Bright Minds works with scholarship sponsors to develop a selection criteria rubric that aligns with sponsor intent, e.g., matching the characteristics of the person the scholarship is honoring. Bright Minds engages HCPSS educators who are best positioned to identify candidates for the scholarship. Educators nominate a shortlist of students anonymously (as "Candidate A, B, C") and share student information using the rubric. Sponsors or designated review teams (or Bright Minds, if preferred) recommend the awardee(s), and selections are reviewed and approved by Bright Minds.

Option 2: Application-Based

Students apply through an online scholarship application. Bright Minds uses well-tested scholarship applications and students apply directly, providing short answers (preferred) or essays based on criteria established with the donor. Bright Minds works with sponsors to define an evaluation rubric that aligns with sponsor intent, e.g., matching the characteristics of the person the scholarship is honoring. Bright Minds reviews applications, anonymizes details where possible, and shares a shortlist of applicants with the designated review team. Review teams scores and recommend the awardee(s), and selections are reviewed and approved by Bright Minds.

Option 3: Combined (Hybrid)

Some scholarships make multiple awards that use both methods—some awards that utilize a scholarship application and some that are educator nominated.

Appendix 3 contains a sample scholarship rubric and **Appendix 4** contains a sample scholarship application that forms the basis of an online application. A scholarship review rubric is used for both educator-nominated and application-based scholarships. With educator-nominated scholarships, educators will use the rubric to share notes on each candidate with columns labeled for candidate A, B, C, etc. For application-based scholarships, the rubric is used by review teams to score applications.

Review & Selection Process

Bright Minds administers scholarship review and selection processes that are tailored to each scholarship fund while remaining consistent with IRS requirements and best practices. Applications and nominations are reviewed using objective, documented criteria. Reviewers will include Bright Minds staff and may also include community volunteers, school representatives, and scholarship sponsors serving in advisory or committee roles. All reviewers are required to complete a Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form and recuse themselves from reviewing any application where a real or perceived conflict exists. **Appendix 5** contains content from our online Review Team Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Agreement.

Bright Minds may conduct an initial screening to confirm eligibility and narrow the applicant pool before finalists are shared with review teams. This process ensures that all candidates considered for an award meet the established criteria and that the review remains fair and manageable.

Sponsor Involvement in Review and Selection

Bright Minds values meaningful partnership with scholarship sponsors while ensuring all scholarships are administered in compliance with IRS regulations. Sponsors may be involved in the scholarship review and selection process in the following ways:

- **Scholarship design and criteria development**
Sponsors help define the purpose, eligibility requirements, award amount(s), number of awards, and values or focus areas of the scholarship prior to the application cycle.
- **Review of finalist information**
After Bright Minds completes an initial review and screening process using objective criteria, sponsors are invited to review anonymized or summarized finalist profiles.
- **Advisory input**
Sponsors may provide non-binding feedback and recommendations on finalists. Final award decisions remain solely with Bright Minds Foundation.
- **Participation on selection committees**
Sponsors may serve as a member of a review committee, provided they are one of multiple reviewers, do not exercise sole decision-making authority, and sign a conflict-of-interest statement as part of their review.
- **Recognition and engagement**
Sponsors are invited to participate in award announcements, recognition activities, and celebrations with recipients after awards are finalized.

To comply with IRS requirements, scholarship sponsors may not select individual recipients, approve or veto specific students, or direct scholarship funds to named individuals. Bright Minds retains full discretion and control over scholarship awards and formally documents the selection process to ensure fairness, transparency, and compliance with charitable regulations and donor intent.

Award & Distribution of Funds

End of Year Award Ceremonies

Scholarship and award recipients are typically honored during end of year award ceremonies at each high school. Each school plans their end of year award ceremony, and the dates and times of these ceremonies are shared in April of each year. Scholarship sponsors are invited to attend these ceremonies, and usually have the option to present the scholarship or award to the recipient during the ceremony. Bright Minds works with schools to determine participation options for scholarship sponsors,

shares these options with sponsors, and allows sponsors to choose what level of engagement is most comfortable to them. Bright Minds has models for presentation scripts and slides which are often used to support the scholarship award process.

In preparation for each award ceremony, Bright Minds will produce scholarship certificates and award letters for each scholarship recipient. See **Appendix 6** for a sample award letter. Some scholarship funds request that plaques be provided in lieu of certificates, and the cost of the plaques is added as an expense to the scholarship fund.

Funds Disbursement

All scholarship recipients are asked to complete the Scholarship Acceptance Form by June 15, and must complete the form in order for scholarships to be paid. (brightmindsfoundation.org/scholarship-award/). Bright Minds will inform and work with HCPSS schools to get recipient information if we experience any issues receiving this information from recipients, which happens for a couple of students annually.

Bright Minds processes and distributes scholarship checks in early July. Funds are paid directly to colleges or universities whenever possible. In limited circumstances, awards may be paid directly to students with appropriate certifications and documentation from the student.

Scholarships Impact on Financial Aid

Scholarship recipients should be aware that third-party scholarships, including those awarded through Bright Minds Foundation, must usually be reported to their college or university as part of a student’s financial aid package. Institutions determine how outside scholarships are applied and may adjust a student’s overall aid award in accordance with their financial aid policies and federal guidelines. In some cases, a third-party scholarship may reduce a portion of need-based aid or replace loans or work-study rather than grants. Students are responsible for notifying their institution of any outside scholarships received and for understanding how those funds will be applied. Bright Minds works with institutions to request that scholarship funds be treated as supplemental support, but final financial aid determinations rest with the recipient institution.

Annual Scholarship Cycle & Timeline

The Bright Minds scholarship cycle begins in October–November with completion of the annual Letter of Intent and distribution of scholarship fund reports, and concludes in July with the disbursement of scholarship funds. A detailed annual timeline is provided below.

October 1	Bright Minds to send fund reports and letter of intent to scholarship sponsors
October 30	Sponsors submit letters of intent, with requested annual updates as needed
November 15	Bright Minds sends invoices to scholarship sponsors with annual payments
December 15	Bright Minds shares scholarship application updates with sponsors (if applicable)
January 5	Sponsors approve scholarship application, communications (if applicable)
January 5	Sponsors provide names / contact information of review committee (if applicable)
January 15	Bright Minds posts scholarship applications for students (if application)
February 1	Bright Minds shares rubric and request for nominations with schools (if educator-nominated)
March 15	Scholarship applications due from students; or nominations due from schools
April 1	Scholarship applications, shortlist, or candidates shared with reviewers

April 15	Bright Minds confirms end of year award ceremony dates and presentation options; shares information with scholarship sponsors
April 15	Review teams provide selected scholarship recipients to Bright Minds
May 1	Bright Minds provides names of scholarship recipients to schools
May 1	Bright Minds contacts multi-year awardees scholarship recipients to request completion of Recipient Information Form
May 8	Bright Minds delivers award letters to schools in advance of award ceremonies
May 11-30 (TBD)	Bright Minds representatives and sponsors attend end of year award ceremonies, presenting awards where appropriate (based on school policies)
June 15	Scholarship recipients complete Recipient Information Form
July 10	Bright Minds mails scholarship checks to colleges and universities
Jul-Sep	Bright Minds manages family communications, unusual financial aid issues, university confirmations, and other administration issues

Fund Contributions, Fees & Reporting

Fund Account

All funds contributed to Bright Minds for the purpose of a Scholarship Fund are held by Bright Minds in a designated scholarship account (the “Fund Account”). Specifically, contributions are received into Bright Minds’ scholarship bank account (First National Bank) and designated as restricted for the scholarship fund in our accounting system (Quickbooks). Scholarship funds accounts do not accrue interest.

Fund Contributions

All contributions made to Bright Minds and designated for scholarship funds are tax deductible and donors will be acknowledged with a tax-deductible receipt. Donors are encouraged to include clear instructions or notations at the time of their gift if they wish to restrict their contribution to a scholarship fund. All designated gifts will be used exclusively for the stated purpose. The Internal Revenue Code requires that completed contributions to Bright Minds are irrevocable and must provide a charitable benefit. Bright Minds gift acceptance policy is available [for review here](#).

Donation Page (Optional)

In support of individual scholarship funds, Bright Minds can provide a customizable scholarship donation page on our website so that donors can contribute tax-deductible donations that help grow the balance of the scholarship fund. Scholarship sponsors provide suggested content for the donation page that describes the person being honored and purpose of the scholarship fund, permitting content works with Bright Minds website capabilities and general philanthropic standards. Examples of some of our scholarship fund donation pages are [here](#) or [here](#).

Payment Processing Fees

Payment processing fees are incurred by nonprofit organizations when accepting online donations (currently 3.95% of the transaction amount plus \$0.30 per transaction). These fees are imposed by payment processors or platforms (e.g., PayPal, Stripe, or credit card companies) to cover the costs of securely processing transactions. Donors have the option of helping to cover processing fees when they make online donations. Donors receive credit for the entire amount of their donation (including if they increase their donation amount to help cover fees), but Bright Minds receives a payout that is the donation amount minus the payment processing fees. We credit the full intended amount of the

donation to the scholarship fund, and accommodate the fee as an administrative cost. Scholarship administrative fees help cover these costs. ***Donations made via check avoid processing fees.***

Fee Schedule

Scholarship contributions are assessed a **10% administrative fee** to support the management and delivery of each scholarship fund, assessed on June 30 of each year on annual contributions. This fee covers the staff time, systems, and resources required to manage the full scholarship process—from fund accounting, application or nomination administration, and award disbursement to student communications and donor reporting. It ensures that every scholarship is administered efficiently, transparently, and in accordance with legal and charitable standards and donor intent.

Adjustments to the annual fee may be considered when scholarship administration costs are already covered through: multi-year funds where the full value of the fee is contributed upfront; or through separate invoicing, annual sponsorships, or other funding sources. Administrative fee modifications must be approved by Bright Minds Finance Committee and documented in the fund's MOU.

Contribution Deadlines

Typically, funding required for annual scholarships must be pledged or received by Bright Minds prior to April 15 of each year. Those planning to contribute to a scholarship fund can inform Bright Minds of their intent to contribute, the amount of their contribution, and the payment schedule in writing. This will constitute a pledge, and pledges with payments expected to be made to Bright Minds by June 30 will be included in the scholarship fund balance for that year.

Scholarship fund contributions or pledges received after April 15 will be held in the fund account for use by the scholarship during the following year. Decisions regarding the number and amount of scholarship awards each year are at the discretion of the scholarship sponsor.

Fund Reports

By November 1 each year, Bright Minds will provide an annual fund report that contains a Statement of Activities with a summary of gifts to and distributions from the fund. Bright Minds can share scholarship fund balances throughout the year as needed to track pledges and fund contributions received.

Annual Letter of Intent

Each November, Bright Minds provides scholarship sponsors with an annual Letter of Intent. The Letter of Intent serves as a planning and confirmation tool for the upcoming scholarship cycle and allows Bright Minds and scholarship sponsors to align on key scholarship details.

Through the Letter of Intent, sponsors confirm or update scholarship criteria, award amounts, funding commitments, primary contact information, and preferred participation in the review and selection process. The Letter of Intent also provides an opportunity to note any anticipated changes for the coming year. Information collected through the Letter of Intent is used by Bright Minds to prepare applications, coordinate with schools, and administer the scholarship in a timely and compliant manner for the upcoming cycle.

Recognition and Engagement

Bright Minds Foundation values the generosity and commitment of scholarship sponsors and seeks to provide meaningful opportunities for recognition and engagement that honor donor intent while respecting school policies, student privacy, and administrative capacity.

Sponsor Recognition Opportunities

Depending on the scholarship and school guidelines, recognition opportunities often include:

- Listing the scholarship fund name on Bright Minds' website and scholarship materials
- Inclusion in Bright Minds publications, newsletters, or annual reports
- Recognition at school-based award ceremonies or celebrations
- Acknowledgment in scholarship award letters and communications

Engagement with Scholarship Recipients

When appropriate and consistent with school policies, sponsors may:

- Attend award ceremonies or presentations
- Receive copies of student thank-you letters or notes (when available)
- Be invited to participate in post-award celebrations or events

Direct contact between sponsors and students is coordinated by Bright Minds and schools and may be limited to protect student privacy if requested by the student.

Student Appreciation

Scholarship recipients are strongly encouraged to write thank you letters to scholarship sponsors. These messages help students reflect on the impact of their award and allow sponsors to understand the difference their support makes. Bright Minds will share thank you letters with scholarship sponsors.

Managing Expectations

Bright Minds works to facilitate recognition and engagement opportunities but cannot guarantee specific activities, attendance, or timelines. Recognition and engagement are dependent on school schedules, student participation, and program capacity.

Governance, Policies & Amendments

Bright Minds Foundation is committed to responsible stewardship, transparency, and regulatory compliance in the administration of its scholarship program. Oversight of the scholarship program is provided by the Bright Minds Board of Directors, which conducts periodic reviews of scholarship policies, procedures, and internal controls to ensure effectiveness, compliance with applicable laws and regulations, and alignment with donor intent.

As part of this oversight, the Board may review scholarship administration practices, financial controls, recordkeeping, and selection processes. These reviews may include internal audits or process assessments designed to strengthen program integrity and support continuous improvement.

From time to time, Bright Minds may update scholarship policies, procedures, or this handbook to reflect changes in regulations, operational practices, or program needs. Material updates to scholarship policies or administration practices will be communicated to scholarship sponsors. When changes affect the terms of a specific scholarship fund, Bright Minds will work with the sponsor to document updates through the annual Letter of Intent and, when appropriate, an amendment to the Memorandum of Understanding.

Appendix 1: Bright Minds Scholarship Fund Examples

Academy of Finance Scholarship

The HCPSS Academy of Finance (AOF) introduces students to career opportunities in the business and financial services industries and, in the process, equips them to make sound postsecondary and career choices. The AOF Scholarship was established to encourage students and help make their postsecondary education more financially accessible. Students who have successfully completed the program and demonstrated outstanding engagement and performance are eligible to receive awards of up to \$1,000.

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 \$500 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.

Braden Zanski & Hailey Zanski-Quinn Memorial Scholarship

The family of Braden Zanski and Hailey Zanski-Quinn established the Braden Zanski and Hailey Zanski-Quinn Memorial Scholarship to honor the life and legacy of their daughter and son who passed away suddenly on January 14, 2024. A \$2500 scholarship honoring Hailey supports a Howard County high school student who demonstrates a passion for embracing acceptance and helping others. A \$2500 scholarship honoring Braden supports students in the HCPSS automotive academy who demonstrate a passion and dedication in the program.

Charlotte Spitalnic Memorial Scholarship - Centennial High School

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 one or more students annually who embody Charlotte's values, commitment to helping others, and demonstrated passion for choir and/or theater.

Clara Heiliger Memorial Scholarship - Oakland Mills High School

The Clara Heiliger Memorial Scholarship was established by Chris & Corinne Heiliger to honor their daughter who died in 2014 and would have attended Oakland Mills High School like her 3 sisters. The \$1,500 scholarship supports high school seniors graduating from Oakland Mills who demonstrate an interest in pursuing a career in the medical or mental health field, and who have shown kindness, care and integrity in how they contribute to their communities.

David Nesbitt Memorial Scholarship - Wilde Lake High School

The David Nesbitt Memorial Scholarship was established by the Nesbitt Family to honor David Nesbitt, a beloved educator, soccer coach, husband, father, grandfather, friend, and community member. The \$1,000 scholarship will support one or more high school seniors graduating from Wilde Lake High School who demonstrate good sportsmanship – including commitment, determination, ethical behavior, teamwork, respect, and encouragement of others – both on and off the field.

Emily Scott Memorial Scholarship

The Scott Family established the Emily Scott Memorial Scholarship to honor the life and legacy of their daughter Emily, a 2018 graduate of Centennial High School. The Fund provides 4 awards each year: 1) Two \$2500 scholarships to Centennial High School seniors that apply and demonstrate kindness and acceptance of others. 2) One \$2500 scholarship is awarded countywide as a surprise scholarship for a senior involved in the Best Buddies program and nominated by educators. 3) One \$2500 scholarship is awarded countywide as a surprise to a senior involved in Peer Tutoring and nominated by educators.

Laura E. Wallen Memorial Scholarship - Wilde Lake High School

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 \$2500 scholarship helps Wilde Lake High School 1-2 graduates who plan to major in one of the social sciences at a two- or four-year institution.

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 \$1200 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.

4th Quarter P.A.S.S.I.T. Forward Leadership Scholarship

The 4th Quarter P.A.S.S.I.T. Forward Scholarship was established by a Baltimore County public school teacher with funds raised from his 4th QTR nonprofit that used sports as a vehicle to mentor local youths. Two Howard High School graduates that represent 4th QTR values of persistence, academic excellence, selflessness, self-confidence, integrity, and teamwork receive scholarship awards of \$500 each year.

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 \$1,000 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 in a teacher education program at an accredited college/university.

Paris R. Buckman Memorial Scholarship - Mount Hebron High School

The Paris R. Buckman Memorial Scholarship was established by the Buckman Family to honor the life and legacy of Paris Buckman, a 2021 Mt. Hebron High School graduate and Lancers Dance Team member. The \$2500 scholarship supports Mt. Hebron High School graduates participating in the Lancers Dance Team and demonstrating kindness for others, and passion and perseverance in pursuing their dreams.

Vision Wealth Our Kids Our Future - All HCPSS High Schools

This Vision Wealth Our Kids Our Future scholarship was established by Vision Wealth Partners, a local wealth management firm founded by three HCPSS graduates and long-time Howard County residents. These graduates remain extremely involved in the local community and this scholarship is a way for them to give back to the Howard County community. Two students will be awarded \$10,000 scholarships to be paid out over 4 years (\$2500 per year).

Appendix 2: Memorandum of Understanding Framework

This Memorandum of Understanding is entered into on Month #, 202X between SPONSOR NAME (the “NAME Family” or “ORGANIZATION”)] and the Howard County Public School System Educational Foundation, doing business as Bright Minds Foundation (“Bright Minds”). Bright Minds, a 501(c)(3) charitable organization, was incorporated in 2006 by the Howard County Board of Education with the purpose of increasing access to diverse funding necessary to fully address student needs and provide important educational resources that would not be possible through public education funding alone.

The SPONSOR desires to establish a scholarship to 1) honor the life and legacy of their son/daughter/child NAME, a graduate / class year at SCHOOL in Howard County, or 2) recognize outstanding graduates from XYZ school demonstrate ABC qualities. [Brief description of child can be added here].

The SPONSOR and Bright Minds agree to create a scholarship under the following terms and conditions:

- **Name:** The name of the scholarship shall be the NAME Scholarship. The name of the supporting fund shall be the NAME Scholarship Fund (the “Fund”).
- **Honoree:** The scholarship honors 1) NAME, a SCHOOL graduate / class year [who touched the lives of many people / who had a passion for XYZ], or 2) post-secondary students graduating from XYZ.
- **Purpose:** The scholarship seeks to provide recognition, encouragement, and tuition support to deserving SCHOOL seniors who embody HONOREE’s values and interests.
- **Scholarship Amount:** The total amount of the scholarship is expected to be \$X per person, which will be paid to each awardee’s matriculating college or university before fall semester. It is envisioned that the scholarship will support one/two scholarship awards per year. The scholarship amount and number of awards will be reconfirmed with the SPONSOR each year.
- **Funding Obligations:** The Fund has been established with initial contributions made by [SPONSOR, or friends and family of NAME] beginning in Month Year. The fund shall be managed by Bright Minds in accordance with guidelines set forth in this Memorandum of Understanding; with federal and state legal, accounting, and charitable standards; and with bylaws established by the Bright Minds Board of Directors, Howard County Public Schools System (“HCPSS”), and Board of Education.
- **Fund Administration:** All funds contributed by SPONSOR and other donors to Bright Minds for the specific purpose of the Fund shall be held by Bright Minds in a designated scholarship account (the “Fund Account”). Scholarship contributions are assessed a 10% administrative fee to support the management and delivery of the scholarship, assessed on June 30 of each year on annual contributions. This fee covers staff time, systems, and resources required to manage the scholarship process—from fund accounting, application or nomination administration, and award disbursement to student communications and donor reporting. It ensures that the scholarship is administered efficiently, transparently, and in accordance with legal and charitable standards and donor intent.
- **Recognition, Promotion and Reporting:** To enhance the Fund, highlight the work of Bright Minds, and help attract gifts for similar purposes, SCHOOL and Bright Minds may make appropriate

announcements through internal and external publications and to the media and give other recognition as suitable.

- **Guidelines for Administration:**
 - The amount and number of student award(s) shall be determined annually by SPONSOR so long as there are funds available in the Fund Account.
 - This is a [one-time scholarship award (usually) / multi-year award] for the student(s).
 - Students eligible for the scholarship shall be:
 - Graduating seniors at SCHOOL.
 - Current or former participants in [program / activities] at SCHOOL.
 - In good academic standing with a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or better
 - Identified as demonstrating or able to demonstrate passion for [QUALITIES OR OTHER CRITERIA].
- **Selection Process (to be customized).** Each year, [SCHOOL] staff will identify and submit a shortlist of recommended candidates who meet the scholarship criteria to Bright Minds. Bright Minds will present the candidates to the Sponsor for review in an anonymized format. Bright Minds will review the Sponsor's award recommendation and retain final authority over the scholarship award.
- **Scholarship Administration.** In administering the scholarship, Bright Minds will:
 - Work with SCHOOL and SPONSOR to confirm the annual selection process;
 - Manage communication regarding the Fund for publicity purposes;
 - Make available through the Bright Minds website the ability to donate to the Fund online as well as collect funds by mail or otherwise;
 - Acknowledge receipt of all gifts to the Fund;
 - Provide annual reports to the NAME Family on the status of the Fund;
 - Collect information from awardees to support scholarship reporting and delivery;
 - Deliver scholarship funds to educational institutions in accordance with the requirements of each institution.
- **Timing.** In November of each year, Bright Minds will confirm the annual process and timeline with SPONSOR and SCHOOL. Generally, the timeline will be as follows: In late January, Bright Minds will either release a scholarship application for students to complete or request that educators nominate candidates. In March/April, Bright Minds will partner with SCHOOL and SPONSOR to select the awardee(s). In May, SPONSOR (or designate) will have the option to present the scholarship at the SCHOOL awards assembly. In May/June, Bright Minds will work with SCHOOL to collect student information necessary to announce, issue, and deliver the scholarship(s). In November, Bright Minds will provide an annual Fund report to SPONSOR.

Accepted by SPONSOR:

Accepted by Bright Minds:

Appendix 3: Sample Scholarship Review Rubric

A scholarship review rubric is used for both educator-nominated and application-based scholarships. With educator-nominated scholarships, educators will use the rubric to add candidate notes within each category with columns labeled for candidate A, B, C, etc. For application-based scholarships, the rubric is used by review teams to score applications. Below is an example of an application-based rubric.

Category	4-5	2-3	0-1
Academics	GPA and academic record at A level	GPA and academic record at B level	GPA and academic record at C level or worse
Application & Responses	Responses are complete, well-written, and descriptive	Responses are complete and relatively well-written, but lack some detail and descriptiveness	Responses are not well written and lack detail or descriptiveness
Personal attributes	Responses shows deep personal reflection and understanding of what motivates them and includes enough descriptive detail to clearly convey information	Responses show some personal reflection and understanding of what motivates them and includes some descriptive detail to clearly convey information	Responses show little personal reflection and understanding of what motivates them and lacks enough detail to clearly convey the information
Demonstrated characteristics	Student has strongly demonstrated a commitment to a just, diverse society and leadership in school and community activities	Student has generally demonstrated a commitment to a just, diverse society and leadership in school and community activities	Student has modestly or not demonstrated a commitment to a just, diverse society and leadership in school and community activities
Goals	Student clearly describes their personal goals for the future and how this scholarship will support their goals	Student somewhat describes their personal goals for the future and how this scholarship will support their goals	Student does not clearly describe their personal goals for the future and how this scholarship will support their goals
Recommendation	Exceptional / very strong endorsement with detailed examples that align w/ scholarship focus	Good endorsement with examples that align w/ scholarship focus	Average endorsement with few or undetailed examples that align w/ scholarship focus

Appendix 4: Sample Scholarship Application

Wilde Lake High School Class of 2004 Scholarship

The Wilde Lake High School Class of 2004 scholarship honors students who show a strong commitment to the WLHS community. Wilde Lake High School seniors willing to share how they have demonstrated their commitment to academic success and community service are invited to apply. Applications are due April 12, 2024. The award is a minimum of \$1,000.00.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Application Deadline: April 12, 2024

Description:

The Wilde Lake High School Class of 2004 Scholarship was established by members of the WLHS Class of 2004 to support the post-secondary endeavors of students graduating in the WLHS Class of 2024 in commemoration of our 20th-year reunion. The scholarship will support high school seniors graduating from Wilde Lake who demonstrate a strong commitment to the WLHS community through academic success, social engagement, and service.

Amount:

Selected student(s) will be awarded a \$1,000.00 scholarship. The scholarship will be paid directly to matriculating colleges or universities before the fall semester. The scholarship funds can be used for education-related expenses such as tuition, educational equipment, and supplies.

Students eligible for the scholarship are:

5. Graduating seniors at Wilde Lake High School.
6. In good academic standing with a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or better.
7. Demonstrates a strong commitment to the WLHS community through academic success, social engagement, and service.

How are scholarship recipients selected:

Every complete application received by the deadline will be given a fair and careful evaluation. Scholarship applications will be reviewed by Bright Minds staff, along with select community members, school representatives, and/or scholarship sponsors serving in advisory or committee roles. Review committees may provide non-binding feedback and recommendations on finalists. Final award decisions remain solely with Bright Minds Foundation. The scholarship is open to all eligible students meeting the stated criteria, and recipients are selected competitively based on application materials and alignment with the purpose of the award. Awards are administered without discrimination based on race, color, creed, religion, sex, disability, or national origin. All information will be held in strict confidence by Bright Minds and reviewers.

Key dates:

- April 12 - Applications due
- May 1 - Award notification
- May TBD - Scholarship presented at end of year awards ceremony
- June 15 - Award recipient information form due to Bright Minds
- July - Scholarship checks mailed to colleges / universities

Questions:

Please contact Bright Minds Foundation at scholarships@brightmindsfoundation.org if you have any questions about the application or submission process.

Acknowledgement

[Checkbox] I have read this information.

APPLICANT INFORMATION

First name:

Middle name:

Last name:

Address:

Home phone:

Cell phone:

Student email address (where you will receive notification or other important communications regarding the scholarship):

[First required]

Name of Parent(s) or Guardian:

Address:

Cell phone:

E-mail address:

[Second optional]

Name of Parent(s) or Guardian:

Address:

Cell phone:

E-mail address:

Cumulative GPA (weighted):

STUDENT PARTICIPATION

Please share some of the school and/or community activities in which you have participated during the past 4 years and positions held, if any.

[Input field]

POST GRADUATION PLANS

College selection:

[Checkbox] I have committed to attend the following college, university, or school: [Text field]

[Checkbox] I have not yet committed but plan to attend the following college, university, or school:

[Checkbox] I have not yet committed and am deciding between the following top three colleges, universities, or schools for next year: [Text field]

What program of study do you plan to pursue: [Text field]

What career or job are you considering pursuing? [Text field]

PERSONAL RESPONSES

[NOTE: Below are sample questions. Personal responses are customized for each scholarship.]

Please respond to the following questions [No more than 150 words for each]:

- Describe a time when someone or a group looked to you to help with a situation or solve a problem.
- Describe a time when you helped (or showed compassion towards) someone that you weren't particularly close to and the impact you had on them.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Please provide the name of at least one person who can provide a letter of recommendation. This could include a teacher, counselor, coach, or other person not related to you that has already provided a college recommendation.

IMPORTANT: It is your responsibility to reach out to your reference(s), share the reference form link, and request that they submit the form online. Reference forms are due by the application deadline. Please follow up with these individuals to make sure they received the request and have completed by the deadline.

Please share this link to the [Scholarship Name reference form]

APPLICANT CERTIFICATION

Electronic signature: I certify that the information provided in this application is complete and accurate to the best of my knowledge. I understand that the contents of this application will be shared with the appropriate review/ approval committees. If I am awarded a scholarship, I understand that my name and school will be publicly announced by Bright Minds Foundation as a scholarship recipient.

Signature (type name):

Appendix 5: Review Team Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Agreement

As a scholarship review team member, I understand that my role is to review applications impartially and maintain confidentiality regarding the process. I agree to disclose any potential conflicts of interest and abide by the following terms:

1. Conflict of Interest

I will disclose if I:

- Am related to or have a personal relationship with an applicant.
- Have a financial interest in the success of an applicant.
- Work for or represent an organization that directly benefits from an applicant's selection.

If a conflict is identified, I will recuse myself from discussions and evaluations related to that applicant.

2. Confidentiality

I understand that all information contained in applications is private and confidential. I agree not to disclose or discuss any applicant's information or the committee's deliberations outside the review process.

3. Commitment to Fairness

I commit to making decisions based solely on the merits of the application and the criteria set forth by the scholarship program.

- I have no conflicts of interest to disclose.
 I may have a conflict of interest (please describe):

[Input field]

By signing below, I confirm that I have read, understand, and agree to these terms.

Name (printed): _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 6: Scholarship Award Letter

7 May 2024

NAME
HCPSS Academy of Finance
Class of 2024

Dear NAME,

Bright Minds Foundation is delighted to award you with an **Academy of Finance Scholarship!**

This **\$X** scholarship supports an HCPSS Academy of Finance graduate who has demonstrated perseverance, positive attitude, teamwork, and integrity. This scholarship was established by the professional Advisory Board of the Academy of Finance that is supporting the program. Thank you for all you are doing to show leadership and integrity in your community.

There are several important things to note about your scholarship:

- This scholarship will be paid in July directly to your matriculating college or university. We will indicate that it can be used for tuition, fees, or books; and that it should be treated as “additional funds” not to replace any other funds in your financial packet.
- In order for Bright Minds to issue the payment, we need you to complete the Scholarship Acceptance Form at brightmindsfoundation.org/scholarship-award by June 15, 2024.
- This scholarship was made possible with generous support from Academy of Finance Advisory Board members, including **Joshua Hale Katzen, Austin Adamczyk, Ashlie Sowers, Morgan Stanley, Howard County Education Federal Credit Union, and Bright Minds Foundation.**
- Thank you letters are strongly encouraged when accepting a scholarship. Donors appreciate knowing that they are making a difference, and your thank you letter can help encourage donors to continue to help future students. Thank you letters may be mailed to Bright Minds Foundation at the below address or emailed to scholarships@brightmindsfoundation.org. Please address your letter to: Academy of Finance Advisory Board.

Please contact Cheryl Johnson at cheryl@brightmindsfoundation.org if you have any questions. Congratulations on this important milestone and best of luck with your first year of college!

Jennifer Van Kirk
Executive Director
Bright Minds Foundation