

Seven Tuition Funding Tips for ICDL Graduate Students

by: Muneera Fontaine, MA

I know in this economy it is necessary for many of us to receive financial aid to continue our educational pursuits. It can be a bit more difficult finding scholarships because we are not eligible for federal aid and many scholarships will not consider us because either we attend classes online, or because the school has not had the opportunity to go through the accreditation process. This can be discouraging but I am hoping some of these hints will help lighten the load in your search for financial aid!

1) **Sign up For as Many of the Scholarship Search Engines as Possible.** More reputable ones include:

[Fastweb Database](#)

[College Board Database](#)

[Sallie Mae](#)

[Scholarship Monkey](#)

[Scholarship Experts](#)

Cast your net wide, click off as many possible options as you can. Remember organizations that your parents or grandparents might belong too, not just you. Often organizations will have scholarships that direct relatives of members qualify for. You want as much information as possible sent to you. Another reason you want to hear about many different scholarships even if you don't qualify for them directly is that many scholarships have links to other scholarships that you might qualify for. You never know and it never hurts to look!

2) **Searching Online for Scholarships/Grants.** Don't do a search using only Google, I love Google but sometimes you will get different results if you search the same terms using Yahoo or Altavista. The idea is cast your net as wide as possible so that you have as many

scholarships/grants as possible to weed through. Use search terms that not only describe the program such as *special education* or *early intervention*-but use terms that might describe you personally such as *ethnicity, single mother/father, parent of a special needs child*, etc. and pair those search terms with scholarship/grant and see what comes up. You would be surprised at the number of random scholarships/grants out there that might pertain to your personal situation. I have seen scholarships/grants for left-handed people, vegetarians, red-heads, you name it-it never hurts to check! Interest-free loans are another option to look for, these are beginning to crop up more and more as people are getting wiped out trying to pay exorbitant interest rates on private loans. Most if not all states put out some type of scholarship publication that you can typically order for free through the State Board of Education to see what might be available to you.

3) Beware of Scholarship Marketing! Scholarships are grouped into three categories. The first are those run by non-profits like foundations, service clubs, etc. these are your safest and best bets! Their priority is to help poor students like us through college! The second group are scholarships that are typically called "promotional scholarships" that are associated with a company and affiliated with products and services, examples are *Brickfish* and *Student Lending Network*. They are legitimate in that they do disburse scholarships but their main job is to promote their product and collect information. The third category of scholarships are called "harvesting scholarships", these are created purely to get your information to sell to companies; they do administer scholarships which are financed by selling your information to any and everybody! If deciding to take a chance with these scholarships the best thing to do would be to set up a separate email account and PO Box so that you do not get spammed. A well-known website for this is *scholarships.com*. Just makes sure to read terms and privacy statements for any scholarship not affiliated with a non-profit! This is a great comprehensive article on spotting [scholarship scams!](#)

4) Contacting the Scholarship Administrator. Okay so you've found an amazing scholarship that you think is the perfect fit for you and then you read the fine print that says it must be an accredited school. Don't be afraid to call the scholarship program and talk to someone directly. Most scholarships do not know the distinction between an approved program and an accredited one. Most just want to make sure that they are not giving their money to some fly-by-night college scam or to someone who is going to pocket the money for their own personal benefit.

Most people who work with scholarships *want* to help you and will often tell you that it is okay to go ahead and apply as long as you can establish that ICDL is a legally operating educational entity. Also, sometimes if a scholarship says graduate students it will also accept doctoral students, not just those pursuing master's degrees, It never hurts to call and ask about that as well.

5) Set a Designated Time to Search and Complete Applications. This is very important, set aside time each month or every two weeks (I know we all are busy) to search scholarship terms online. You have to treat it almost as a part-time job, time is money and a \$500 or \$1000 scholarship is well worth four or five hours that you put into looking for it and applying. I like to set aside a solid hour every few weeks where I can just comb through scholarship databases and do random searches on the web, it's a few hours per month that can bring you a great benefit in the end! Don't rush your application, especially the essay, that is what is truly going to speak for you.

6) What to Say When Applying. I think we all are here in this program because we are passionate about what we do and helping kids. I dare-say many of us feel that DIR/Floortime can make the world a better place of understanding! You have to channel this same passion and energy into your essay in particular. I have a friend who sits on a scholarship committee and she says that essays with passion are what catches her eye after reading applications for several hours. She likes to see the personality of the applicant shine through-it gives her that emotional connection that we all talk about in class. It's nice to hear about all your accomplishments but they want to hear that you have soul, passion, and drive for what you do. They also want to see how they can contribute to the greater good by helping you. And **always, always** send a personalized thank you note if you do receive a scholarship, not only is it good etiquette-but it will cause people to remember you and you never know who you might run into later in your professional life.

7) Other Money Ideas. This is my last catch-all category. In this day and age we all have to be creative and think out of the box. Could you have a yard sale with all proceeds going to your college fund? I guarantee you put out a donation box while having your yard sale some people are going to give a little extra. Throw yourself a bake sale or other fundraiser in conjunction with

some other event (yard sale/bake sale), set up at a local flea market, etc. Check with your local religious organizations or professional organizations to see if they have scholarships set up for members. Programs such as [Upromise](#) and [Baby Mint](#) will put a few extra dollars in your college fund as well. Set a monetary goal for yourself. You know how many classes you want to take per semester and how much it is going to cost. Set a goal of 25%, 50%, or even 100% funding from outside sources and work towards that. Sometimes having a specific dollar figure will help drive you when you are thinking about ways to fund your college tuition and what you need to set aside for the future.

I wish everyone good luck on their scholarship/grant searches. If you find something that could be helpful to your classmates-**share it**, someone might be in worse financial condition than you and need the scholarship more than you ever could. Sometimes we could use the good karma way more than the money anyway. Happy Hunting Everyone!