**College Scholarships and Google**

**You Can Win or Lose Scholarships on the Internet**

[Dec 17, 2007](http://www.suite101.com/daily.cfm/2007-12-17) [Barbara Pytel](http://www.suite101.com/profile.cfm/pytel)

On-line is a great place to compete for scholarships and it is also a great place to be disqualified from them. Find out how you can unknowingly lose scholarships.

***Two Sides of the Coin***

The Internet is a great source for finding generous scholarships. [Fastweb.com](http://Fastweb.com) is a popular scholarship vault holding 1.3 million scholarships for students that qualify. It is free. Students register and complete an on-line interview and scholarship applications will begin arriving soon after that.

Colleges are known for giving the largest scholarships and frequently for all four years of college. And, local organizations give scholarships to students for college—usually for the freshman year only.

These scholarships can be easily lost if students post inappropriate profiles on various sites like

* Friendster
* Facebook
* [MySpace](http://educationalissues.suite101.com/blog.cfm/suicide_and_myspace)
* Xanga
* Live Journal

Colleges’ admission counselors are beginning to investigate students considered for scholarships beyond the usual letter of recommendations. They are beginning to Google in student names and see what they have posted on the Internet.

Google Search to Screen Students

In increasing numbers, [colleges](http://educationalissues.suite101.com/article.cfm/college_admissions_police) are using a Google search to screen students. Some check students randomly, some check only if students have been brought to their attention, and others are actively researching students online.

Joan Place, director of guidance counseling at Centerville High School in Dayton, OH, says, "Every college has raised the bar on what they want from our students academically, and now it’s socially, as well. What ends up separating you from another student could be how you present yourself online." [Stephanie Gottschlich, Dayton Daily News, daytondaily.com, November 25, 2007]

**Common Scenario**

For example, a college is strongly considering four students for a very large scholarship. The information on all four is very close and there is little data to give one an edge over the other—until they begin a Google search. To their surprise, two of the four students have an unflattering MySpace profile. One has very politically incorrect comments about females and another talk about alcohol parties with photos. These two students are now disqualified from the scholarship pool and the college is now free to focus on the two remaining students. Chances are slim to none that the two disqualified students will ever know the reason why they were no longer in the competition. The images that lost them the scholarship may still be up and active when they begin their search for a job in a few years.

**University of Massachusetts Study**

How often is this happening? The University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth concluded a study in the fall of 2007. They questioned 453 college admissions departments and found that

* 26% are actively researching students through search engines
* 21% are checking out social networking profiles like MySpace and Facebook

**Air-Tight Online Profile**

How can students make sure they are squeaky clean online?

* Do not post anything to your site that would be morally or ethically questionable.
* Never post personal information such as your address, daily schedule, or phone number.
* Make your profiles private so only a selected group can view your information.
* Don’t add "friends" you don’t personally know.
* Ask friends to remove any photos of you that could be seen as unflattering.
* Make sure they never use your name when they add you to their site.

Source: [National Association of College Admission Counseling](http://www.nacac.org).

Fortune 500 companies have been using Google to investigate future employees. Now, colleges are doing the same.

Related articles: [MySpace Predator Caught](http://educationalissues.suite101.com/blog.cfm/myspace_predator_caught), [College Preparation--Good or Poor?](http://educationalissues.suite101.com/article.cfm/college_preparationgood_or_poor)

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