Following is a summary of key takeaways from NSPA’s May 7, 2020, webinar, entitled Scholarship Program Administration in the Time of a Pandemic.

Related Resources
- Webinar & Slides: Scholarship Program Administration in the Time of a Pandemic
- Member Resource: Covid-19 Scholarship Program Planning Template

Summary of Recommendations
- Be flexible with your applicants and scholars
- Use NSPA resources to help develop your own responsive approach to students
- Refer students to other supports, including CARES Act emergency funding from their colleges/universities
- Post your questions--and your organization’s developments--in the NSPA Member Forum
- Stay tuned to NSPA for timely, relevant programming

Changing Application Requirements - for New Applicants and Scholars
Members reported:
- Extending application deadlines (typically by two to four weeks)
- Keeping application windows open to allow for rolling submissions
- Relaxing or eliminating requirements, especially for:
  - Grades or GPAs
  - Graduation dates
  - Recommendation letters
  - Transcripts
  - Community service requirements
  - Activity requirements
  - Financial aid award package availability
- Allowing varied submission formats (electronic via portal, email, paper)
- Planning for another scholarship opportunity in fall 2020, for those unable to meet requirements in spring 2020
Changing Application Requirements - for Renewing Scholars

Members reported:

- Relaxing or eliminating requirements, especially for:
  - Enrollment statuses (full- versus part-time)
  - Grades or GPAs
  - Graduation dates
  - Recommendation letters
  - Transcripts
  - Community service requirements
  - Activity requirements
  - Financial aid award package availability
- Accepting official or unofficial documents, including those available in students’ online portals
- Eliminating requirements for spring 2020 term entirely
- Member Resource: Member FAQ: Changing Scholarship Deadlines & Requirements

Adapting to Students’ Changing Circumstances

Members reported:

- Adapting to students’ changing financial circumstances
  - Updating awards during the selection process
  - Advising selection committees to be generous and consider the pandemic’s potential impacts on families
- Member Resource: Member FAQ: Students’ Changing Financial Circumstances
- Adapting to students’ changing college plans
  - Offering the opportunity to defer scholarships, for one year or multiple years
  - Offering the opportunity to transfer or use scholarship at alternate college/university

Emergency Aid Needs

Members reported:

- Most frequent student requests
  - Housing
  - Technology/learning supports
  - Travel/transportation
  - Food
  - Health care
  - Child care
- Requests average $600-$1,000
- Requests have changed over time: Initially to meet immediate emergency needs, now continued supports to meet basic needs on an ongoing basis

Emergency Aid Programming

Members reported:
• Referring students to colleges/universities for emergency aid from CARES Act
  ○ Note: Emergency funds, whether provided by colleges/universities or other organizations, are not taxable during pandemic disaster
• Keeping the process simple, for your organization and program, as well as students and colleges/universities
• Using diverse aid distribution methods:
  ○ Checks, ACH, credit card, and gift card payments
  ○ Payments to college/universities (both financial aid and Foundations), vendors, and students directly
• Member FAQ: Emergency Aid and Responsive Student Supports
• Tools of the Trade Toolkit: Emergency Aid and Responsive Student Supports
• Member FAQ: Electronic Scholarship Payments

**Electronic Scholarship Payments**

Members reported:

• Using many potential technologies and tools
  ○ Making ACH distributions directly from their current financial management platforms
  ○ Working with existing financial institutions
  ○ Using separate information-transfer portal
• It is a complex process, to be considered and planned for thoughtfully
  ○ Working with colleges/universities to collect payment information
  ○ Sharing student information so that scholarships are awarded accurately
  ○ Tracking all steps of process, from provider, to financial institution, to college/university
  ○ Reporting back to scholarship provider on funds and award

**Technology Access for Students**

Members reported:

• Both hardware--laptops, routers, hotspots, phones--and internet connectivity are issues
  ○ This is especially difficult in non-urban areas, though issues have been reported nationwide
• Referring students to colleges/universities for emergency aid from CARES Act, which can cover technology expenses
• Plenty of free or low-cost video conferencing options are available - but be flexible, as phone options might be best for some students
• Select and test options ahead of meetings or interviews, providing technical assistance as needed to students to help them join meetings
• Online learning is proving to be challenging for many students

**Technology Access for Committees and Volunteers**

Members reported:

• Asking committees and volunteers to manage their own meeting logistics
• Requesting that committees and volunteers to come as prepared as possible
• Asking for or appoint moderators to manage conversations, especially among larger groups
Navigating to the COVID-19 Information Center from NSPA’s Home Page