

A grayscale photograph of a hand holding a pen, poised to write on a document. The image is slightly out of focus, with a metal fastener or clip visible in the lower-left foreground. The overall tone is professional and academic.

Scholarship Funds

*Handbook
for
Scholarship
Advisory
Committees*

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Welcome

On behalf of the Board of Directors, thank you for your interest in the Community Foundation for the Twin Tiers (CFTT) Scholarship Funds. Why do we need scholarship committees? If the awarding of scholarships were based merely on financial need or academic merit – or a combination of the two – there would be no need for advisory committees. While computers can rank candidates by who is the poorest or who has the best grades, they cannot measure heart, drive, desire, or talent, the qualities of character that allow individuals to overcome the hardships in life to become successful contributors to society. This is what we ask you to do. Scholarship advisors bring to the selection process the benefits of their life experience, their diverse outlooks, their local knowledge, and their human touch.

This Handbook for volunteers serving on the various Scholarship Selection Committees is designed to inform you about your role and responsibilities and assist you in serving in this volunteer capacity. We encourage you to review this handbook and offer any suggestion for improvements you might have. Please feel free to contact the Community Foundation for the Twin Tiers at 570-888-4759 at any time should you have any questions regarding the information in this handbook.

Again, thank you for your commitment to the ideals of philanthropy and for agreeing to assist the Community Foundation for the Twin Tiers in this important work and we look forward to working with you.

About Scholarships

By their very nature, scholarship funds require great attention to detail regardless of who establishes them. IRS requirements dictate that the Foundation's files reflect the complete selection process, criteria for determining recipients, and selection committee members. The Foundation's processes require that staff insure donor intent and continually monitor fund administration and that the Board of Directors make the final determination of scholarship recipients each year.

The scholarship fund recipients are maintained in the CFTT's database and a Fund Profile Worksheet is developed for each fund and is based on the language in the contract agreement that created the Fund(s). The CFTT Board of Directors must appoint the members of the selection of committee. While an advisor may certainly suggest some members of the committee, the CFTT Board has the power to accept or reject any suggestion.

The selection committee members are maintained in the Fund's record and approved annually by the CFTT Board of Directors. They may include the high school principal, guidance counselors, appropriate subject matter department heads or coaches or appropriate representatives of the community who are qualified to participate in choosing the scholarship recipient due to their expertise. Members of the CFTT Board of Directors may also serve as members of a selection committee. All members of selection committees are required to abide by the CFTT's Scholarship Advisory Committee Conflict of Interest Policy.

The donor and related parties may sit on a selection committee but they cannot make up a majority of the committee. Related parties include relatives and employees of the donor. The donor's attorney will generally be considered a related party. The donor may recommend for membership on the committee someone who is not a related party; if the recommendation is based on objective criteria related to the expertise of the person recommended.

Most scholarship awards are not paid directly to awardees. Students are sent a notification of their award, along with a Scholarship Agreement Form. The student is responsible for returning a signed agreement to the CFTT before a grant check is sent to the college or university.

CFTT'S CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY FOR SCHOLARSHIP ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Definition

Each committee members will be given a copy of the CFTT's Code of Business Conduct that contains the Conflict of Interest Policy that all scholarship selection committee members must agree to adhere to. You will be given a form stating that you have received a copy of the Code of Business Conduct and have read it. You will be given a second form asking you to identify any conflicts of interest you have going into the selection process. This form also gives you a definition of conflict of interest as defined by the CFTT. A conflict of interest can occur when an action of a committee member recommending a scholarship award results in a direct financial benefit to a person closely related to the member. A conflict of interest may also occur if a committee member exerts influence to select a recipient without considering objective criteria for the scholarship.

Explanation

Advisory committee members are often asked to serve because of their knowledge of local communities or connection with schools and colleges. The fund donor may act in an advisory capacity to a scholarship fund as well. This may mean that they are familiar with individual scholarship applicants or their families or in some cases, related to applicants.

Scholarship advisory committee members must be able to make independent decisions on behalf of the scholarship fund and the Community Foundation for The Twin Tiers without potential or perceived influence caused by a conflict of interest. They must evaluate the eligibility of all applicants without bias and make selection recommendations based on the established objective criteria for the scholarship.

Advisory committee members should avoid any situation where personal and business relationships could have, or give the appearance of having, undue influence on the member's judgment in matters under consideration.

In case of a potential conflict of interest, the member shall declare the conflict, and refrain from participating in the discussions and decision-making process.

IRS Rules on Grantmaking to Individuals

The awarding of scholarships falls under the category of “grantmaking to individuals,” because a scholarship benefits an individual rather than an organization. The Internal Revenue Service strictly regulates awards to individuals because of the potential for abusing the tax deductibility of such awards. As an advisor recommending scholarship recipients to the foundation, you must make certain that the IRS rules and regulations are followed to ensure that the foundation’s tax status is not put in jeopardy.

Basic IRS Rules

- The award must be made for a charitable purpose;
- Recipients must be members of a sufficiently broad “charitable class;”
- Selection is done on an objective and non-discriminatory basis;
- No benefit accrues to the donor/relatives of the donor/individuals specified by the donor;
- Selection committee is independent of the sponsoring employer/membership organization;
- The selection committee must abide by rules governing conflicts of interest;
- Proper records are maintained that clearly establish that these rules have been satisfied.

Criteria for Selection

Proper selection criteria may include but are not limited to:

- Academic performance;
- Achievement or aptitude test scores;
- Recommendations;
- Financial need;
- Personal statements;
- Personal interviews.

Education is considered a charitable purpose. To meet the documentation requirement, the CFTT requires that recommendations for scholarship awards be submitted to the CFTT’s Board in writing in order to be approved for disbursement.

In addition, each committee that meets off-site will need to adopt the CFTT’s Conflict of Interest policy to ensure that selections are made in a fair and consistent manner. See the Conflict of Interest Policy information that is included in this section of the handbook.

Under IRS rules, scholarships can have very specific criteria, if the pool of applicants is sufficiently broad to constitute a charitable class. The term “charitable class” has been left undefined by the IRS, but should pass a common sense test. Currently, a scholarship fund is considered nondiscriminatory even if it benefits limited groups of people such as women, minorities, or residents of a particular community.

Taxability of Financial Aid Awards

A scholarship award used for tuition and required course-related expenses is exempt from federal income tax, if the student is enrolled in a degree-granting program. Any part of the award used for living expenses and non-required educational expenses (such as computers or travel) is taxable, even though these are considered legitimate educational expenses for award purposes. It is the responsibility of the student to declare any taxable amounts of educational awards.

Conflict of Interest Policy for Members of Scholarship Advisory Committees

The Community Foundation for the Twin Tiers (CFTT) relies on volunteers to serve on scholarship advisory committees for the Foundation's many scholarship funds. The role of committee members is to evaluate the applications and recommend awarding the scholarship funds in the way that best fulfills the original donor's charitable wishes. Although all scholarship funds have specific criteria, awarding scholarships also requires judgment in assessing the character, motivation, and potential of the applicants. Despite this mixture of art and science, the scholarship process must be fair to the persons involved.

Scholarship Advisory Committee members must be able to make independent decisions on behalf of the scholarship fund and the CFTT without potential or perceived influence caused by conflict of interest. They must evaluate the eligibility of all applicants without bias and make selection recommendations based on the established objective criteria for the scholarship.

Advisory committee members should avoid any situation where personal and business relationships could have, or give the appearance of having, undue influence on the member's judgment in matters under consideration.

To ensure fairness, the CFTT requires all members of scholarship advisory committees to adhere to this conflict of interest policy. By agreeing to serve on a committee, members also agree to comply with the following rules:

- A member has a conflict of interest if (a) the member is related by blood, marriage, or adoption to a scholarship applicant; (b) the member will receive a direct or indirect financial benefit from recommending a scholarship to a particular applicant; or (c) due to personal or business relationships, or any other reason, the member exerts influence to recommend a recipient without regard to the scholarship criteria.
- If a member has an actual or potential conflict of interest concerning an applicant, the member will disclose the conflict to the rest of the committee. The member shall not discuss the scholarship applicant with anyone on the committee and will not participate in, or be present during, any committee deliberations concerning that applicant.
- Members agree to treat their committee's deliberations and recommendations as confidential and not to disclose information to anyone outside the committee.
- Members acknowledge that the Board of Directors of The Community Foundation for the Twin Tiers has the final authority concerning the awarding of scholarships.

Annual Disclosure Statement for Scholarship Advisory Committee Members

I am providing this statement in accordance with the Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest sections of the Code of Business Conduct Policy of the Community Foundation for the Twin Tiers (the “Foundation”).

1. I have received a copy, read and understand the current Code of Business Conduct Policy of the Foundation.
2. I understand that I am obligated to keep information concerning the Foundation confidential and to make an annual disclosure of all actual or apparent conflicts of interest (as described in the Policy) involving myself or a related person by blood, marriage, or adoption to a scholarship applicant.
3. By agreeing to serve on a committee, members also agree to comply with the following rules:
 - A member has a conflict of interest if (a) the member is related by blood, marriage, or adoption to a scholarship applicant; (b) the member will receive a direct or indirect financial benefit from recommending a scholarship to a particular applicant; or (c) due to personal or business relationships, or any other reason, the member exerts influence to recommend a recipient without regard to the scholarship criteria.
 - If a member has an actual or potential conflict of interest concerning an applicant, the member will disclose the conflict to the rest of the committee. The member shall not discuss the scholarship applicant with anyone on the committee and will not participate in, or be present during, any committee deliberations concerning that applicant.
 - Members agree to treat their committee’s deliberations and recommendations as confidential and not to disclose information to anyone outside the committee.
 - Members acknowledge that the Board of Directors of The Community Foundation for the Twin Tiers has the final authority concerning the awarding of scholarships.

By signing this disclosure agreement I agree to comply with the policy and understand that the Foundation is a charitable organization and that in order to maintain its federal tax exemption it must engage primarily in activities which accomplish one or more of its tax-exempt purposes.

Name (Please Print)

Scholarship Committee Name

Foundation Representative Signature

Date

Guidelines for Scholarship Advisory Committee Members

Welcome to the (Name of School Committee) Scholarship Committee. We are delighted that you are working with the Community Foundation for the Twin Tiers (CFTT) to help provide educational opportunities for young adults in our community. We are confident that as you review the records of the students eligible for these scholarships you will be impressed by the perseverance and achievements of these young people.

The CFTT currently administers several scholarship programs and each program has different award criteria. The donors who established and funded these programs had specific guidelines for the students they wanted to assist. It is the Foundation's responsibility to manage the programs in a way that ensures that the donors' wishes are realized, and that the award process is objective and fair to all candidates.

Following is a description of the process and your responsibilities:

- ◆ Review your Code of Business Conduct Policy from the CFTT and sign and send in your Annual Disclosure Statement for Scholarship Advisory Committee Members to the CFTT before the Advisory Committee holds its first meeting.
- ◆ You are asked to carefully read and rate each student based on the specific criteria for the scholarship. You are encouraged to develop rating forms that are designed to give the most weight to the focus areas of greatest importance to the donor. Some objective means of deciding among candidates should be implemented and documented.
- ◆ Each member of the advisory committee should complete the rating forms and a tally of them recorded. If this isn't they sole criteria used for selecting the scholarship recipients, then other criteria used must be recorded. At the end of the selection process the rating forms will be collected by the advisory committee chair and returned to the Foundation for each student considered along with a listing of the other criteria used in reaching the committee's recommendations for grant recipients.
- ◆ Student records contain very person information about the candidates and their families. As a volunteer, you are required to keep this information confidential. Please do not discuss your ratings outside advisory committee meetings.
- ◆ If a family member or close friend is a scholarship candidate for the scholarship for which you are serving as a Selection Committee members, you must notify the Foundation. Anyone having a conflict of interest or appearance of conflict of interest will not rate the candidate.
- ◆ The chair of the Selection Advisory Committee will notify the CFTT in writing of the recommendations of the committee using the forms provided by the Foundation. The CFTT will then act on the recommendations of the committee.
- ◆ The Foundation will notify the students and their schools in mid May and send you each school a list of recipients in late May.

Timeline:

March – April 30, 2012	Advisory Committees Organize, Meet, Make Recommendations
April 30, 2012	Final recommendation sent in writing to CFTT
May 15, 2012	Notification mailed to students and schools notified
May 30, 2012	Each school is sent list of scholarship recipients

We constantly strive to improve the quality of the review process. As you go through the review process we welcome your comments and suggestions for future enhancements to the program. Please contact the Foundation at 570-888-4759 or cftt@stny.rr.com if, at any time, you have questions about the process.

Serving as a member of the Selection Review Committee takes time and a genuine concern for each individual candidate. We appreciate the time you are taking to ensure that these students will be able to achieve their educational goals. Without the help of volunteers like you, we would not be able to administer these worthwhile programs.

**Notification Form for Scholarships Administered by
The Community Foundation for the Twin Tiers**

Use this form to notify the Community Foundation’s Scholarship Manager of selected students. The form may be copied if there are more than two recipients of the same award. The form must be filled out completely or marked “not applicable” and the certification statement must be signed and dated by a guidance counselor, school administrator, or representative of the group or organization selecting scholarship recipients.

Name of Scholarship: _____

Recipient Name: SS#: Home phone: Home address & zip: Parent names & address: High School: College & address: Award amount: <i>(if known; complete for multiple recipients and unequal award amounts)</i> Payable to: <i>(if to the school, indicate school name and bursar’s mailing address)</i>	Recipient Name: SS#: Home phone: Home address & zip: Parent names & address: High School: College & address: Award amount: <i>(if known; complete for multiple recipients and unequal award amounts)</i> Payable to: <i>(if to the school, indicate school name and bursar’s mailing address)</i>
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I certify that an open, fair and equitable process was used to select the above student(s), that no members of any recipient’s immediate family participated in the selection process, and that the criteria of the scholarship as determined by the donor and the Community Foundation were fully met.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Print Name and Title: _____
 School, Group, or Organization: _____
 Address & phone: _____

Send form to Scholarship Administrator, Community Foundation for the Twin Tiers (CFTT), 104 W. Lockhart Street, Sayre PA 18840 or fax to (570) 888-2179. At least 7 business days are required to process award letters or checks.

Appendix A
Sample Acceptance Letter
Community Foundation for the Twin Tiers

(Name of Scholarship)

Student
Address
City, State, Zip

Date

Dear Student,

Congratulations! It is a pleasure to inform you that you have been selected as a recipient of a scholarship from the (Name of Scholarship Fund) for the 2011-2012 academic year.

Your scholarship check will be mailed directly to the school listed below. It may be used for tuition, fees, and books without incurring an income tax obligation. Other uses such as transportation, room & board or other educational expenses may incur an income tax obligation. This is a grant that does not have to be repaid.

GRANT INFORMATION:

Institution:	Mansfield University
Total scholarship amount:	\$1,000
Fall Check:	\$500
Spring Check:	\$500

IMPORTANT:

- ◆ Payment of this scholarship grant will be delayed unless you complete and return the enclosed Student Agreement Form.
- ◆ If you are not considered a student in good standing by your school, then you are no longer eligible to receive this grant.
- ◆ This grant may be considered taxable by the IRS. Check with a tax expert for more information. The CFTT will not provide a 1099 or other IRS reporting forms.
- ◆ If there should be any change in the grant amount, a letter confirming your final award will be sent to you.

Best wishes for a productive and enjoyable year at school.

Sincerely,

I.M. Smart, Scholarship Administrator

Appendix B
Second Sample Acceptance Letter
Community Foundation for the Twin Tiers

Memorandum

To: The Community Foundation for the Twin Tiers Scholarship Recipients
FROM Scholarship Administrator
RE: FALL 2011 and SPRING 2012 Award

Enclosed is a check representing your scholarship award for the Fall and Spring terms of the 2007-2008 academic year.

Please note the payee and amount of the check carefully for accuracy, and if an error has been made, advise us immediately so that a new check may be issued.

This award may be used for tuition, fees, and books incurred as part of your course of study. You may wish to consult your attorney or financial advisor for additional information as awards applied to room and board or other expenses may be taxable. The Community Foundation for the Twin Tiers (CFTT) will not provide a 1099 or other IRS reporting forms. Should you have any questions, regarding this award or its application, please contact me at (570) 888-4759 or fax (570) 882-9156.

On behalf of the Board of Directors and Scholarship Selection Committees of the CFTT, we wish you success in your educational and career goals.

Appendix C
Sample Student Agreement Form
Community Foundation for the Twin Tiers

Scholarship Recipient: _____

SSN 000-00-000

AWARD INFORMATION:

Total scholarship amount:

\$

Institution grant is based on:

University, Anywhere USA:*

Fall Check:

\$

Spring Check:

\$

** If there is a change of school, please make corrections below.*

I DECLINE THE AWARD:

I do not accept the (Name of Scholarship) grant.

Please specify reason: _____

I ACCEPT THE AWARD:

I accept the (Name of Scholarship) grant and have verified the following:

I am not directly related to any of the persons involved in the scholarship award process: employees or volunteers of the Community Foundation for the Twin Tiers (CFTT) or the members of the selection committee.

I authorize the CFTT to release information regarding my scholarship to my school and the media.

I agree to send the CFTT a report on my progress at the end of the final term for which I am being funded. Should I withdraw from (name of college) during the semester, I will return this award to the Foundation.

My study plan is listed below: (Make any necessary changes in the space provided. Please note that any changes to your study plan could mean a change in your award amount and/or could effect your eligibility for this grant.)

I will attend: Mansfield University, Mansfield, PA _____

I will be attending for: Full Year _____

I will be registered as: Full time _____

My major is: Early Childhood Education _____

Signature (recipient signature required)

Date

E-mail address: _____

Appendix D
Sample Rejection Letter
Community Foundation for the Twin Tiers

8/25/2011

Community Foundation for the Twin Tiers
104 W. Lockhart Street, Unit 2
Sayre, PA 18840

Student
Address
City, State, Zip

Dear Student:

We regret to inform you that the scholarship committee of the (Name of Scholarship Fund) was unable to grant you a scholarship for the 2011-2012 academic year.

The committee had a very difficult time choosing from the many qualified candidates. As funds are limited, scholarships could not be awarded to all who applied.

This letter does not affect any other scholarships for which you may have applied through the Community Foundation for the Twin Tiers. You will be notified about each scholarship separately after award decisions are made by each of the scholarship committees.

Thank you for taking the time to apply for scholarships this year. If you are interested in scholarships for the 2011-2012 academic year please contact our offices in December to get a new application, or visit www.twintierscf.org to apply online.

Sincerely,

I. M. Smart
Scholarship Administrator

The official registration and financial information of the Community Foundation for the Twin Tiers may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll free, within Pennsylvania, 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

Appendix E Award Displacement Issue

Many committees and donors express concern that their awards only get taken away from students when they go to their colleges. From time to time, we are asked to make award payments directly to students to avoid this problem.

It is the Foundation's policy to make all award payments co-payable to the student and the institution. This helps prevent misappropriation by both student and institution.

In addition, the Foundation believes that we must work with colleges, not against them, to provide financial aid. It helps to understand that colleges are trying to do exactly what we're doing, i.e., to give as many students as possible a financial helping hand.

In most cases, when aid packages are adjusted due to a private award, it is a student's loan obligation that is reduced. The Foundation feels that this is a positive outcome.

In cases where institutional grant aid is reduced, there are strategies, which can help minimize the chances of this happening. Generally, it is only the expensive, private colleges, which reduce institutional, grant dollars as a result of an outside award.

However, even these institutions usually allow the first \$500 to reduce loan aid. Therefore, your committee can adopt a policy of making only \$500 awards to students attending this type of institution.

Generally, you can safely assume that awards of \$1,000 or less have little chance of adversely affecting students' aid packages at schools other than ivy-league colleges.

The following example may help clarify the issue.

The Jones family has a combined adjusted gross income of \$40,000 with liquid assets (no real estate) of \$40,000. There are four family members with one being a full-time college student. The family's contribution is \$5,000.

Comparison Treatment of Foundation Awards

	State School	Ivy League
College Cost	\$10,000	\$ 20,000
Family Contribution	-5,000	-5,000
FINANCIAL NEED	\$ 5,000	\$ 15,000
 Aid Package:		
Stafford Loan	2,625	2,625
Work/Study	1,500	1,500
College Grant	-0-	6,000
Collage Loan	-0-	4,875
NEED GAP	875	-0-
 A foundation award of :	 \$ 1,000	 \$ 1,000

will fill the need gap at the State School and reduce the loan obligation by \$125. At the Ivy League school the same award will reduce the loan obligation by \$500, the amount above \$500 will reduce institutional grant aid by \$300 (60%) and loan or work/study aid by \$200 (40%).

Appendix F Sample School Scholarship Awards Announcement Letter

Date:

To: Name of School
Address
City, State, Zip

From: XXXXX XXXXXX, Board Chair

The students listed below have received the referenced scholarship award(s) from the Community Foundation for the Twin Tiers. Complete payment accompanies this letter.

Scholarship awards are for tuition, fees, books or equipment needed for course work while this student attends your institution. Unused scholarship funds must be returned to the Community Foundation. If any part of this scholarship is used for anything other than the previously stated expenses, it will be necessary for the recipient to claim that portion of the scholarship as income, as specified in the Internal Revenue Act of 1986.

If the student receives financial aid, this scholarship is intended to reduce the student loan and/or work-study portion of the student's financial aid package. It is our intent that grant aid previously offered to the student should not be reduced unless the reduction is required by federal or state law.

Please advise me immediately of any of the following situations:

1. The student does not register for the coming academic term.
2. The student withdraws from classes after the beginning of the term.

Your assistance and cooperation is very much appreciated. Please do not hesitate to contact the Community Foundation for the Twin Tiers at 570-888-4759.

<u>Student Name</u>	<u>SSN</u>	<u>Scholarship Awarded</u>	<u>Amount(s) Awarded</u>
Doe, Jane M.	279902449	Victor & Carla Ross Scholarship Fund	\$300.00
		Athens High School Scholarship Fund	\$500.00
		Total for: Doe, Jane M	\$800.00
Donnelly, Lauren M	279860809	Eagles Mere Lions Scholarship	\$500.00
		Total for: Donnelly, Lauren M	\$500.00
Lopez, Joanna N	286847606	Owego Free Academy Scholarship	\$1,500.00
		Total for: Lopez, Joanna N	\$1,500.00
Total of Check Enclosed:			<u>\$2,800.00</u>

*Community Foundation for the Twin Tiers
104 W. Lockhart Street, Unit 2
Sayre, Pennsylvania 18840*

*Phone (570) 888-4759 • Fax (570) 888-2179
E-MAIL cftt@stny.rr.com / WEBSITE www.twintierscf.org*

Appendix G
Sample Letter to Donor of Scholarship Funds
Community Foundation for the Twin Tiers

(Name of Scholarship)

Donor
Address
City, State, Zip

Date

Dear Donor,

It is a pleasure to inform you that the following students were selected as recipients of scholarships from your (Name of Scholarship Fund) for the 2011-2012 academic year.

There was a total of (Total of Funds Available for Scholarships) available for scholarships this year from your fund. Of that total amount (total amount awarded) was awarded to (# of students) students. A summary of this information is contained in the table below. Any funds not awarded will be left in the fund and will be available for grants next year.

GRANT INFORMATION:

Name of Student:	Joy Fullaway
Amount of Grant:	\$1,000
Higher School Graduated from:	ABC High School
Institution of Higher Education Attending:	Penn State
Field of Study:	Architecture
Name of Student:	Amy Grant
Amount of Grant:	\$1,000
Higher School Graduated from:	XYZ High School
Institution of Higher Education Attending:	Mansfield
Field of Study:	Elementary Education

We are delighted that you established your scholarship fund through us. I am sure you join us in wishing these students best wishes for a productive and enjoyable year at school. Your generosity has made it possible for these students to further their education and for us here at the Foundation to be able to share in that experience.

Sincerely,

I. M. Smart, Scholarship Administrator