

Evolving Trends in Scholarship Opportunities

The **Muskegon Promise** gives Muskegon County graduates with a 2.5+ GPA two free years at Muskegon Community College or Baker College. As a “last dollar” award, other scholarships reduce its value without increasing affordability.

The **Community College Guarantee** covers in-district tuition and fees for all recent grads, regardless of GPA or income.

Many students don't view higher education as an accessible option. They may be the first in their families to consider college, worry about the cost, and be unaware of the wide range of careers that require education or training beyond high school.

Up to 30% of enrollees at local colleges (MCC and Baker) are **Adult Students**, attending for the first time or returning to complete a degree. These students already live and work in our community, and may not have access to traditional forms of student assistance and scholarships.

70% of students in higher education change their major at least once. Changing majors is a common part of the college journey that reflects a willingness to adapt, learn, and pursue a path that more closely aligns with evolving interests and goals.

A shortage of skilled workers is leading more students to consider pursuing technical degrees or certificates in the skilled trades.

The cost of higher education has skyrocketed. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, in 2022-23, the average total cost of attendance for first-time, full-time undergraduate students living on campus at 4-year degree-granting institutions ranged between \$27,100 and \$58,600 per year.

Empowering Students: New Approaches to Educational Support

- Make awards to students when they finish with the Muskegon Promise in years three or four and transfer to four-year schools to complete their degree.
- Make awards to students who are not attending Muskegon Community College or Baker College.
- Support the **KickStart to Career** program – an “early reward” scholarship that provides a \$50 seed deposit for all Kindergarten students in the County.
- As of 2025, all K-6 students have an account that can grow through family contributions and reward deposits earned by activities like career exploration, savings matches, or completing challenges such as 'March is Reading Month.'
- Consider supporting the **Adult Student Scholarship Fund**.
- Our Adult Student application is open year-round to support the varying needs and schedules of this population.
- If supporting a particular field of study is important, consider making awards in year 3 or 4 of a student's education, when they have declared their major and are more likely to stick with it.
- Allow students to use the scholarship for vocational, two-year, or certificate programs.
- Make larger awards and multi-year awards whenever possible, even if it means supporting one student at a time rather than a new student every year. Use a pass-through gift to your Fund to increase the award size.