

Funding Resources for PI

Scholarship, Loan, VA, and Fundraising Resources for your RMSP Education

The search for funding your education can seem like a needle-in-a-haystack. Hopefully this guide can give you some out-of-the-box ideas and lead you to find ways of funding your education. No matter what, money won't just fall in your lap if you don't do the leg work – so, get prepared to do a little bit of reading, some internet research of websites, and don't be afraid to just apply to scholarships that you think you have a chance to get!

Scholarships

TIP: *These searches almost always cause a feeling of overwhelm. We recommend using the Bookmark feature on your browser. Create a bookmarks folder specifically for the links that lead to funding options you think are viable. Do all this in 3 passes to reduce the 'overwhelm' feeling.*

The First Pass is to just determine if the possible scholarship is feasible and you fit the criteria – bookmark it if it is.

The Second Pass is to go back to those bookmarks and look at each link, read deeper and determine exactly what needs to be done. If there's a deadline, immediately add that deadline to your calendar. If you can apply online at that moment, do it. If it will take more time because it will involve other work like an essay – you can tackle that in Pass 3, so write that one down.

The Third Pass is for the ones that require a bit more time writing an essay or creating something specific in their requirements. It will all take a bit of work, but it will be worth it!

Your FIRST stop should be the scholarship search at [College Board](#). There are some esoteric contests and awards in there, but it could be worth applying to all the ones that seem relevant to you. You can filter the search based on your own specific characteristics – but I'd recommend looking into all the scholarships just in case the filter removes opportunities that might apply to you. Any extra money will help, right? It won't hurt to go for it. Anything for accredited 4-year schools won't apply to RMSP, but there are others in there that don't require that criteria.

Your SECOND stop should be the scholarship search at [College Data](#). This one goes pretty deep – but if you are of a particular gender, a particular faith, of a specific ethnicity, or you have any particular skills or awards from High School, use the filter in this one to bring up a list of other potential scholarship opportunities. Again, bookmark the ones that seem to fit and then go back later and attack that list and apply to every single one! Tip: run a search using Photojournalism/Photography as the "Area of Study" but also run a search with "Filmmaking/Video."

The next stop is to go to [SuperCollege](#) – which has a long list of possible scholarships and grants. Some are only for accredited programs, but there are some that aren't restricted to that. It is a very long list of links – some of the links are dead or inactive, but some are legitimate, so persevere! Push through them and bookmark all the ones that are relevant and worth exploring – then take the time to go through those and apply to every single one you bookmarked!

The next option is to check out the various [references by Gail Ann Schlachter](#). Her titles have mixed reviews on Amazon; however, that may be because people have not researched that deep. If you search your local library, you may be able to locate a free copy to peruse. It seems that despite their self-published nature, they may have useful information for finding funding. You can also purchase a specific reference title from her website, should you choose.

[RMSP High School Scholarship](#) – Every year, RMSP awards five \$5,000 scholarships to graduating high school seniors who display academic excellence and a desire to build a photography career. These scholarships are designed to encourage students to pursue their photographic dreams following high school by helping offset the cost of Professional Intensive. To apply, follow the steps listed [here](#) and communicate with Bob McGowan at bobm@rmsp.com.

Community Organizations are another option to explore. If you belong to a church community, or a service-based organization such as the Lions Club, there may be some opportunities within those communities for scholarships.

Additional Ideas

Do a Photoshoot! Maybe you are already actively taking pictures in your community and know enough to make decent images. This would be an excellent way to offer a donation-based photoshoot to help fund your education! You could do this under open shade in a local park and bring an assistant. The assistant will write down each client's name and contact information, and then write their first and last name on a separate piece of paper. You then get one shot of them holding the 'nameplate,' take it away, and then shoot the rest of your shots! That way you know who they are later.

Once you are done downloading your images, you can create folders by name, (Right Click-Compress the folder) and then use a service like Dropbox or We Transfer to email the images. No postage or thumb-drives needed!

And your assistant will be there to not only help with keeping track of who is who, but to take donations towards your educational fund!

Use social media to advertise the event as a One-Day Donation-Based Photoshoot, and you can decide if you'd like people to just show up whenever (which means you'll have to work fast!) - or if you'd prefer people contact you and you sign them into an actual 10 minute time-slot to arrive for their shoot.

Keep it simple – shoot in open shade under a tree away from the trunk. Avoid including the trunk in your images.

It's low pressure for you, it's low investment for them – win/win! And after a bunch of them, you'll have some extra funds AND photoshoot experience which will increase your confidence in time. And you'll have made a bunch of connections so that later when you are a bona fide professional, people will remember you and hire you again. Word-of-mouth is powerful!

Crowdfunding is an often-overlooked way to source additional funding for your dream. All you need is a cell phone that can shoot some video and to sign up for an account at www.GoFundMe.com. Get a friend or family member to film a little snippet of you talking about your dream to go to photography school, why you want to be a photographer, and how their support will help make this dream come true. I recommend that you also talk about the other funding you've been tracking down – don't put all your eggs in the GoFundMe basket – it will be better for you to apply to all the other scholarship opportunities FIRST, and then when you go into crowdfunding, you can also talk about what scholarships you've been awarded and how you are crowdfunding to help defray the rest of it! Grantors like knowing that they aren't the only one who is supporting your endeavor, so consider asking for less than the total amount you need and hope to gain more! If you ask for a huge amount, it will feel impossible and people may be less likely to give if the target is too far away – but folks get excited when you get close to the goal and they often will 'kick in' to see it to completion. Maybe consider asking for 15-25% of your total amount and see where it lands!

Hold a Bake Sale! Yes, it's 'old-school' but in many states it's legal and can bring in extra money. If you do enough of them, in various locations around your town, you could bring in a decent amount of extra funds to help tuition or living expenses! Check with your local health code and laws regarding bake sales and go for it! Tell people why you are doing it and be impassioned about pursuing your dream and be sure to thank them for any sale/contribution to your cause! Every little bit will help.

Using VA Benefits for *Professional Intensive*

RMSP's Professional Intensive program is approved for Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits. We have had many students use VA benefits to pay for their education at RMSP.

Check out the FAQs to learn more!

To attend *Professional Intensive* using your VA benefits, follow these steps:

1. Apply for Professional Intensive at: rmsp.com/professional
2. Await application approval before proceeding to next step
3. Apply for Education Benefits from the VA and obtain your Certificate/Letter of Eligibility. You can learn more about this process here: <https://www.va.gov/education/how-to-apply/>
4. Send your Certificate of Eligibility to Bob McGowan (bobm@rmsp.com) at RMSP
5. RMSP will ensure that you are eligible for education benefits and will email you once that's confirmed
6. At this point, you can officially register online for *Professional Intensive* by paying the \$500 deposit
7. If you decide to withdraw from *PI* before starting, this \$500 is non-refundable after a 72-hour grace period

Frequently Asked Questions:

ARE MY BENEFITS ELIGIBLE FOR YOUR PROGRAMS?

RMSP's *Professional Intensive* program is approved for VA Education benefits as a Non-College Degree granting institution. If you are unsure of the status of your benefits, check: <https://benefits.va.gov/gibill/>

WHAT DO THEY COVER IN TERMS OF EXPENSES?

The VA will cover (through the Post-9/11 GI Bill) \$25,162.14 of your tuition costs (As of August 2020). You may also be eligible for additional housing and equipment benefits. Check here for more information: https://www.benefits.va.gov/GIBILL/resources/benefits_resources/rates/ch33/ch33rates080120.asp

WHERE DO I GO TO FIND OUT ABOUT MY BENEFITS?

<https://benefits.va.gov/gibill/>

WHAT'S THE FIRST STEP IN TERMS OF OBTAINING MY BENEFITS AND APPLYING THEM TO YOUR PROGRAM?

If you haven't already, apply for VA Education Benefits here: <https://www.va.gov/education/how-to-apply/>

If you have already applied for VA Education Benefits, you can follow the steps above to get the process started.

WILL MY BENEFITS APPLY TOWARD EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES NECESSARY FOR YOUR PROGRAM?

Maybe, but that is at the discretion of the VA, not RMSP. With that said, the majority of our VA students do receive an equipment stipend and a monthly housing allowance. You can learn more about that by reaching out to the VA directly.

DOES THE VA PAY THE SCHOOL DIRECTLY OR DO THEY PAY ME FIRST AND I PAY THE SCHOOL?

The VA pays RMSP directly for the *Professional Intensive* tuition. Housing and equipment stipends are delivered directly to the student from the VA.

I WANT TO TRANSFER MY BENEFITS TO MY DEPENDENT (SPOUSE, CHILD) FOR YOUR PROGRAM. HOW DO I DO THAT?

That is done through the VA. The transfer needs to be completed before the start of the program. Once transferred, we will need a Certificate/Letter of Eligibility with the incoming student's name on it from the VA.

WHO DO I CONTACT WITH QUESTIONS?

That depends. If it's a question about RMSP, you can reach out to Bob McGowan here at the school (bobm@rmsp.com). If it's a VA-related question, you can try asking Bob, but we might refer you to the VA if the question is regarding something we cannot answer. The Department of Veterans Affairs can be reached at 1(888) 442-4551.

Sallie Mae Smart Option Career Training Loan[®]

Students registered for our *Professional Intensive* program have the option to apply for a Career Training Smart Option Student Loan offered through Sallie Mae. With this loan, you can borrow up to the full cost of your education. Designed to help you graduate with less student loan debt and help you pay it off faster, the Career Training Smart Option Student Loan requires making interest-only payments while in school and during the six-month separation period to avoid capitalized interest. A creditworthy cosigner may also help you qualify and/or receive a lower interest rate. RMSP is not a federally accredited school, therefore our students do not qualify for Federal Aid (FAFSA).

ELIGIBILITY

- U.S. citizens attending an eligible school
- International students are eligible with a creditworthy cosigner (who must be a U.S. citizen or permanent resident) and appropriate U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service documentation
- Student meets current credit and eligibility criteria

FEATURES

- Easy online application with fast credit decision and electronic signature ("eSign") available
- 24/7 online account management
- No prepayment penalty
- You may be able to deduct the interest you pay on a qualified student loan

BENEFITS

- Pricing that rewards creditworthy borrowers
- A creditworthy cosigner may help you qualify and/or receive a lower interest rate
- Apply for a cosigner release after successful completion of your education
- Choice of interest-only or fixed monthly payments of \$25 required while in school and during the six-month separation period to avoid capitalization of interest and lower the overall cost of the loan
- A 0.25 percentage point interest rate reduction is available for automatic debit

LOAN LIMITS

- \$1,000 minimum loan amount
- Borrow as much as needed to pay for tuition and expenses, up to the cost of attendance as certified by school and confirmed by Sallie Mae

INTEREST RATE

- Applying with a creditworthy cosigner may help you qualify and/or receive a lower interest rate
- The Career Training Smart Option Student Loan has interest rates that reward good credit. Interest rates are variable and are reset monthly based on the one-month LIBOR Index

REPAYMENT

- Choice of the Fixed Repayment Option to make monthly payments of \$25 while in school and during the six-month separation period OR the Interest Repayment Option to make interest-only payments while in school and during the six-month separation period
- Consider making principal and interest payments while in school to lower the amount you must repay.
- Principal and interest payments begin following the six-month separation period
- Prepay your loan at any time without penalty

FEES

- Disbursement fee of zero to 5%
- No repayment fee

****Students may apply for the Career Training Smart Option Student Loan after January 1st.***

****Students must apply for the RMSP Professional Intensive program prior to applying for the loan.***

All flier information comes from slmfinancial.com. RMSP is not responsible for this content.

We hope that this list of ideas helps you get closer to funding your dream of Professional Intensive. We would love to see you find financial help, and we hope you have success in at least one of these arenas!

If you end up procuring funding from another scholarship opportunity or alternative fundraising source, let us know! We'd love to pass the info along to future students.