

THE CHARLOTTE W. NEWCOMBE FOUNDATION

2008 Conference – Scholarships for Mature Women Students – October 23-24, 2008 Discussion Highlights

1. Some institutions award a small number of relatively large Newcombe Scholarships while others award a large number of smaller scholarships. What considerations have led your institution to choose the number and size of Newcombe Scholarships that it awards?

- To enable awarded students to take an additional course, one institution awards scholarships in an amount equal to the cost of one course.
- To emphasize the reduction of loan indebtedness, one institution provides larger grants to fewer women who have exhausted all state and federal grant opportunities.
- One institution provides larger awards to fewer recipients who are very close to graduating, which has led to a 100% completion rate for Newcombe scholars.
- One institution, desiring to acknowledge, encourage and celebrate all eligible applicants for a Newcombe Scholarship, gives a large number of smaller awards.
- Some private institutions with higher tuition rates provide fewer, larger Newcombe scholarships to ensure that the scholarships are large enough to make a significant difference to recipients.
- Some institutions limit the size of their Newcombe Scholarship awards to recipients' identified unmet financial need; this allows a larger number of awards than if all were of equal size.
- Questions from the group:
 - How do institutions inform women who meet the criteria so that many apply?
 - *Suggestion from several attendees: Use the institutional database to identify those eligible, and send each one an invitation to apply.*
 - If many apply, will it change an institution's philosophy of size and number of Newcombe scholarships awarded?
 - *CWNF suggestion: Not necessarily. It will improve awareness of the extent of student need, but Newcombe-funded institutions are free to determine how best to use the available funds to address the needs of their mature women students.*
 - How should an institution choose between making a significant difference in a few women's lives, vs. benefitting a greater number of students?
 - *CWNF suggestion: In terms of students' needs and the other resources available to each institution, The Newcombe Foundation relies upon funded institutions to use their own best judgment as to how Newcombe funds can have optimum overall impact on helping eligible students complete their bachelor's degrees.*

2. In what uniquely effective ways is your college or university serving the needs of mature women students?

- Misericordia University's Women and Children Program provides group housing and related support services for single women students with young children.
(http://www.misericordia.edu/misericordia_pg.cfm?subcat_id=129&page_id=352)
- La Salle University demonstrates a long-term commitment to women in the surrounding community, an economically distressed area of Philadelphia. Many participants in the College of

Professional and Continuing Studies have had lifelong involvement in the community and look forward to working for its betterment after graduation.

- One institution provides child care on campus. Another reimburses students for one-half of the cost of eligible child care.
 - Distance learning has become an option at many institutions. Questions remain about balancing the discipline and social networking of classroom attendance against the convenience of technology.
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3. What are some of the more challenging issues that you face when trying to evaluate the student-candidates for Newcombe Scholarships?

- Selection committees struggle to determine where the Newcombe money will have the most impact. In comparing two equally needy Scholarship candidates, it is difficult to choose between one who is clearly in need of the education offered by a college and one who appears to have more skills and thus may be more able to negotiate the academic world. Newcombe Foundation policy states (II.F.): “Among otherwise qualified candidates, preference for superior academic performance is encouraged.”
 - In computing eligibility for a Newcombe Scholarship against the Foundation’s minimum 2.50 standard, there may be difficulty determining a meaningful GPA for students with many transfer credits (e.g., whether the GPA should include courses taken elsewhere ten years ago, or only those taken at the receiving institution). The Foundation does not stipulate how to compute the GPA. Each institution should determine how to interpret this criterion in good faith, toward the larger goal of selecting the most appropriate applicants for a Newcombe scholarship.
 - The overall manageability of the selection process is an issue at some institutions. Some use criteria beyond those set by the Foundation (e.g., requiring a student to carry a course load of nine credits or maintain a GPA of at least 3.0 for the semester in which the scholarship is awarded).
 - When standard financial forms do not accurately reflect information pertinent to the Newcombe Scholarship criteria, such as special circumstances causing financial need, some institutions include an essay and/or interview component in the selection process. Alternatively, a supplemental financial aid form that elicits information not considered on the FAFSA can be a practical tool in ascertaining critical financial data.
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4. How has your institution been successful in connecting former Newcombe Scholars with current Newcombe Scholars? What advantages does this provide?

- Past Newcombe recipients can be tapped as mentors for current Newcombe scholars and as potential donors for the Newcombe Endowed Fund at the institution. The 50-year-old Mary I. Bunting Program at Douglass College of Rutgers University is a model of how alumnae and current students, many of them current and former Newcombe scholars, connect with each other. Bunting alumnae are also the main source of “match” contributors to the Newcombe Endowed Fund at Douglass.
(http://drc.rutgers.edu/index.php?page_name=mary_i_bunting_program)
- One institution offers a career workshop for Newcombe scholars once a year, inviting former Newcombe recipients to discuss their experience on a panel. “We underestimate their desire and appreciation of the scholarship; everyone we asked attended, and they were delighted to ‘give back.’”

5. What successful strategies has your institution developed to meet its endowment challenge matches?

- More than one institution attempts to create a culture of responsibility, privilege, and gratitude around the Newcombe Scholarships, so that recipients see the scholarship as more than just financial assistance for a semester. “Charlotte W. Newcombe is real, and her legacy continues. Recipients have a personal responsibility to contribute to the next generation of mature women students.”
 - One institution has had some success in approaching women-owned businesses for donations.
 - Appeal to Newcombe scholarship recipients who have graduated, welcoming gifts of all sizes.
 - Include a letter from a current Newcombe recipient with the Development Office’s appeal to donors.
 - Appeal to adjunct faculty, Alpha Sigma (honor society) alums, foundations that support women’s issues, and donors whose mothers or wives were returning women students.
 - The Newcombe challenge can be used as leverage in approaching alums, offering them the opportunity to match with like-minded donors. The challenge can be used to galvanize a population of alums that has traditionally been overlooked.
 - Reassure donors that “even small gifts will be matched, thus doubling your donation.”
 - The Newcombe Foundation encourages institutions to pursue research to evaluate the long-term impact of a Newcombe Scholarship on recipients, either via IR departments or faculty/student projects in appropriate courses. In addition to gathering information, this exercise can inspire potential donors to the institution’s Newcombe Endowed Fund.
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6. What criteria would you suggest that the Newcombe Foundation use in evaluating the effectiveness of its *Scholarships for Mature Women* program?

- The Foundation is very interested in institutions’ efforts to measure both quantitative and qualitative outcomes of women who have received Newcombe scholarships. Separate funding for research is not available through the Foundation at this time.
- A recurrent question is, “How can we quantify the unquantifiable?” Note that the Newcombe Foundation is not trying to oversimplify the process. The fundamental question is “How should we think about the extent to which the Newcombe Scholarships for Mature Women Students program has positive impacts on recipients?”
- A potential indicator: graduation/retention rate. It would be important to analyze such data in a statistically relevant way. Mature adult students often do not finish a bachelor’s degree in a prescribed time period, but a delay in completing the degree does not necessarily mean that a recipient’s scholarship was ineffective.
- A potential indicator: reduction of debt burden. One institution requires recipients to use Newcombe scholarships to begin paying back student loans.
- A potential indicator: numbers of children of Newcombe Scholars who plan to attend college, are in college, or have graduated from college.
- An idea: Invite a Ph.D. candidate to develop a research tool that can be used to measure (quantitatively and qualitatively) the effects of a woman’s receiving a Newcombe scholarship.
- An idea: \$1,200 science scholarship at Towson requires that recipient agree to be followed throughout his/her career. Recipients report that they enjoy talking about their successes.

- An idea: Alumni and Development offices track information on graduates exceptionally well; they may have data already on file that could be a useful resource.
 - An idea: Locate general research regarding older students' experiences of returning to college.
 - An idea: those institutions with mentoring components to their Newcombe programs may wish to study the impacts of mentoring.
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7. What other questions or comments do you have, either for Newcombe Foundation staff or for your colleagues at other institutions?

- Representatives from Financial Aid noted that the credit market crisis will impact students who have historically pursued private alternative student loans. Women who have been willing to borrow funds for college may no longer be eligible to do so.
- Ideas for Foundation staff to pursue:
 - Consider inviting the CEO of Smith Kline to be on an advisory board of the Foundation.
 - Seek out organizations that support scholarships for women and invite them into partnership.
- Consider expanding eligibility criteria to build a cohort of Newcombe scholars. (For example, offer some form of institutional recognition to meritorious candidates who meet all criteria but lack financial need. Including these individuals could bring attention and possibly additional funding to the Newcombe program at an individual college or university.) Since the most important criterion for Newcombe Scholarships is financial need, this small group could not be Newcombe Scholars as such, but could be affiliated in some way appropriate to the institution.
- Matching both the Foundation's annual and endowment grants is a tangible way of reflecting institutional commitment to mature women at a university or college. Matching the annual grant enables an institution to provide twice as many Newcombe scholarships, and to foster a vibrant community of women who identify themselves as "Newcombe scholars."

Compiled by
Newcombe Foundation staff
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