



## BRIGHT STARS SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

John & Deborah Gillis Foundation



### Bright Stars Scholarship Program Overview

The *Bright Stars Scholarship Program* was created in 2018 by the *John and Deborah Gillis Foundation*. The foundation exists to provide scholarship opportunities to amplify, strengthen and empower Hopkins County students so they will be career ready to be highly competitive in a global society.

#### Foundation's Scholarship Goal

1. Provide a minimum of ten (10) annual education scholarships to **eligible** graduating seniors **who would benefit from financial support** and that are renewable for up to eight consecutive semesters

In May of 2019 the *John and Deborah Gillis Foundation* began to annually award minimally ten (10) *Bright Stars Scholarships* in the amount of up to \$5,000 a semester for up to 8 semesters to graduating Hopkins County seniors who meet criteria established by the foundation's Board of Directors. **These criteria reflect the foundation's mission and goal of supporting students who would benefit most from financial support to increase the potential of achieving their post-secondary education and career goals.** The Bright Stars Scholarship application deadline is **Monday, March 2, 2026, at 5 pm**. All required documents **MUST** be submitted through the Online Application System on our website by this time and date. No exceptions.

#### **STEP 1 – Establishing Eligibility**

1. Applicants must complete a **Step 1 Bright Stars Scholarship** application form and submit it electronically through the foundation's website no later than **5:00 pm on March 2**.
2. Applicants must submit an **official transcript** for the first seven semesters (grades and GPA through the fall semester of their senior year) of high school with the application. This means they **MUST** have the **school's official seal stamped on document** or the **signature of a school official** on the document. **Transcripts will not be accepted** if they are not signed by a school official or have the official seal embossed on the document.
3. Applicants must submit an **official attendance form** from a school counselor or administrator who can confirm their attendance record for the first seven semesters of high school.
4. Applicants must submit **a) their official FASFA forms with BOTH parents' income information** included on the reporting document **OR b) parents/guardians must submit the required documents (Official Income Tax Return's first page showing total income OR paycheck stub information) to establish a need for financial assistance for post secondary education opportunities. They only need to submit one of these financial documents.**
5. Applicants must meet the published application deadlines established. The **Step 1** application requirements will be vetted by the foundation's executive director to ensure all required documents have been submitted. Once all documents have been submitted within the published deadline, applicants will be notified via email of their eligibility status based on published criteria and required next steps for moving on to **Step 2** (if eligible). **No one other than the executive director vetting the student's documents will see ANY documents and they will be deleted after being reviewed.**

## **Step 2 – Submission of Final Documents and Interview**

6. In **Step 2**, eligible applicants must write an essay on a given topic related to the mission and goals of the foundation. Each applicant will receive the same essay prompt in an email from the executive director.
7. In **Step 2**, applicants must have letters of recommendation submitted by two (2) adults. These letters of recommendation **must be mailed by the authors of the letters** to the executive director at the foundation's designated address or **written and uploaded on the foundation's website (preferred)**. **An applicant will not be eligible for their interview until both letters of recommendation have been received by the executive director.**
8. In **Step 2**, applicants must submit a resume describing work and education experiences, achievements, future goals, leadership positions, etc. A student may use the resume template of his or her choice to submit this information.
9. In **Step 2**, applicants must conduct an interview with a John and Deborah Gillis Foundation's *Bright Stars Scholarship Advisory Committee*. The Executive Director will work with the applicant to set up his or her interview date and time ***AFTER two recommendation letters, a resume and their essay have been received.***
10. Applicants must submit and complete all of **Step 2 Bright Stars Scholarship** application processes no later than **5:00 pm on March 9, 2026. No letters of recommendation, resumes or essays will be accepted after the March 9 deadline.**

## **Remaining Scholarship Eligible in Post-Secondary Institution Studies**

11. *Bright Stars Scholarship* winners must retain an overall 2.5 GPA to remain eligible to receive scholarship funding each semester.
12. *Bright Stars Scholarship* winners must submit an official transcript to the foundation's Executive Director after each semester from their post-secondary educational institution to remain eligible for scholarship funds.
13. The *Bright Stars Scholarship* funds for each winner will be sent directly to the post-secondary institution to pay for tuition, housing, books, required tools, parking fees, etc. *Unused funds will be returned directly back to the foundation to be banked for the student to use in future semesters.* No student may be refunded unused scholarship money directly to their personal accounts.

## **Selection Process**

The selection process has been designed with the intent of eliminating biases and conflicts of interest for all applicants so to ensure fidelity within the scholarship program. A *Bright Stars Scholarship Advisory Committee*, created from residents living within Hopkins County, TX., will work together to identify the top 10 (ten) winners to receive an annual scholarship. Board members, as well as the Executive Director, will nominate and come to consensus on county residents to be invited to serve a two-year term on this advisory committee. Committee membership may be renewed at the end of the two-year term by the Board of Directors.

Three members of the Bright Stars Scholarship Advisory committee will be assigned to an applicant to review required documents and, using a scoring rubric, give points in each of these three areas:

1. **Essay** – counts as **30% of total score**
2. **Resume** – counts as **10% of total score**
3. **Letters of recommendation** – counts as **20% of total score**
4. **Interview** – counts as **40% of total score**

The foundation's Executive Director will NOT be a part of the scoring process for the scholarship selection process. The executive director's role is to:

- facilitate the process to ensure equity,
- ensure fidelity in the process and,
- manage the logistics of the submission of applications, communications between the foundation and applicants and parents/guardians and set up interviews with the Scholarship Advisory Committee.

**No *Bright Stars Advisory Committee* member will see any financial documents of families, Grade Point Averages or School Attendance Data of students who submit applications.** Only the foundation's Executive Director will view those documents during the vetting process to ensure an applicant meets criteria to be eligible to move on to **Step 2** in the process.

## BRIGHT STARS SCHOLARSHIP SCORING RUBRICS

The following rubrics will be used by the three *Scholarship Advisory Committee* members assigned to an applicant to score each of the four areas:

1. The essay written that responds to the prompt given in the application will count as **30% of total score.**
2. The letters of recommendation will count as **20% of total score.**
3. The resume will count as **10% of the total score.**
4. The interview each applicant will conduct with the Scholarship Advisory Committee members will count as **40% of total score.**

### ESSAY SCORING RUBRIC (counts as 30% of total score)

APPLICANT'S NAME \_\_\_\_\_

SCHOOL DISTRICT \_\_\_\_\_

SCORER'S PRINTED NAME AND SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

PRINTED NAME \_\_\_\_\_

SCORER'S SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

Criteria	0 to 2 points	2.1 to 4 points	4.1 to 6 points	6.1 to 8 points	SCORE
<i>Quality of Response to Essay Prompt</i>	<i>Essay does not address or respond to prompt given.</i>	<i>Essay somewhat addresses or responds to prompt given.</i>	<i>Essay mostly addresses or responds to prompt given.</i>	<i>Essay thoroughly addresses or responds to prompt and specific examples were provided.</i>	
<i>Quality of Conventions of Writing Used in Response to Essay</i>	Essay is not well written grammatically.	Essay has some grammatical errors.	Essay has few grammatical errors.	Essay has no grammatical errors.	

Criteria	0 to 2 points	2.1 to 4 points	4.1 to 6 points	6.1 to 8 points	SCORE
<i>Clarity of Thought or Message's Response</i>	Response to prompt was not easily understood by reader.	Response to prompt was somewhat understood by reader.	Response to prompt was mostly understood by reader.	Response to prompt was clearly stated, thus totally understood by reader. Personal descriptions or examples amplified the message within the essay.	
<b>TOTAL SCORE</b>					

### **INTERVIEW SCORING RUBRIC (counts as 40% of total score)**

APPLICANT'S NAME \_\_\_\_\_

SCHOOL DISTRICT \_\_\_\_\_

SCORER'S PRINTED NAME AND SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

PRINTED NAME \_\_\_\_\_

SCORER'S SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

Criteria	0 to 2 points	2.1 to 4 points	4.1 to 6 points	6.1 to 8 points	Score
<b>Appearance</b>	Overall appearance is untidy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Choice in clothing is inappropriate for interview (torn unclean, wrinkled)</li> <li>Poor grooming</li> </ul>	Appearance is somewhat untidy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Choice in clothing is inappropriate</li> <li>Grooming attempt is evident</li> </ul>	Overall neat appearance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Choice in clothing is acceptable for the type of interview</li> </ul>	Overall appearance is very neat <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Choice in clothing is appropriate for interview</li> <li>Very well groomed</li> <li>Overall appearance is businesslike</li> </ul>	
<b>Greeting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unacceptable behavior and language</li> <li>Unfriendly and not courteous</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Used typical behavior and language – did modify behavior to fit the interview</li> <li>Attempts to be courteous to all in</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Acceptable behavior, well mannered, age appropriate and context professionalis m lacking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Professional behavior and language (handshake, "hello", "thank you", eye contact, etc.)</li> <li>Friendly and courteous to</li> </ul>	

Criteria	0 to 2 points	2.1 to 4 points	4.1 to 6 points	6.1 to 8 points	Score
		interview setting	▪ Courteous to all involved in interview	all involved in interview	
<b>Communication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Presentation shows lack of interest</li> <li>▪ Speaking is unclear – very difficult to understand message of what is being said (ex. mumbling)</li> <li>▪ Facts about scholarship and goals not included</li> <li>▪ Volume is inappropriate for interview (ex. Spoke too loudly, too softly)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Showed some interest</li> <li>▪ Speaking is unclear – lapses in sentence structure and grammar</li> <li>▪ Knowledge of personal goals is minimal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Showed interest throughout the interview</li> <li>▪ Speaking clearly</li> <li>▪ Minimal mistakes in sentence structure and grammar</li> <li>▪ Knowledge and facts are included/shared</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Very attentive</li> <li>▪ Speaking clearly</li> <li>▪ Appropriate use of sentence structure and grammar</li> <li>▪ Commitment &amp; enthusiasm for use of scholarship to further goals is conveyed</li> </ul>	
<b>Responding to Questions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Inappropriate responses to questions</li> <li>▪ Did not attempt to respond to questions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Gives inaccurate responses</li> <li>▪ Attempts to respond to questions with some detail</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Responses are acceptable and accurate</li> <li>▪ Responds to questions with details</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Thorough responses given to questions and provided personally appropriate details</li> <li>▪ Specific goals both short term and long term were clearly stated with details of plans of how they were to achieve goals</li> <li>▪ <b>Need</b> for this scholarship to achieve goals <b>was evident and clearly stated</b> using specific details</li> </ul>	

Criteria	0 to 2 points	2.1 to 4 points	4.1 to 6 points	6.1 to 8 points	Score
<b>Asking Questions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No questions asked</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Applicant asked questions that were not related to the scholarship</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Asked questions relating to the scholarship</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Asked questions relating to the scholarship demonstrating they researched the foundation, requirements of the scholarship, funding questions. (Evidence is shown that the applicant had researched the scholarship's goal for students, requirements for fulfilling eligibility, use of funds, etc.).</li> </ul>	
<b>Total Score</b>					

**Letters of Recommendation Rubric**  
(average of two LOR scores counts as 20% of total score)

Criteria	0 to 2 points	2.1 to 4 points	4.1 to 6 points	6.1 to 8 points	SCORE
<i>Recommendation regarding Character</i>	<p><i>Letter does not address or respond to level of character of applicant.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>No specific examples of positive character traits</i></li> </ul>	<p><i>Letter minimally addresses or responds to level of character of applicant.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Few examples of positive character traits</i></li> </ul>	<p><i>Letter adequately addresses or responds to level of character of applicant.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Adequate examples of positive character traits</i></li> </ul>	<p><i>Letter strongly addresses or responds to level of character of applicant.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Strong examples of positive character traits with specific detail</i></li> </ul>	
<i>Recommendations regarding Work Ethic</i>	<p><i>Letter does not address or respond to level of work ethic of applicant.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>No specific examples of work ethic</i></li> </ul>	<p><i>Letter minimally addresses or responds to level of work ethic of applicant.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Few examples of strong work ethic</i></li> </ul>	<p><i>Letter adequately addresses or responds to level of work ethic of applicant.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Adequate examples of strong work ethic</i></li> </ul>	<p><i>Letter strongly addresses or responds to level of work ethic of applicant.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Strong examples of work ethic with specific details</i></li> </ul>	

<i>Appropriateness of relationship to applicant regarding scholarship application</i>	Letter demonstrates no appropriate relationship to applicant regarding knowledge of character, work ethic and/or their goals.	Letter demonstrates some appropriate relationship to applicant regarding knowledge of character, work ethic and/or their goals.	Letter demonstrates an adequate appropriate relationship to applicant regarding knowledge of character, work ethic and/or their goals.	Letter demonstrates a strong relationship to applicant regarding knowledge of character, work ethic and/or their goals.	
<b>TOTAL SCORE</b>					

### **RESUME SCORING RUBRIC (counts as 10% of total score)**

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>0 to 2 points</b>	<b>2.1 to 4 points</b>	<b>4.1 to 6 points</b>	<b>6.1 to 8 points</b>	<b>SCORE</b>
<b>PERSONAL INFORMATION:</b>  Name, address, city, state, zip, phone & email	Resume does not address or provide personal information	Resume minimally addresses or provides personal information	Resume adequately addresses or provides personal information	Resume strongly addresses or provides personal information	
<b>WORK AND EDUCATION EXPERIENCE</b>  <i>Employment:</i> All workplace names, dates, responsibilities, and skills required  <i>Education:</i> High school courses, technical classes, honors, AP and dual-enrollment, etc.	Resume does not address or provide employment or education experiences No specific examples of employment (formal or informal employment) with dates, responsibilities and skills required No specific examples of high school courses identified	Resume minimally addresses or responds to employment and/or education experiences: Few examples of employment (formal or informal employment) with dates, responsibilities and skills required Few specific examples of high school courses previously taken or currently being taken	Resume adequately addresses or responds to employment and/or education experiences: Adequate specific examples of employment (formal or informal employment) with dates, responsibilities and skills required Adequate specific examples of high school courses previously taken or currently being taken	Resume strongly addresses or responds to employment and/or education experiences: Strong specific examples of employment (formal or informal employment) with dates, responsibilities and skills required Strong specific examples of high school courses previously taken or currently being taken	
	Resume does not address or provide	Resume minimally	Resume adequately	Resume strongly addresses or	

Criteria	0 to 2 points	2.1 to 4 points	4.1 to 6 points	6.1 to 8 points	SCORE
<b>LEADERSHIP AND SCHOOL/COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT</b>  <i>Such as:</i>  Volunteerism, activism, awards  Membership and Leadership in community, school, club, organization or church groups including sports	information on involvement within the school or community nor leadership experiences	addresses or provides information on involvement within the school or community or leadership experiences	addresses or provides information on involvement within the school or community or leadership experiences	provides information on involvement within the school or community or leadership experiences	
<b>GOALS AND ASPIRATIONS</b>  <i>Such as:</i> Immediate goals Post-Secondary goals Career goals Personal goals Aspirations for Life	Resume does not address or provide information on applicant's goals and aspirations	Resume minimally addresses or provides information on applicant's goals and aspirations	Resume adequately addresses or provides information on applicant's goals and aspirations	Resume strongly addresses or provides information on applicant's goals and aspirations	
<b>TOTAL SCORE</b>					