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THE SMART MONEY

Boost efficiency in searching for scholarships

Higher education costs too much. That's a given.

The preferred solution to the problem of the extraordinary cost of higher education is scholarships — because free money is the best kind of money.



Michael Taylor

COMMENTARY

The central challenge with scholarships, however, is maximizing your return on investment of time and effort.

Sallie Mae, the national private student loan company, recently bought Scholly, a scholarship search engine designed to help families make the most of such time and effort.

"We found that efficiency is the problem," Brian Babineau, chief brand officer for Sallie Mae, told me. "The biggest barrier to applying (for scholarships) is that kids don't think they can win, so they might believe the ROI of their time is terrible. We want to make it easier for them to win, and also make them feel like winning is a possibility."

San Antonio

The San Antonio Area Foundation offers more than 120 scholarships totaling \$9 million for local students.

Its flagship opportunity, called "Legacy Scholarship," is a merit-based program worth \$40,000 over four years for 80 students from Bexar County planning to attend public or private universities in Texas. That application is due during a high school student's junior year.

From Dec. 1 through Feb. 24, the most efficient way for seniors in the San Antonio area to apply for scholarships is through the Area Foundation.

Via a single application, prospective students can compete for dozens of scholarships as the foundation's application platform matches their applications to scholarships that they're eligible to receive.

Actually, the Area Foundation has two applications. Students can submit a "universal" and a "common" application, said Jennifer Ballesteros, the Area Foundation's executive director of scholarship and relief programs. Some scholarships are administered solely by the organization's staff, while other scholarships are awarded in consultation with outside committees.

Students should apply via both methods to increase their odds of landing money. Just two applications to put oneself in the running for more than a hundred scholarships seems efficient to me.

Many scholarships through the Area Foundation are targeted to a student's family background, choice of major, intended career or a specific campus. As a result of such narrow focus, some scholarships are less competitive and more easily obtained. Every year, Ballesteros said, "There is money left on the table, and we do want that money to be spent."

Ballesteros said that money for archeology majors, to cite one example, has gone unclaimed in the past. In terms of ROI, an uncompetitive scholarship is the best kind.

Houston

Similarly, at the Greater Houston Community Foundation website, high schoolers and their parents can efficiently seek opportunities available to them.

Courtney Grymonprez,



Jordan Vonderhaar/Contributor

From Dec. 1 to Feb. 24, the San Antonio Area Foundation offers more than 120 scholarships totaling \$9 million for locals.

scholarship manager at the Community Foundation, pointed me to the 48 scholarships listed on its site.

Like many scholarships available via the San Antonio Area Foundation, most scholarships on the Greater Houston Community Foundation's site are narrowly focused on children of certain employers, or from a particular school or community, or who suffer from a medical condition, or who seek to pursue a specific course of study. That specificity means that for students who qualify, such scholarships may not be overly competitive.

"There are years when certain scholarships are not awarded because nobody applied. Sometimes there are scholarships for one particular high school. Local scholarships are the best way of having really good chances," Grymonprez said.

High school guidance counselors are a good resource for

finding these types of scholarships, she said.

Besides the scholarships that Grymonprez oversees for the Community Foundation, she recommends all Texans look at the Houston Livestock and Rodeo site, where money raised from the event is earmarked for higher education.

She is quick to point out that not all scholarships there are targeted to agriculture or "rodeo-themed."

The National Scholarship Providers Association, an advocacy group, reports that \$100 million in college scholarships go unclaimed each year.

At the scholarship search engine Scholly, Sallie Mae's Babineau echoed the idea that some money is out there waiting to be claimed.

"We want to change the narrative that scholarships are only for students with a 4.0 GPA and 1,600 SATs," Babineau said. "There are scholarships available for the person you are, the

things you want to be and do, your hobbies. There are local scholarships available in your town. We are trying to create awareness around that."

Accessing regional foundations and a scholarship search engine feels like an important way for students to increase the return on their investment of time and effort.

I spent six minutes to create a parent profile on Scholly, after which the app returned with \$131,250 in "potential scholarships" for my child. After I inputted some more data — another five minutes — based on my oldest daughter's extracurricular activities, academic interests and personal background, the app increased the amount of potential scholarships to \$151,750.

Scholly is just one of several scholarship search engines that parents and students can use to quickly identify plausible scholarships. While the best search engines may change over time, a Google search will quickly give your student a few places to start.

Maybe this opens up the concept to students that hustling to apply for college scholarships is a worthwhile use of time. Can 30 minutes of online work qualify them for \$500? Can two hours of essay writing and filling out forms get you \$2,000? A high schooler is unlikely to earn that much on a per hour basis in any other legal activity they could engage in.

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TRANSACTIONS

Luxury hotel next to Texas Medical Center trades hands

By Katherine Feser
STAFF WRITER

Los Angeles-based **Stockdale Capital Partners** acquired the InterContinental Houston, a 354-key luxury hotel at 6750 Main next to the Texas Medical Center. The 22-story hotel was developed by Houston-based Medistar Corp. in 2019. Near NRG Stadium, Rice University and the Museum District, the InterContinental's amenities include Safina Restaurant, the Naturalist Café and Lounge, 18,000 square feet of meeting space, a 24-hour fitness center and an outdoor pool. The hotel draws a mix of corporate and leisure travelers, according to Stockdale. Demand comes from

ongoing medical and life science research generated by the Texas Medical Center, which has \$3 billion in medical and life sciences research facilities underway.

Houston-based **Interra Capital Group** purchased Memorial Pointe, a 226,586-square-foot office building at 11767 Katy Freeway in west Houston's Energy Corridor. Rick Goings of JLL Capital Markets, along with Tom Hall and Chad Coluccio of JLL's Loan Sales represented the seller. The 11-story building is 25% leased and aligns with Interra Capital's distressed acquisition strategy.

"The ongoing disparities in the office market, coupled with interest rate challenges, are presenting

significant opportunities for our firm," Interra Capital Principal Jack Polatsek said in a statement. "Memorial Pointe's strategic location in Houston's Energy Corridor, along with recent upgrades, positions it as an attractive investment within our portfolio."

Tenant Managers, a Houston-based real estate company with assets in office, retail, multifamily and hospitality in five states, acquired 2929 Briarpark Drive in Westchase. The acquisition brings the firm's Houston office portfolio to nearly 500,000 square feet across three buildings following the recent purchase of the Fugro building at 6100 Hillcroft and 1500 Citywest, which has grown to 90% occupancy since the acquisition, according to CEO Nirav Shah.

"Our recently acquired properties will undergo modernization efforts aimed at delivering a superior experience to our current and future tenants," Chief Operating Officer Rishabh Jain said in an announcement. "We are dedicated to adding tremendous value to these assets and creating dynamic, modern spaces that meet the evolving needs of today's businesses."

Randall Davis Co. reached a milestone with the sale of 60 percent of the units at its 12-story London House condo development at 2323 San Felipe in the River Oaks area. The property broke ground earlier this year and is expected to be completed in August 2024. The 70,000-square-foot building will have 23 residences including four penthouses. Gloria Tankesley and Ashley Oswald of Randall Davis Co. are handling sales in-house. Randall Davis is developing the residences with his daughter Natalie Da-



Stockdale Capital Partners

Stockdale Capital Partners acquired the 354-room InterContinental Houston at 6750 Main near the Texas Medical Center.

vis. So far, the concrete has been poured up to level 5.

Decor by Dulce, a provider of linen rentals and decor for weddings and events, leased 4,080 square feet of office/warehouse space at 3309 Texas, one block south of Harrisburg. David Gerber of Gerber Realty represented the landlord, MC Family Partnership.

Houston-based **Vista Management Co.** awarded Stream Realty Partners the leasing assignment of 9720 Cypresswood Drive in northwest Houston. The four-story, 87,696-square-foot office building is owned and managed by the Vista Cos. Matthew Seliger and Danielle Rothchild are the leasing agents.

Bison Lifting Equipment leased a 5,000-square-foot property at 425 Independence Parkway South in La Porte. Katie Keys of Junction Commercial Real Estate represented the landlord, Independence Business Park LLC. Robert McGee and Austin Bartula of Lee



Randall Davis Co.

Randall Davis Co. expects to complete London House, a 12-story condominium building, next year.

& Associates — Houston represented the tenant.

Kolache Shoppe, a Houston bakery serving Texas-Czech pastries since 1970, opened a 1,200-square-foot store with drive-thru in Broadway Plaza shopping center at 11940 Broadway in Pearland. The design with warm wood accents, white subway tile and bold blue-and-white patterned motifs is similar to the Heights location. Kolache Shoppe owners Randy and Lucy Hines partnered

with franchisees Cecilia and Luis Rey on the new store near Shadow Creek High School. The couple commissioned local artist Whitney Hayden to paint an indoor pear-shaped mural.

Sharkey's Cuts for Kids leased 1,219 square feet at Pearland Town Center at Texas 288 and Broadway in Pearland. Michael Stanley of CBL Properties represented the landlord. Bunny McLeod of Wulfe & Co. represented the tenant.

Largest mutual funds

Data provided by Bloomberg. Net asset value of selected major U.S. mutual funds two trading days ago. Returns annualized. Dividends reinvested.

Name	Ticker	Last Price	Mgmt Annual Fee%	YTD %Ret	1Yr %Tot Ret	3Yr %Tot Ret	5Yr %Tot Ret
Arcap Fund-A	AMCPX	34.03	0.3	13.4	12.9	3.3	6.0
Amer Bal Fund-A	ABALX	29.24	0.2	2.7	6.3	3.6	5.1
Amer Cap Incm Bl	CAIBX	60.47	0.2	-2.0	4.3	3.6	3.4
Amer Cap Wrld G&	CWGX	54.18	0.4	6.5	13.5	4.3	5.5
Amer Europac Gr	AEPGX	50.34	0.4	3.0	10.6	-1.4	3.1
Amer Fundm Inv	ANCFX	65.01	0.2	9.8	14.1	7.4	7.4
Amer New Persp-A	ANWPX	52.32	0.4	10.6	14.3	3.6	8.4
Amer Smallcap Wr	SMCWX	57.47	0.6	2.4	4.9	-2.0	4.4
Amer Wash Mut In	AWSHX	52.24	0.2	4.2	10.1	10.3	8.3
Davis NY Vent Fd	NYVTX	24.31	0.6	12.8	18.9	6.8	5.1
Dodge & Cox Bal	DODBX	94.38	0.5	3.7	8.8	8.9	6.3
Dodge & Cox Intl	DODFX	45.99	0.6	6.7	17.2	10.6	4.3
Dodge & Cox Stk	DODGX	221.07	0.5	4.5	10.8	14.7	8.1
Fdly 500	FXAIX	148.36	0.0	12.3	14.5	9.4	10.0
Fdly Bl Chip Gr	FBGRX	150.32	0.5	34.6	24.8	5.2	13.8
Fdly Contrafund	FCNTX	14.87	0.7	24.8	22.8	6.0	10.5
Fdly Diver Intl	FDIVX	38.42	0.6	5.4	14.5	-0.1	4.3
Fdly Equity-Inc	FEQIX	62.92	0.4	-0.3	6.5	10.2	7.3
Fdly Free 2020	FFFDX	13.04	0.6	2.3	5.3	0.6	3.4
Fdly Grth & Inc	FGRX	49.57	0.4	6.5	12.9	13.7	8.7
Fdly Grth Co	FDGRX	28.93	0.3	28.5	23.4	5.5	14.8
Fdly Low Pr Stk	FLPSX	40.47	0.8	1.0	8.6	10.8	7.4
Fdly Magell Fd	FMAGX	11.05	0.6	15.7	14.9	4.5	8.8
Fdly Puritan Fd	FPURX	22.04	0.4	8.4	10.0	4.5	7.0
Fdly Value	FDVLX	12.68	0.4	1.5	6.5	15.8	8.2
Fidelity Bal Fd	FBALX	24.93	0.4	9.7	10.8	5.3	7.9
Franklin Gr Fund	FKGRX	114.14	0.4	11.7	12.2	4.3	8.7
Franklin Income	FRIAX	2.13	0.4	-0.7	3.7	7.1	4.5
Harbor Intl	HAINX	40.82	0.8	3.7	17.8	4.3	3.4
Income Fd of Am	AMECX	21.52	0.2	-2.7	3.1	4.4	4.4
Pimco Tot Ret II	PMBIX	7.75	0.5	-1.2	-0.2	-5.5	0.1
Pimco Tot Ret-In	PTTRX	8.09	0.5	-1.5	-0.3	-5.3	0.2
T Rowe Pr Equity	PRFDX	31.20	0.5	-3.0	3.6	11.7	5.8
T Rowe Pr Gr St	PRGFY	80.11	0.5	30.0	19.9	1.0	8.0
The Bond Fd of A	ABNDX	10.79	0.2	-2.6	-1.3	-5.0	0.6
The Inv Co Amer	AIVSX	45.60	0.2	11.7	17.2	9.1	8.1
Vgrd 500 Idx Fd-	VFINX	393.01	0.2	12.2	14.3	9.3	9.8
Vgrd Eur Stk STK	VEURX	30.60	0.2	5.0	20.7	5.2	3.8
Vgrd Ins Tot Stk	VITNX	73.65	0.0	11.3	12.9	8.3	9.2
Vgrd Tot Int Stk	VGTSX	16.86	0.2	3.0	12.7	2.6	2.9
Vgrd Tot St Mk I	VTSMX	102.40	0.1	11.2	12.7	8.1	9.0
Vgrd Tot Bd	VBTIX	9.10	0.0	-1.7	-0.6	-5.3	0.2
Vgrd Wellingt-I	VWELX	39.15	0.2	3.6	7.1	4.3	6.0
Vgrd Windsor II	VWNFX	39.51	0.3	6.8	11.3	11.4	8.7
Vgrd Windsor Inv	VWVNX	20.35	0.4	1.2	-7.8	14.6	8.4