

The Michigan Drum Corps Scholarship Fund

About the Fund

The Michigan Drum Corps Scholarship Fund was created by drum corps alumni from Michigan with the goal of lowering the financial barrier for Michigan band students to march drum corps.

Mission Statement: To strengthen and support the Michigan band community by lowering the financial barrier for Michigan students to march drum corps participating in Drum Corps International.

The Michigan band community is stronger for having as many students march drum corps as possible. Students that march drum corps come back to their programs better performers, better leaders, and better people. Many continue on to become educators, where they help grow the activity and promote excellence based on their drum corps experience.

However, the increasing cost of tuition and auditions create a financial barrier to marching drum corps that many students and their families cannot afford. This financial barrier means fewer Michigan band students march drum corps and the Michigan band community is worse off as a whole. Most importantly, Michigan students miss out on the opportunities that marching drum corps provides, both on and off the field.

The fund's contributors have collectively decided to donate money into a pool intended to help Michigan students and families afford to audition and/or march with DCI drum corps.

While Legends Drum and Bugle Corps is Michigan's only DCI drum corps, and the fund actively encourages Michigan students to march at Legends, the benefits of marching drum corps are not corps-specific. Therefore, the fund will support students who march *any* DCI drum corps.

How It Works

Starting in the early fall, the fund starts soliciting applications for assistance from students who wish to audition at drum corps. The fund's goal at this stage is to cast a wide net - students and their families may reach out as individuals, but band directors are also encouraged to communicate with their point of contact at a fund and help their students march drum corps and apply for funding.

As the audition season progresses, the Fund's Board of Directors decides how to distribute dollars to the students. There is no typical allocation to students - each student's funding depends on their level of need, total funds available, and the total number of recipients, among other things. While the Board of Directors has final say on all disbursements, contributors are allowed to advocate for students they know personally. Opportunity and education for youth often depend on advocacy from those that care about them, and this scholarship fund is no different.

The funding application is intentionally minimal. It asks mostly for basic information such as the students (and their family's) names and contact information, home band program, and the drum corps for which they are auditioning. Students should not ask for tuition assistance before auditioning and knowing they will get a contract. However, applications can be modified through the course of audition season to account for changing circumstances.

At the end of each season (usually sometime in September or October), there is an optional gathering of all contributors, band directors, and students who received funding the previous year. This provides an opportunity for those in the activity to network, for band directors to have in-person discussions with contributors, and for everyone in the community to get an annual update regarding the financial position of the scholarship fund. While an annual funding report will be provided at this time, the treasurer will communicate openly and regularly with all contributors as to the financial status of the fund, especially through the audition season as scholarship monies are being allocated to students.

The Role of Contributors

Each year, contributors donate money to the fund. Contributors are encouraged to communicate regularly with their peers and inquire about the status of the fund, even in years in which they do not donate to hold the Board of Directors accountable for running the Fund well.

Contributors are expected to serve as a point of contact for the fund with local students and their former programs as needed. They will hopefully be able to answer questions that students, their families, or their band directors have about the fund and they are expected to advocate for students they feel are especially deserving or in need of scholarships. The fund actively encourages contributors to be dedicated members in the Michigan band and drum corps community and to foster positive relationships with students and band directors. Personally knowing students or having strong connection with a band program is not considered a conflict of interest.

The Role of Band Directors

Band directors, especially at the high school level, are the people in the best position to determine which students should audition for drum corps and they usually have some level of knowledge about the financial position of the students and their families.

They are expected to encourage capable students to march drum corps and help increase awareness of the scholarship fund among their students and alumni. They may reach out to the fund on their students behalf, but they cannot apply on their behalf. When band directors have students marching drum corps, they are encouraged to communicate with a point of contact at the fund and keep them updated as to how the student is progressing through the audition process.

College band directors typically have less individual knowledge of their students, so the expectations are much lower. However, the fund asks Michigan college band directors to make sure their students know they can reach out to the fund for financial assistance if they are marching drum corps. Any level of involvement beyond that is encouraged, but not expected.

The Role of Students and Their Families

Students (and their families) are responsible for getting the most out of their experience and for being open and honest enough about their financial position that they can take advantage of the scholarship fund without abusing it. They need to understand that the fund's resources are limited and that there are several students every year which deserve financial assistance.

Students who receive funding and march a full season of drum corps are asked to provide a written, video, or audio statement prior to and when they return from their drum corps season. The "before" statement should include discussion about why they are marching drum corps and what they hope to learn, and the "after" statement should discuss their season, what they learned, and what goals they did or didn't accomplish. As long as the statements meet these criteria, there is no minimum or maximum length. The statements are used to help keep an oral history of what the drum corps experience means to Michigan band students and to demonstrate the

fund's positive impact on the community. They are not used to decide how to allocate funds to students and are not required.

About the Applications and Awards

Who Is Eligible

The fund considers any student who is part of the Michigan band community to be eligible to apply for funding. Generally speaking, this includes anyone who is residing in Michigan or attending a Michigan high school, college, or university, as well as anyone who has attended such an institution in the past. Some clarifications:

- A student at Western Michigan University who was born, grew up, and attended high school outside Michigan is eligible.
- A student who attended a Michigan high school but who is attending a college or university outside Michigan is eligible.
- Someone who is not attending college or university but who attended a Michigan high school is eligible.

Application Process

The application requirements are intentionally minimal. A simple web application is required to be filled out by the student and/or their family. It asks basic demographic information, as well as institutional information such as the high school or college they've attended and which drum corps they are auditioning or marching with.

The application provides an optional section where they can provide attachments of any kind - students are encouraged to do so. This can include statements or letters of recommendation from band directors, other teacher, or peers, or additional statements about why they'd like to march and what they hope to get out of it. The goal of this section is to allow the Board of Directors to get a more full understanding of the student who is applying for aid.

If a student is going to march a full season of drum corps and gets tuition assistance from the fund, it will ask more directly for a pair of statements about their drum corps experience - a before and after. The "before" statement should include information like why the student wanted to march, what they hope to get out of their experience, and the "after" should have a follow-up on these points and a broader review of their experience. This is *strongly encouraged but not mandatory*. If the students provide these statements, any medium is fine but the fund prefers audio or video statements.

Typical Scholarship Size

There is no standard scholarship size; however, the purpose of this fund is to lower the financial barrier for marching drum corps and not eliminate it entirely. It is designed to be flexible enough to meet the needs of several students and families while also being sustainable. Examples of contributions include paying for full or partial audition fees, contributing \$500 towards tuition, or helping to provide post-show and laundry day spending money while on tour for those in need.

Questions

Questions can be directed to the Board of Directors by email at midrumcorpsfund@gmail.com.