

No freebies: Scholarship search firms often lead to loans

By Thomas King
Staff Writer

In the 1987-88 school year, Benjamin Calfee was a senior at Pinecrest High School in Southern Pines. He didn't have the type of senior year that you would read about.

Like most of his classmates, he wondered what he was going to do for Spring Break, worried about whom he would take to the senior prom and wished for graduation day to come quickly.

But not all of the questions that plagued the teenager's mind were as carefree as those. Like many other high school seniors, Ben had to figure out how he was going to pay for the next four years of his education.

A letter arrived at his house from a financial aid search firm. It detailed the methods of their company and how they could serve him.

"They kept writing me letters saying that I was eligible for all of this money that was out there not being used by

students," Calfee said. "All I had to do was to send them my application and a small fee, and they would send me back a list of about 20 names that I could write to get money."

"It was a bunch of bull because most of the names they sent me back were for loans," said Calfee, a senior business administration major. "Some of the names were like The State Financial Aid Company. I would write letters to these places, and the ones that I got back would have things like 'No forwarding address' written on them."

High school seniors and students in college often receive letters from or hear about such companies as USA-1221, Academic Resources and the Student Financial Services. Some have seen their advertisements in newspapers across the country.

Most companies guarantee that they will find students at least six sources of financial aid in return for a fee. What most students don't realize is that educational loans are considered financial

aid, not just the scholarships and grants that most students are seeking.

One organization that conducts financial aid searches for students is Academic Resources based in Deep Gap and owned by Grace Rohrer. She said Academic Resources guarantees a student at least six and as many as 25 sources of financial aid.

"We have a data bank estimated at 10,000 sources," Rohrer said. "We provide information to the students telling them which of the sources they are eligible for. Our fee is \$65; the money is returned if we don't find at least six."

The University's financial aid office in Vance Hall has a similar service for undergraduate students, said Eleanor Morris, director of the Office of Scholarships and Student Aid. "We have a computer data service that is on line. It doesn't cost anything to use, but (it does require) a little time."

The resource center in Vance Hall also has books and pamphlets that list information about federal, state and pri-

ivate sources of financial aid. Two part-time graduate students work at the center and help students in their search.

"Is \$90 or whatever (financial aid search firms') fee worth the time (students) are saving? That is a decision that the students have to make," Morris said.

Rohrer said students who didn't receive any financial aid would be guaranteed a \$200 U.S. savings bond from her company. "If they receive less than \$200 in aid then we will send them a savings bond, but they have to send us copies of the rejection letters," she said.

But Morris said the scholarship firm might not be everything it said it was. "I've read where some firms will give the student a \$200 savings bond if they don't get a source. (But) what about the loan programs that everyone is eligible for? Does that count?"

Some students may skim over the ads in the newspapers or throw out the letters that the financial aid search firms send. But for students who are desperate for money, they respond to these organizations, hoping to get some kind of help to finance their educations.

Morris said, "It's been our experience that we have never talked to a

student who has gotten a scholarship match from one of the services."

Many scholarship search companies were started on the premise that millions of dollars in financial aid were not being utilized by students each year because they did not know that it was available.

The American Legion recently conducted a survey and determined that there was almost \$4 billion available per year for financial aid, Rohrer said.

"One hundred and forty-five million of the aid was not claimed because people did not know about it," she said. "Academic Resources has the latest and most up-to-date resources. So many of the scholarships and other forms of aid had odd or different requirements that they wouldn't know about."

The function of financial aid search firms varies depending on the type of searches they do and the kind of financial aid they may find for students.

Some firms are called matching organizations because they connect student athletes with sports scholarships. Others, like Financial Services, offer programs for high school students with appropriate colleges and universities.

Rohrer said, "Our service provides a list of scholarships, loans and part-time work that we have found the student eligible for after running his or her data form through our computers."

"We send the students any information that they request to answer their questions. They are under no obligation to go with our service after they receive it."

Some financial aid offices say students should not use these services because the information can be found in a college financial aid office, from a high school guidance counselor or from research in the public library.

Morris agreed. "I would just advise students to try the free one on campus first."

"I'm not trying to say that they don't work. I'm just saying we've never had a student that has been tremendously successful in getting a scholarship with one, or maybe they're just not reporting them to us," she said.

Rohrer said she believed differently. "We feel that we have access to more sources. We have more sources than a library because we have people who work around-the-clock with our computers to get the information. Libraries and counselors don't have the resources to do the volume of work that we do."

Although Morris advises students to use campus resources before going to a fee-based search, she said the firms do fill a void. "Filing for financial aid is a difficult process. Programs like ours are already overworked so that we can't take the time to sit down with a student and explain the process like we would want to do."

Morris said there was a need for the services if students didn't take the time to do the research themselves.

Diane "Joey" Reynolds, a senior business administration major in the master's of accounting program, said people who pay for these services know exactly why they are doing it.

"These companies are networked with huge databases that can locate the money. What would take someone a couple of days to research would take someone at the computer about two minutes to do. All you are really doing is paying for the time."

Campus Calendar

MONDAY
10 a.m. Sorority Rush 1992 Registration until 2 p.m. in the Pit.
3 p.m. UCPPS will have a session on maximizing internships for students who already have secured one in 306 Hanes.
6 p.m. Black Interdenominational Student Association will have Bible study in Upendo Lounge. The topic is "The Christian Response to AIDS."
6:30 p.m. CGLA management board will meet in 225 Union to review this year's events.
7:30 p.m. SCA will have a meeting in 212 Union. CGLA will nominate officers and begin to plan next year's activities in 225 Union.
Human Rights Week '92 open organizational meeting in the Campus Y Resource Center.
8 p.m. a.p.p.l.e.s. will sponsor an open discussion on "Sex, Drugs, and Harassment" in 226 Union.

**NEED MONEY FOR COLLEGE?
TIRED OF GOV'T RED TAPE?**
Private Sector Funding is Available!
For more info call:
1-900-420-3715 Ext. 313
Students under 18 require parents permission
\$2 per minute

The TANNERY
10 Visits \$30
20 Visits \$52
1 Month Unlimited \$45
Open 7 days a week • Til 10 pm Weekdays
169 E. Franklin St. • Near the Post Office
929-5409

NOW ACCEPTING CAROLINA DINING CARDS AFTER 5 P.M.
ASK ABOUT SPECIAL PARTY PRICES.
HOURS:
Sun-Thurs 11:00 am-1:30 am
Fri-Sat 11:00 am-2:30 am

FAST FREE DELIVERY
968-FAST
(968-3278)

GUMBY'S PIZZA

Below prices do not include tax.

CARRY-OUT SPECIAL 16" Cheese Pizza ONLY \$5.50 Additional Toppings \$1.00	2-16" CHEESE PIZZAS ONLY \$9.91 Additional Toppings \$2.00 Covers Both Pizzas	GUMBY MADNESS 20" 1 Topping Pizza ONLY \$8.54
--	--	---

LUNCH SPECIAL
11 A.M. — 4 P.M. Mon — Fri
\$1.00 off Any 12" Coupon or Special
\$2.00 off Any 16" Coupon or Special (NOT VALID WITH CARRYOUT SPECIAL)
\$2.50 Off Any 20" Coupon Pizza (NOT VALID WITH GUMBY MADNESS)

MEAT LOVERS' SPECIAL
Toppings include Pepperoni, Sausage, Ham, Ground Beef
12" Meat Lovers \$7.32
16" Meat Lovers \$8.97
20" Meat Lovers \$11.80

Balloons & TUNES
Say Happy Easter in a Special Way!
Baskets, Easter Ornaments, Cards, Basket Stuffers, Stuffed Animals, & of course, Balloons!
We'll deliver or come by and see our great selection of fun ideas! 967-3433
208 W. Main St., Carrboro (corner of Main & Weaver, diagonal from Town Hall)

Register for
RUSH '92 NOW
Registration and Information in the Pit
Monday April 13 - Thursday April 16
(NO Fall Registration)
For further info call 966-4041

GRAND OPENING & Sidewalk Sale
Friday 9:30-7
Saturday 9:30-6
Sunday 12-5
Monday 9:30-7
T-shirts as low as \$3.00! • Sweats \$15.00!
Up to 75% OFF Selected Items!
One Of The Area's Largest Champion® Dealers
Sam's Sports Shop
(formerly Franklin Street Sporting Goods)
1129 Weaver Dairy Rd. at Timberlyne Shopping Ctr. • 933-0024

HOW TO AVOID MALPRACTICE EVEN BEFORE YOU TAKE THE MCAT.

Here's a chance for everyone who wants to get into the med school of their choice to really use their medulla. At Ronkin you'll spend three times as many hours with us than with some other course. You'll be in some classes that will be as small as five (there's no

hiding here). You'll take a real MCAT. You'll get scheduled tutoring and MCAT exam reviews. All in all, you'll get the most thorough, most comprehensive MCAT preparation anywhere. What could be better malpractice insurance than that?

RONKIN.GET IN.
LSAT • GMAT • GRE • MCAT • TEST PREPARATION AND APPLICATION ASSISTANCE
RX: ACT NOW. CLASS SIZE LIMITED.
Chapel Hill 932-9400

Introducing authentic
GHIRARDELLI
FOUNDED 1852
Nonfat Frozen Yogurt
Enjoy blissful pleasure & skim off the guilt!
Exclusively at
the YOGURT pump
106 W. Franklin St.
Downtown Chapel Hill
(next to Pizza Hut)
942-PUMP
4711 Hope Valley Road
(Hwy. 751 & Hwy. 54)
Woodcroft Shopping Ctr.
493-8594

DTH **1/2 Price Yogurt** DTH
Buy any size of our delicious Yogurt Pump yogurt (any flavor) and get a second yogurt of equal or lesser value at half-price!
(excludes shakes & flurries • toppings extra)
not valid with any other offers good thru April 23, 1992