

# ***Guide for Jovenes Adelante Scholarship Applicants and Current Students***

**“Chance favors the prepared mind.” (Anonymous)**

**This guide has been written to help students who want be successful in their quest for a scholarship through Jovenes Adelante (JA) to submit a well-thought out application that will be carefully considered by the Scholarship Committee. It is also our hope that current students will find some of the ideas contained here to be helpful as they continue their university studies.**

First, some background about Jovenes Adelante.

## **Jovenes Adelante!: Mission, History, and Current Status**

Jovenes Adelante is a student-focused organization that supports talented but economically disadvantaged Mexican youth from San Miguel de Allende and surrounding areas in the state of Guanajuato, Mexico, through scholarships and other forms of support to enable their success at university and in their professional careers.

JA was founded in 2001 by a small group of volunteers in the San Miguel de Allende area to provide five year scholarships to outstanding Mexican high school graduates without sufficient resources to continue their education. When students attend university and succeed, not only do they realize personal satisfaction and a viable career, but the quality of life for their families and communities is also enriched.

Currently Jovenes Adelante has 57 students in 20 universities and technical schools throughout Mexico, studying everything from architecture to law to medicine, dentistry, geologic engineering, chemical engineering, computer information, accounting, education, administration, and tourism. Thirteen students who have already graduated are working in their chosen fields.

At the heart of JA is the awarding of scholarships each year. The annual number of scholarships is determined by the amount of funds donated by individuals and foundations and raised through fundraising events. Students who are chosen for scholarships typically receive 13,000 pesos for each of the years they are attending university. JA only awards scholarships if there are donations or pledges that will allow funding for completing the students' approved programs, up to a maximum of 5 years.

Jovenes Adelante also provides additional forms of support for students accepted into the JA program, such as individual mentoring, tutoring to increase English skills, and counseling as needed.

## The Scholarship Process

Each year JA engages in an extensive process to determine who will be recipients of that year's scholarship awards. The process begins in early February with the distribution of application forms to interested students through various prepas and organizations such as the Biblioteca Publica and Mujeres en Cambio. The application forms are also available on the Jovenes Adelante website for downloading. [www.jovenesadelante.org](http://www.jovenesadelante.org)

Eligible students are those who have a grade point average of 9.0 or higher, are graduating prepa or have already graduated, have financial need, have a realistic and achievable academic goal that they are motivated to achieve, and have identified university or technical school programs that are a good match for their interests and abilities.

**The application forms are then filled out by students and returned by the deadline to La Conexión, Aldama #3, Box 49A.** The deadline is in early March (check for the specific deadline date on the application form.) The applications are then reviewed by the Scholarship Committee and those who meet the eligibility requirements are invited to an interview in April with a team of two people to further discuss their application. The interview is conducted in Spanish, although it doesn't hurt for students to display a bit of their knowledge of English.

Students who have done well in this first interview are then contacted for a home visit by another team of two people. The home visit is meant to confirm and give additional information about the student and his or her family situation.

Following the home visits the Scholarship Committee meets to determine the final list of students to be funded for that year. Students who make this final list will need to provide copies of the necessary documents (final grades and promedio, confirmation of acceptance into the program they have applied to, and a receipt for the first semester's registration) in order to receive final approval for a scholarship. There will also be a list of alternates in case some finalists drop out.

Students who are chosen to receive scholarships will be asked to attend a group meeting in late June or in July to sign a contract document with Jovenes Adelante. This contract outlines the responsibilities of students receiving funding from Jovenes Adelante, explains what JA will provide the student with, and specifies the university and program that the student will be attending. **It is important that students who receive scholarships are aware that once they have signed this contract they may not change universities and/or programs without the knowledge and permission of Jovenes Adelante and, if permission is granted, they will need to sign a new contract with JA.**

Once all necessary documents have been submitted to Jovenes Adelante and students have signed a contract with JA, the process is complete. Then in August students attend a beca meeting to receive the first installment of their scholarship. Normally students will

receive this money through direct deposit to an individual Bancomer account which they will access through a bank card. (Previously students will have presented their voter card and proof of their domicile through a receipt for their electric or other bill in order to obtain this bank card. Students who are not yet 18 years old and are not eligible for a voter card will receive cash.)

### **What You Can Do to Help Yourself:**

Since you are thinking of applying to Jovenes Adelante for a scholarship, it is important that you consider all the things you can do to help yourself be a viable, even a superior, candidate. After all, many other students will be presenting their requests for a scholarship as well, and initially you will be one among a possible one hundred or more candidates. You need to stand out as a person who has strong academic credentials, a mature and responsible attitude, and a well-grounded knowledge of the requirements and costs of your chosen university and field of study. It will also help to convey a sense of your values and commitment to serving others within the field you have selected.

So in order to make it more likely that you will be able to proceed through each step of the scholarship selection process, we want you to pay close attention to some advice we have for strengthening your chances for a scholarship. We have divided that advice under five headings to be covered in this chapter:

1. **Self-assessment and planning:** We will be looking to see if you are realistic in your academic and career goals and have thought about any obstacles that may lie in your path and how you are going to overcome them.
2. **Investigating and researching:** We will also be considering how much you have investigated the career you wish to pursue and how much information you have gathered about the programs and universities/technical schools that would be good choices for you.
3. **Networking:** In addition, we want to know what use you have made of the people who can be helpful in exploring your future career and perhaps even future job possibilities.
4. **Being proactive:** Whenever possible, we hope that you will take the initiative to do things that will give you valuable experience and additional skills, making you a more well-rounded individual.
5. **Communicating:** We hope that you will recognize the importance of communicating by phone and by email with Jovenes Adelante, as well as using the JA website. It is important that you let us know that you have received messages and will be attending interviews, meetings, etc.

## Self-Assessment and Planning:

Attending university or technical school means making a major commitment of time, money, and effort for the next five years or so. And usually you will not be the only one affected by this commitment. Your family will also be involved in a number of ways. So you need to think beforehand not only about what you want to achieve but also about the best way for you to achieve it. It is important that you create a plan that is both challenging **and** realistic. Here are some of the questions you need to answer as you think through your choice of majors and the university you want to attend.

1. Is this major/career a good choice for me? What do I know about the courses I would need to study? About the day to day work of a person who is a dentist, an engineer, a marketing person, etc.? Is it a good match for my personality and abilities? For example, am I a person who likes to work closely with other people and help them through the service I can provide (perhaps as a teacher) or am I a person who likes to work by myself at a task that I complete with well-defined guidelines (say as an accountant) ? Am I choosing this career because I truly would enjoy it or solely because I can make a good salary? (After all, chances are you will spend many years employed in this field and it is much easier to work at something that you enjoy.)
2. What universities or technical schools offer programs in the field I want to study? Are there important differences among the programs at different universities? What are they and how might they affect my first, second, and third choice of universities to apply to? (JA encourages you to apply to more than one university or technical school to increase the chances that you will be accepted.)
3. How long does each program take to complete? And how much will it cost to attend, not only for tuition but for **all** the costs such as fees, transportation, room and board, books and materials, etc.? Can I really afford the program, knowing that if I receive a scholarship, the money will not cover all of my expenses? If I can't afford it with a JA scholarship alone, can I get money from other scholarship sources, from my family, or can I work part-time to make money? How many hours can I work without interfering with my studies?
4. When do I need to apply to each university I am considering? What tests must I take when applying? What are the costs for the tests? When will I find out the results? When does each school start? Are scholarships available from the school? How do I qualify? Perhaps I need to talk with current students at that university to see how the school's scholarship program actually works.
5. Is my family supportive of my attending university? Are there responsibilities that I have at home that will make it difficult for me to be away from home studying? If I must live in another city to attend university, am I prepared for the separation from my family? How will my family manage without me at home? How will they deal with the separation?
6. Am I well prepared to study in the field I have chosen? How strong is my background in math, in science, in computers, in writing reports, etc.? Will I need

- to do a propaedeutica? Is there anything I need to do now to strengthen my academic preparation for university study?
7. Once I have graduated from the program I have chosen, are there likely to be job opportunities available in San Miguel or in nearby cities, or will I have to go to Mexico City or elsewhere to look for work?
  8. What will I do if I apply to university (or several universities) and am not accepted? Do I have a backup plan? Will I apply again next year? Will I try to gain some job experience that will help me be a more attractive candidate? Will I work on strengthening my knowledge and skills in key areas related to my chosen field of study? Will I choose a slightly different but related field to pursue because it may offer a wider range of job opportunities, for example, civil engineering instead of architecture?

Thinking about these and other related questions will help you fill in your scholarship application, but more importantly, it will help you to choose your field of study wisely and that is very important for your success.

### **Investigating and Researching:**

As you thought about the questions in the previous section, you may have realized that you didn't have all the information you needed about the universities and technical schools and their programs, about costs, about important differences among programs, and about the job market for the program(s) you are interested in. In this section of the handbook, there are some resources that may be helpful to you in researching answers to those questions that have to do with universities, technical schools, programs, and employment information. But before you actually do the research we will look more deeply into some of the questions about choosing universities and programs so that your investigation will be effective.

The important questions that you need to answer are these four:

1. What is the best career choice for me personally?
2. What universities and programs will give me the best preparation for this career?
3. Are the expenses that are necessary to pursue these programs ones that I can manage, even with a scholarship?
4. What job opportunities are likely to be available to me, both during my time in school and after I graduate?

### **Making a good career choice:**

The choice of a career or profession involves knowing yourself fairly well and being honest about your abilities and skills. This doesn't mean you can't aim high but it does mean that you may need to prepare yourself even before you start classes. Indeed, some universities require students to complete a propaedeutica before they are fully accepted into a university. So one of the things to think about is what kind of propaedeutica may be associated with your career? Do you know

anyone who has done this propaedeutica? What can they tell you about their experience with it?

### **Choosing a university and a career:**

Besides the websites for the specific universities you are interested in, there are some more general websites that can be of great help to you in learning more about how to make a good choice of a university and a career.

Although the following website is for students in the United States, everything on it is available in both English and Spanish, including advice about choosing a major, matching your personality with a future career area, and thinking about characteristics of a university that are important to you.

[http://www.educationplanner.com/education\\_planner/espanol.asp?sponsor=2859](http://www.educationplanner.com/education_planner/espanol.asp?sponsor=2859)

In addition, there are two Mexican websites that you are likely to find helpful.

<http://www.uniopportunidades.com.mx/universidad>

[http://sicdev.sic.gob.mx/?estado\\_id=11&table=universidad](http://sicdev.sic.gob.mx/?estado_id=11&table=universidad)

### **Calculating expenses:**

Some of the things to think about here involve comparing your top choice of a university or technical school with others that also offer a similar program.

Questions to research are: how expensive is this university/technical school compared with others in terms of tuition, fees, any lab or materials fees, etc.? Will I be able to live at home during the week? What will the transportation costs be? Are there any other costs that are unexpected?

Some of the best answers to these questions may come from other students who have already started university. It's a good idea to check with anyone you know who is already attending the university you are interested in to see what they can tell you that would be helpful about the kinds of expenses they have encountered.

### **Job opportunities:**

While thinking about a future job may seem a long way off, it is important to think about what places are likely to employ you once you have graduated. Some of these jobs may be in San Miguel or elsewhere in the states of Guanajuato or Queretaro, some may only be available if you move to Mexico City.

One way to increase the job opportunities you have is to work hard on learning more English. Almost any career is enhanced by being able to communicate with clients who speak English and may not speak much (or any) Spanish. And even while you are attending university your requirement to do social service may also be helpful in preparing you for future work after you graduate.

Again, the websites previously cited may offer you some help.

### 3. **Networking:**

Many people are good at using their extended family to find job opportunities for themselves or to make contact with others in the community who can help them. But the concept of networking goes beyond that to make use of others beyond family.

Networking can also include other students or professionals in the community, especially those who are studying or working in the same career that you are interested in.

Networking involves making yourself known to others who have similar interests, possibly forming groups who meet and study together, sharing information that you have that is of interest to others, and creating opportunities to keep in touch. Jovenes Adelante invites you to use other JA students and graduates as well as the mentors and other volunteers in JA as sources of information and contacts with others who can help you make progress in your education, your career, and your life. Beca meetings and other JA events are one good way to do this. Your mentor can also help you to find and meet people with similar interests. And don't forget some of your former teachers and your current university professors.

### 4. **Being proactive:**

Over the years that Jovenes Adelante has been working with students, we have had some of our students show us that they are individuals with diverse and often unsuspected talents. Their experiences have often given them insights about responsibility, the importance of patience, the advantages of teamwork, and other life lessons. While demonstrating outside interests is not mandatory for getting a scholarship, you can set yourself apart from others by demonstrating that you are not only a person who learns in school but also learns as you work part-time, while participating in sports or playing an instrument, or taking up photography.

In addition, we sometimes see prospective students who for one reason or another have to postpone their plans to go immediately to university. Those who use the time to develop other talents and skills are increasing their chances of being more competitive in the challenges of getting a job or a scholarship. So think about your own interests and take the time to learn more about computers, English, or something that will make you a strong candidate for whatever lies ahead.

### 5. **Communicating:**

During the process of beca selection it is important that you keep in touch with Jovenes Adelante by communicating **information** and delivering **needed documents** as they become available to you.

One of the most important kinds of **information** that we need is how to contact you by email and telephone. Email and phone numbers can change with amazing frequency. So please let us know of any changes by putting information in writing in an envelope addressed to Jovenes Adelante Beca Committee at La Conexion, Aldama #3, Box 49A. Make sure your name is included and the date the new email or phone number will take effect. If you have other important information to share, you can do it in the same way.

**Needed documents** include, but are not necessarily limited to, grades and promedio from your final semester at prepa (or in some cases, from university), written acceptance at the university or technical school you have selected, and a receipt for your first semester's enrollment. These are also to be put in Box 49A at La Conexion.

If you are chosen to receive a scholarship there will be additional documents needed from time to time as well as beca meetings most months. JA will notify you on a regular basis of meetings and documents that are needed but it is up to you to read your email regularly and respond.

**Final Thoughts:**

Having the opportunity to continue your education will be one of the most important factors in making for a richer and more satisfying future, both for you and for other members of your family who may look to you as a role model. We wish you success in your journey toward reaching that goal.