

Abigail Seldin

Chief Growth Officer, Scholarship America

February 28, 2024

[5:00 pm] [Dr. Pam Luster \(@DrPamLuster\)](#)

We're back again with an all new #EquityChat sponsored by @CollegeFutures w/your hosts @IamKeithCurry @DrTammeil & @DrPamLuster. This week, we're talking scholarships & financial resources with Abigail Seldin, Chief Growth Officer @ScholAmerica. Welcome Abigail!

[Scholarship America @ScholAmerica](#)

Thank you for having me! I'm so excited to be here this evening. Scholarships can be an amazing tool for making higher education more equitable, and I'm excited to talk about how we're working to eliminate the financial barriers between students and their goals. [#EquityChat](#)

[5:05 pm] [Dr. Tammeil Gilkerson \(@DrTammeil\)](#)

Q1 Abigail Seldin @ScholAmerica. As you engage in equity-focused work, what is your walk-up song or anthem? @DrPamLuster @IamKeithCurry @CollegeFutures #EquityChat #EquityAvengers

[Scholarship America @ScholAmerica](#)

I'm going to go with [@taylorswift13's](#) Look What You Made Me Do. It's hard not to feel like you're about to do something to shake up the system when you hear it. [#EquityChat](#)

[5:11 pm] [Dr. Keith Curry \(@IamKeithCurry\)](#)

Q2 Abigail Seldin @ScholAmerica. You recently joined @ScholAmerica as their Chief Growth Officer. Was there a defining moment or experience that catalyzed your journey to engage in this work to support access to #highered? @DrPamLuster @DrTammeil @CollegeFutures #EquityChat #EquityAvengers

[Scholarship America @ScholAmerica](#)

I've always worked near the intersection of [#highered](#) + equity, and scholarships can help that work so much. We're supporting students we KNOW can succeed, but who drop out because of financial stress. Here I can connect students with those vitally needed resources. [#EquityChat](#)

[5:18 pm] [Dr. Luster \(@DrPamLuster\)](#)

Q3 Abigail Seldin @ScholAmerica. Why are private scholarships an important piece of the conversation when it comes to #racialequity and access to #highered? @DrTammeil @iamkeithcurry @CollegeFutures #EquityChat #EquityAvengers

[Scholarship America @ScholAmerica](#)

(1/2) A lot of us think of scholarships as a prize or a reward for past achievements. But they're really an investment in students' futures, and our greatest return on that investment comes when we help break down financial barriers for students in need. [#EquityChat](#)

[Scholarship America @ScholAmerica](#)

(2/2) We know that students from historically underserved communities, and those who are the first in their families to pursue higher ed, have the hardest time affording college. We're using scholarships to further [#racialequity](#), one student at a time. [#EquityChat](#)

[5:25 pm] [Dr. Gilkerson \(@DrTammeil\)](#)

Q4 Abigail Seldin @ScholAmerica is the leading administrator of private scholarships in the U.S. How do they ensure scholarship dollars are making the most student impact? @DrPamLuster @iamkeithcurry @CollegeFutures #EquityChat #EquityAvengers

[Scholarship America @ScholAmerica](#)

(1/2) We can drive equity by simply making sure students KNOW they're eligible for scholarships, and by making the application as straightforward as possible. So we do targeted outreach; we don't require a FAFSA; we strive to show students they CAN get a scholarship. [#EquityChat](#)

[Scholarship America @ScholAmerica](#)

(2/2) Building collaborative partnerships is also a huge part of successful scholarships. No one org does EVERYTHING well, but if we work with private-sector funders and community-based outreach groups, we can get more \$ to those in need. [#EquityChat](#)

[5:32 pm] [Dr. Curry \(@iamkeithcurry\)](#)

Q5 Abigail Seldin @ScholAmerica. Can you share how @ScholAmerica is responding to the most recent FAFSA delay? What steps can students take to assure financial resources? @DrPamLuster @DrTammeil @CollegeFutures #EquityChat #EquityAvengers

[Scholarship America @ScholAmerica](#)

(1/2) We actually updated our application with several alternatives for reporting financial need, so none of our programs require FAFSA data. [@MarketWatch](#) shared some details on that work as well as other orgs: <https://marketwatch.com/story/this-organization-is-giving-out-300-million-in-financial-aid-without-the-fafsa-form-f31859b3...> #EquityChat

[Scholarship America @ScholAmerica](#)

(2/2) For both students and supporters looking to make sense of this year's delays and changes, I also recommend the [@NCANetwork](#) toolkit, which is always being updated: <https://ncan.org/page/better-FAFSA-training-toolkit...> #EquityChat

[5:39 pm] [Dr. Luster \(@DrPamLuster\)](#)

Q6 Abigail Seldin @ScholAmerica. To do this work, we must continue learning and partnering with others. How do you educate yourself and who is informing your practice? @DrTammeil @lamkeithcurry @CollegeFutures #EquityChat #EquityAvengers

[Scholarship America @ScholAmerica](#)

(1/3) We're fortunate at [@ScholAmerica](#) to work with a huge array of sponsors and partner orgs, from one-person foundations to nearly half the Fortune 500, and I learn something from every one of their unique challenges and goals. #EquityChat

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(2/3) Right now, we're working w/ [@WellsFargo](#) to assist veterans and people with disabilities; with [@UnitedHealthGrp](#) to help health professionals; and with countless partners that have recognized a population in need, and how they can help. That's so inspiring to me. #EquityChat

[Scholarship America @ScholAmerica](#)

(3/3) I'm also excited to keep up with colleagues at [@CCTrustees](#) and [@NatlHeadStart](#) on their efforts to bring Head Start preschools onto campuses. Aligning financial, social and support resources is absolutely key to getting students to their goals. #EquityChat

[5:46pm] [Dr. Gilkerson \(@DrTammeil\)](#)

Q7 Abigail Seldin @ScholAmerica. We all have a vision of the future we want to live in. What is your freedom dream for higher education and what gives you hope for its future? @DrPamLuster @lamkeithcurry @CollegeFutures #EquityChat #EquityAvengers

[Scholarship America @ScholAmerica](#)

(1/2) I believe [#highered](#) is still the greatest tool we have for creating equity, raising up those in need and building both generational wealth and a talented, competitive future workforce. [#EquityChat](#)

[Scholarship America @ScholAmerica](#)

(2/2) Even in the midst of national debates about the value of college, I see so much passion from the private sector for supporting students. I firmly believe we can work to ensure that passion turns into impactful, equity-building material support. [#EquityChat](#)

[\[5:53 pm\] Dr. Curry \(@iamkeithcurry\)](#)

Q8 Abigail Seldin @ScholAmerica. The road to racial equity is long. How are you sustaining yourself? What practice would you recommend to other [#EquityAvengers](#)? @DrPamLuster @DrTammeil @CollegeFutures [#EquityChat](#) [#EquityAvengers](#)

[Scholarship America @ScholAmerica](#)

Ultimately, what we're doing is creating a brighter, better future, and nothing reminds me of that more than my kiddos. At the end of the day, I have to disconnect, give them a hug, and remember why I go to work every day. [#EquityChat](#)

[\[6:00 pm\] Dr. Luster \(@DrPamLuster\)](#)

TY Abigail for joining us and sharing @ScholAmerica work with [#EquityChat](#) @CollegeFutures. Join us next week to chat about Civic Mapping Initiative w/@MattCrespi @ecbakermith @leagueofcities. Until next time - @iamkeithcurry @DrTammeil @DrPamLuster @equityavengers OUT!