

## Expanding Your College Dollars

Story ID: 1041

Date Posted: September 12, 2011



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Twenty two years ago, I walked onto the University of Mary campus to have my life changed forever. While I was there, I learned many things – most importantly, the life skill of how to make the almighty dollar go a long way. This is my gift to the class of 2016:

**Manage your money.** Get a free checking and savings account at your [local credit union](#). Keep track of your debit card/checking account as to not go in the red and accumulate overdraft fees, as your card may be declined if your account has insufficient funds. To prevent overdrafts, you may want to ask your credit union to provide overdraft protection. If you must have a credit card, get one with the lowest interest rate possible, no annual fees and enough of a credit limit for emergencies. Pay credit card bills on time to avoid late fees. Save your spare change in a big jar and count it yourself. Stay away from coin-counting machines at the grocery store; they will rip you off or charge a fee.

**Don't drink.** [College students will spend over \\$5 billion on alcohol this year](#). If you must drink, be cheap, buy in bulk, drink where the specials are and don't bring much money with you to limit how much you drink and spend. Hit other people's parties, [brew your own beer](#) or wine (warning: brewing may not be "legal" in your dorm room) and avoid ordering alcoholic beverages in sit-down restaurants where the alcoholic beverages mark up can be anywhere between 75-400 percent.

**Buy used books.** Don't wait to run to the bookstore the day before your class begins. Instead of buying textbooks borrow them. If you can't borrow, buy used. The campus bookstore might have a supply of used books, but they are limited and sometimes overpriced; so check online sources like [amazon.com](#) and [isbn.nu](#). Once the semester is over don't forget to sell your books too.

**Two words:** Ramen Noodles. You can't beat \$.10/ package. If eating on the school plan, pay for the partial or whole meal plan, and use it. See if you are allowed to take food to go or can have limitless meals. Quit buying fufu coffee at the café. Make your own and save \$500 a year. Quit drinking bottled water; tap is free. Collect coupons and follow weekly sales. When you go shopping, make a list of all the meals you are going to eat for the next week first; buy **ONLY** what you need to make those meals. Don't shop hungry, and don't give in to impulse buys at the checkout stand.

**Ditch the car.** Campus living is not only fun, but also much more cost effective than living on your own. This will also help you get around without a car. If no campus housing remains, try to get an apartment (find yourself some roommates) close by. Walking, biking, roller-blading, skateboarding or public transportation will save you money on gas.

**Communicate with spoken words and sentences.** Cut down on text messaging. You can easily text your way to hundreds of dollars in extra fees. Text messaging is charged both to the sender and the receiver; ask your friends to refrain from texting you. Make a phone call during your free minutes or send an email instead. Some cell phone plans come bundled with a maximum number of free text messages.

Communicate via email and instant messaging or [create a blog](#), share photos on [Flickr](#) or invite friends to visit your Facebook page. [Skype](#) is also a fun and inexpensive way to communicate. If you live on campus, don't pay for Internet. In many cases your campus will offer free Wi-Fi.

**Easy money.** If you are not able to work while in school and need some extra cash, donate plasma. You can easily net a couple hundred dollars a month. Volunteer for a medical study. Most do not require much time and you get paid! Sell your expertise in a subject as a tutor, computer skills and music lessons. Get a job in the food service industry as you might get discounted or free food. Offer a resume writing service.

Finally, the best money saving tip is saving dollars for others by volunteering. When you volunteer, you are taking away from the time you might be out spending money. Call your local United Way to see which agencies in your community need help.

*"Volunteers go unpaid not because they are worthless, rather they are priceless."*