

# WINNING AT THE FINANCE GAME

## **What Your College Financial Advisor Wants You to Know**

Compiled by Student Financial Services at Andrews University

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Some of the most important lessons you'll learn in college won't come from a textbook or a professor. These lessons may not help your GPA, but they are just as important. These are financial lessons: preparing for college, paying for college, and making college pay off. No matter where you are in your education, the good news is that planning and paying attention will help you get ahead and stay ahead.

### **Before College**

**A head start is a smart start**

Knowing how you're going to pay for college is just as important as knowing which college you're going to attend. So, while you're looking over those admission brochures and prepping for those ACT/ SATs, start doing your financial homework.

Search for scholarships; don't wait for them to come to you! Check with your chamber of commerce office, your parents' employers, and your local high school guidance counselor for lists of possible scholarships. Register with FREE online websites like Fast Web ([www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com)) and Broke Scholar ([www.brokescholar.com](http://www.brokescholar.com)).

Be sure that the search engine you use is FREE. Spend time perfecting the scholarship essay you send with your applications. A winning essay is well worth your time and effort. Be aware of and meet application deadlines. These are usually due during your high school/academy senior year. Apply for federal financial aid early as some funds allocated to each school do run out. Fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) online at [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov). Be aware of state deadlines for filing the FAFSA as well, so you don't miss state aid. This tip is one you'll want to remember every year you plan to attend college.

### **During College**

**Paying attention pays off**

Now that you're in college, you will have to file for financial aid every year. Renew your FAFSA early to be sure that you qualify for as much aid as possible. Keep searching for scholarships; you might want to see your

financial aid advisor for advice. Take ownership of your finances now, while you're still in school. If you're borrowing loans, remember that you must eventually pay them back. Know how much total loan debt you're accumulating. Go to [www.dl.ed.gov](http://www.dl.ed.gov) for a summary.

How much you borrow and what you spend your money on will affect your future as you repay your loans over the next 30 years. Don't borrow more than you absolutely need; keep your total loan debt as low as possible. Avoid falling into the trap of using high interest credit cards. Instead, turn vacations and school breaks into moneymaking opportunities. The ski slopes and beaches will still be there when you graduate and you will enjoy them more when you're not so worried about money.

### **After College**

**Take control - don't be controlled**

Be sure that you make on-time payments for any remaining school balance and/or student loans. If you're having trouble, contact your lender and/or school before your

payment is due. Did you know that your federal loan repayment histories for the last seven years as well as any remaining student balance are included in calculating your current credit score? If you carefully manage your educational debt, you can qualify for lower interest rates when it comes to big purchases like a new car or a home. Economic hardship deferment, unemployment deferment and forbearance may be available and could keep your account out of default status. Work hard to pay off your loans as quickly as possible. If you can, pay more than the minimum amount due; you will reduce the interest that you'll pay over the life of your loan(s), thus saving you money. College is a big decision; in tough economic times, even more so.

You have to work harder and smarter than ever before. Taking control of your finances before, during, and after college is vital to realizing your dreams as well as making your investment in higher education pay off. **e**