



# Your Bottom Line

Your go-to resource for timely information about personal finance, college planning and student loan management

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## Freshman Orientation Activities

Starting college is exciting and sometimes a little overwhelming for an incoming freshman. What if you don't make any friends? What if you get lost on campus? Will you be the only person who doesn't know where the dining hall is? Universities and colleges host orientation events designed to help address these fears and smooth your transition. Take advantage of these activities, and ease into college like a pro.

Depending on your college of choice, freshman orientation may be a half day, a whole day or a three-day event. Regardless, orientation provides you with invaluable experience and great information. You'll meet other freshmen who are feeling all the same things you are and learn about the various campus resources available to you. Maybe you don't need to know where the campus health center is when you first arrive, but if you come down with a cold in a few months, it'll be a handy piece of information to have.

Orientation events often take place all over campus. That's not an accident. As you visit various buildings to complete an activity like a campus scavenger hunt, you're also learning where things are and the quickest route from your dorm to the library or gym. Many institutions also provide guided tours so you can find your classrooms before the first day of class. Take advantage of these opportunities to learn your way around campus. Knowing where you're headed will relieve some stress on the first day.

Orientation and campus activities also give you the perfect opportunity to ask questions. The returning students, staff and faculty are there to help you adjust and will be happy to clear up any lingering questions you may have. You'll gain information about resources such as tutoring services and campus jobs.

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Some schools offer orientation programs specifically for parents. These are designed to provide parents with valuable information to help calm any fears they may have about sending their child away to school. From financial aid to campus safety to advice on how often they should call their student, parent orientation sessions are just as important as student orientation.

Many schools also host organization fairs during freshman orientation so students have the chance to learn about student groups on campus. Joining a student organization is a great way to connect with other students who have similar interests or beliefs. Participating in student organizations is not only a great way to make new friends, but also provides opportunities to build your resume and gain leadership skills.

Even after the welcome week events are over, keep participating in campus activities. If you're living on campus, your dorm will host a variety of activities throughout the year. Whether it's bingo in the lobby, volleyball on the lawn or a group of your neighbors going to a football game, join in! College is where many students make friendships that last a lifetime. You'll start to recognize faces and will quickly feel more comfortable in your new home.

When students connect with other students, they also connect to the campus. And when students are connected and active on campus, they're more likely to do well in school, stay enrolled and persist to graduation. Start college on the right foot by participating early and often.

**Adding  
20 minutes  
to your daily commute  
has the same effect  
on your job satisfaction**

as a



**reduction in income.**

UWE Bristol - The Commuting  
and Wellbeing Study

Distance isn't the only thing to consider before accepting a job offer. Check out OKMM's **Transition to Independence** learning module to learn more.

## Expenses Covered by Financial Aid

When you receive federal financial aid, the expectation is you'll use the money only for authorized educational expenses incurred during a specific time period.

The Higher Education Act of 1965 (HEA), Section 472, lists the following items that are included in the total cost of attendance at a college or university. These items may all be considered authorized educational expenses for students enrolled at least half-time:

- Tuition and fees
- Room and board
- Books and supplies
- Transportation to and from school
- Dependent care expenses
- Disability-related expenses
- Loan fees (i.e., origination and guarantee fees)
- Cost of first professional credentials (licensing/certification)
- Personal computer
- Miscellaneous personal expenses

Some of the costs of college are optional. You can't assume an activity is designated as an authorized educational expense simply because it takes place on a college campus. Here are some items that are NOT authorized educational expenses:

- Admission to college sporting events
- Party supplies
- Fundraisers
- Formal wear
- Graduation announcements
- Dorm room decor

If you have any questions about authorized educational expenses, contact the financial aid office at your campus.



# Student Health Care

Hollie Boneé, Director of Benefits  
Oklahoma State University

Holli Boneé, Director of Benefits for Oklahoma State University Human Resources, answers our questions about student health insurance.

## *Why is health insurance important for students?*

There are a number of things that could happen in the life of a student, and it's always wise to have health insurance in the event something occurs. Health insurance provides protection from the high costs associated with health care. Additionally, access to health insurance and this protection allows students to focus on the completion of their educational goals while meeting health care needs. Defraying the risks of health care costs allows these students to graduate instead of requiring them to drop out of school in an effort to "work off" medical debt.

## *How is student health insurance different from a marketplace plan?*

Marketplace plans tend to have high deductibles and are very costly. Our student health plan offers great health care coverage with a low deductible. At this time, Oklahoma State University's student health plan offers a \$500 deductible for an annual premium of \$3,126. A comparable premium within the marketplace would require a deductible of \$4,000.

With high deductibles such as these, students in need of non-emergency treatment may delay care or do without. Either of these cases can negatively impact the student's ability to succeed academically.

## *Are all students required to have health insurance?*

At Oklahoma State University, international students are required to have health insurance through a US-based group health plan, their government sponsor or the Oklahoma State University student health plan. Domestic students can voluntarily enroll in the plan. Graduate assistants are granted health insurance as a benefit of their assistantship.

## *Are there health services available on campus for students who don't have insurance?*

Oklahoma State University's University Health Services offers acute health care through their clinic to students. Charges for these services are then billed to the student's Bursar account.

## *If a student is still covered by a parent's health insurance, do they also need their own student health insurance?*

If a student is covered under their parent's health insurance plan, generally they don't need another health plan.

## *Is there anything else students or families need to know about student health insurance?*

All faculty, staff, students and parents are encouraged to be actively engaged in their own health and wellness. This includes being prudent health consumers and looking at the benefits afforded to them through the university they attend. Student health plans can be a great and cost-effective way to obtain health insurance coverage for college students.

According to [HealthCare.gov](http://HealthCare.gov), if your school offers a student health plan, it can be an easy and affordable way to get basic insurance coverage. If you're enrolled in a student health plan, in most cases it counts as qualifying health coverage. This means you're considered covered under the health care law, and won't have to pay a penalty for not having insurance. Be sure to check the plan to verify your eligibility.







## Campus Jobs Have Their Perks

As students leave high school for college, many will get their first taste of financial independence. While financial aid, scholarships and savings often cover much of college tuition and housing, they don't always cover the full cost. When this happens, many students will look to loans to cover remaining expenses, but there's another option to consider before borrowing: work-study and campus jobs. These programs allow students to earn money by working on university grounds, helping offset the cost of school. These jobs vary from teacher aids and recruitment assistants to lawn and building maintenance staff. Though campus jobs are typically paid at or near minimum wage, there are plenty of benefits to working on campus.

- **Work a flexible schedule.** One major benefit of working on campus is convenience. Working where you live, learn and hang out with friends makes it easier to fit work into your busy schedule. Supervisors are usually willing to work around your class schedule, recognizing that school is your first priority.
- **Build a network.** Another advantage to working on campus is the relationships you build. Working with other students, professors and staff allows you to build contacts that last long after you graduate. Staying in touch with these colleagues can connect you to future jobs or lead to letters of recommendation to potential employers.
- **Establish work experience.** Working on campus gives you valuable work experience that most future employers greatly appreciate. Like any occupation, campus jobs teach you the fundamentals of working for an organization in a professional setting. Upon graduation, these jobs may give you an advantage over other college graduates who didn't work while in school.
- **Explore career paths.** The variety of jobs also allows students to test out their interests. If you want to be a journalist, for example, you could pursue a position with the school paper, or if you want to be an accountant, you can apply to work in the financial aid or bursar's office.

If you're not sure how to connect with a campus job, visit the college financial aid and admissions offices for some guidance. Many schools will have a career services office devoted to helping their students find jobs.



The Oklahoma College Assistance Program, an operating division of the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, provides college access and financial aid awareness, financial literacy and student loan management programs and services that benefit students, parents, schools and community partners.

