REALISTIC INTERNATIONAL STUDENT EXPENSES

The United States is an incredibly popular location for students all over the world wanting to gain a great education abroad. As there are more and more international students studying in the U.S., a common experience emerges: money mistakes. Everyone has made mistakes with money at some point or another, sometimes you just treat yourself a little too much! However, when you study abroad in the United States and you’re away from home, particularly when you’re a student on a budget, a mismanaged budget can make or break your experience, and you’ll need all the funds you can get.

Not only do international students studying in the U.S. tend to struggle with the same basic money mistakes and issues most college students have - where to get cheaper textbooks, how not to spend too much on going out, choosing housing that balances location, safety, amenities and so on - they also have these larger issues to contend with as they deal with exchange rates, a more challenging way of accessing funds, and limitations on their ability to work.

The key is educating yourself before you pursue your international education and working through the nitty gritty details ahead of time. A little bit of research and preparation can go a long way when figuring out how to be budget-conscious as an international student studying in the U.S.

COMMON MONEY MISTAKES INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN THE U.S. MAKE

1. Misunderstanding the availability of scholarships or other funding

   There are only limited scholarship opportunities for international students. And, international students are not eligible for the most common form of financial aid used by students at U.S. colleges and universities: federal loans and grants. These programs are funded by the U.S. federal government and eligibility is limited to U.S. citizens and permanent residents.

2. Not understanding foreign exchange rates

   Foreign exchange rates between one country and another make all the difference in the spending power of international students. If you come from a country with a weaker currency when compared to the U.S. dollar, you will want to keep track of foreign exchange rates to be sure you aren’t outspending your means. Otherwise, you could find yourself quickly running out of cash.

3. Paying tuition by international wire

   International wire transfers have the tendency to eat away at student’s funds as fees between the banks add up. Make sure to do your research and see how you can best transfer money directly when you study abroad in the United States.

   The University of Colorado Denver has partnered with Flywire to streamline the tuition payment process for international students. Flywire allows you to pay from any country and any bank. They also offer excellent foreign exchange rates, allowing you to pay in your home currency (in most cases) and save a significant amount of money, compared to
traditional banks. You will be able to track the progress of your payment throughout the transfer process via a student dashboard and you will also be notified via email when your payment is received by the University of Colorado Denver.

To send a payment using Flywire, go to [www.flywire.com/pay/ucdenver](http://www.flywire.com/pay/ucdenver). You will need to create a Flywire account. Click [here](http://www.flywire.com/pay/ucdenver) to see how it works.

4. **Misunderstanding your qualification for in-state tuition**
   
   You should expect to pay non-resident tuition throughout your academic career. Tuition classification is governed by Colorado statutes that apply to all state-funded institutions in Colorado. Institutions are bound by the provisions of this statute and are not free to make exceptions to the rules. F-1 students cannot qualify for in-state tuition.

5. **Not knowing where your money is going**
   
   Overspending is a problem everyone faces at one time or another. Having a spending plan will allow you to see where your money is going and where you can cut back your spending. Basically, when creating a spending plan, you compare your income to your expenses. A goal can be to have an emergency fund to use for unexpected expenses. It’s easy to let one unexpected incident make your financial life spin out of control.

6. **Succumbing to peer pressure**
   
   Peer pressure is a very powerful phenomenon on a college campus. You need to understand it is okay to say “no”. If your friends want to go out to eat, see a movie, or go on a trip, but you know you do not have enough money in your budget to do so, you don’t need to give into peer pressure. Determining wants versus needs will help avoid impulse purchases and overspending.

7. **Abusing credit & ruining their credit score**
   
   Many college students mismanage credit cards and find themselves caught in a cycle of debt. You need to set limits for yourself on what you use credit cards for, have the self-discipline to not use credit to purchase what you can’t afford, and know you will be able to pay the credit balance in full each month to avoid wasting money on interest. Your credit management habits will affect your credit score, which will affect your future financial life.

8. **Not taking advantage of free or low cost events on campus or in the community**
   
   - Source for schedules, venues and tickets for upcoming free Denver events: [https://www.denver.org/events/free-denver-event/](https://www.denver.org/events/free-denver-event/)
   
     
     This is updated weekly – go to [http://www.9news.com/entertainment-news](http://www.9news.com/entertainment-news) and scroll down for “9 things to do in Colorado this weekend”.
   
   - Campus Happenings, e-newsletter distributed weekly to students at University of Colorado Denver. Check in every Monday to find out what’s happening on campus! [http://www.ucdenver.edu/students/CollegeLife/Pages/events.aspx](http://www.ucdenver.edu/students/CollegeLife/Pages/events.aspx)
REALISTICALLY ESTIMATING YOUR ACTUAL “COST OF ATTENDANCE” - WHAT OTHER EXPENSES WILL YOU HAVE?

Besides tuition and fees, you have to pay for housing, food, books and supplies. You also have to cover any additional college fees and other living expenses, such as transportation costs.

There are five main categories of expenses to think about when figuring out how much your college education is really going to cost: 1) tuition and fees, 2) room and board, 3) books and supplies, 4) personal expenses, and 5) transportation. You can control some of these costs to some extent. And when you know how much you'll need to cover these expenses, it makes it easier to create a budget.

1. **Tuition and Fees**
   
   Tuition and fees are the price you pay for taking classes. This amount can change based on your academic program and the number of credit hours you take.

2. **Room and Board**
   
   The charges vary depending on what option/plan you choose if you live on campus. If you decide to live off-campus, you'll have your own rent and meal costs to consider.

3. **Books and Supplies**
   
   You'll need books and other course materials for the classes you take. The yearly books and supplies estimate for the average full-time undergraduate student at a four-year public college is about $1,298.

4. **Personal Expenses**
   
   All students need to have a budget for personal expenses such clothing, personal items, laundry, going to a movie, buying a pizza, cell phone bills, eating out and anything else you normally spend money on. Expenses vary from one student to the next based on their particular needs and lifestyle. You are the best person to determine your own spending habits and needs.

5. **Transportation**
   
   Whether you commute to campus or take the occasional trip home, you'll have transportation costs. These will vary depending on how you travel and how often. Some students use bikes and public transportation to get everywhere they need to do while others students opt to maintain their own vehicles.

**COST OF LIVING 101**

What is cost of living?

One of most important determinations you need to make before moving to a new city or town is how much it will cost to live there. “Cost of living” is the amount of money you need to sustain a certain lifestyle in a given place.

Because the price of goods and services varies from one city to the next, calculating the cost of living will determine how affordable it is to live in a certain area. The expenses that factor into cost of living can include housing affordability, transportation expenses, food prices and
entertainment costs. Cost of living is also tied to income, as salary levels in a geographic area are measured against these expenses.

What is the breakdown of cost of living?

- **Housing costs**  
  According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), the largest bill consumers pay each month is for housing. Whether that’s a mortgage or rent, a large percentage of your salary will go toward your housing expenses each month. Home prices, property taxes and monthly rents vary from state to state, city to city, town to town and even neighborhood to neighborhood. For homeowners, there are more expenses to consider than just the monthly mortgage payment. There’s also maintenance, upgrades, taxes and fees to take into account when deciding where to live.

- **Transportation**  
  Unless you’re lucky enough to work from home, you will need to factor in transportation costs when deciding where to live. According to the BLS, transportation is the second-largest expense consumers have. For some, these costs include taking public transportation. For others, it involves driving your car, and that means factoring in car repairs, gas, tolls and parking. Proximity to employment is an important consideration because it can drastically impact your cost of living.

- **Food**  
  Weekly trips to the grocery store can add up, especially if food costs are high where you live. According to the latest BLS data, consumers average over $7,000 per year on food expenses. There are ways to trim that down. You could eat out less, cut back on takeout and cook more often. But even then, the price of groceries is going to significantly influence your cost of living.

- **Entertainment**  
  A movie ticket, a pint of beer, box seats at a baseball game - they can all come with a different price tag depending upon where you live. And it adds up. Americans spend nearly the same amount each year on entertainment as they do on health insurance, according to the BLS. Just like with food costs, you can curb how much you spend on entertainment by altering your behavior.

**PRICES IN DENVER, COLORADO**

Denver, CO remains relatively affordable for a booming metropolitan area that has been named one of the best places to live in the U.S. [U.S. News & World Report](https://www.nerdwallet.com/cost-of-living-calculator/city-life/denver) named Denver, Colorado the number 1 place to live in the United States in 2016. Denver’s cost of living was ranked 42 of the 232 cities in the database we used. Comparing Denver with other cities in the U.S. and see its ranking in terms of composite cost of living, composite cost of food, average apartment rent cost, average home cost, average milk cost, etc.

Ex: Composite cost of living

The cost of living index represents the relative cost of living in a specific city. It ranges from 79.5 to 229.5 in the largest 300 U.S. cities, with 100 as the average American city. The composite index for Denver is 109.

Below is a list of many standard items and the amount (in U.S. dollars) you should expect to pay for them in the Denver area.

**Housing Costs**
Median 2-bedroom apartment rent: $1,475
Median home price (3BR, 2BA): $407,400
Campus Village – Student Apartments near the CU Denver:
  Per Person Installments $4900/per semester (4 Bedroom 2 Shared Bathroom)

**Transportation Costs**
Gas (per gallon): $2.42
Permit Parking at the Auraria Campus: $318.75
RTD – Public Transportation
  - *CollegePass (Students)*
    The CollegePass allows unlimited access on RTD bus and light rail lines. Students may get their CollegePass in the ID Station (Commuter Resource Center, Suite 202) in the Tivoli Student Union. The cost for CollegePass is included in the tuition and fees per semester.
  - *EcoPass (Faculty and Staff)*
    The EcoPass is a $25/month RTD pass for faculty and staff. It is arranged through payroll deduction. Sign up by visiting the Parking & Transportation Services Office (777 Lawrence Way, in the 7th Street Garage). Call 303-556-8385 for more information. See [here](#) for more EcoPass Information. Contact melissa.jones@ahec.edu for questions.

**Food Costs**
Bread: $1.73
Dozen eggs: $2.95
Gallon of milk: $1.83
McDonalds Quarter-Pounder with cheese: $4.35
Campus Village Dining Plan (Costs vary according to the plans chosen)
  - Rockies Plan: $1775.00 per Semester - 10 all you care to eat meals per week plus $80.00 per month in flex dollars

**Entertainment Costs**
Movie ticket: $11.11
Bowling game: $6.18
Appetizer at the Tivoli Brewing Company located on the Auraria Campus - $8.00
A ticket to a Nuggets game - Price Range Per Ticket from $15 to $750
Admission to a performance at the Denver Performing Arts Center - Price Range Per Ticket from $30 to $175

**Healthcare Costs**
Cost of a doctor's visit: $132.20  
Cost of dentist visit: $89.67  
Cost of optometrist visit: $103.28  
Cost of Lipitor: $432.24

International Student Insurance Rates 2017-2018:
- Fall (08/01/2017-12/31/2017) $981
- Spring/Summer (01/01/2018-07/31/2018) $1,369
- Summer (06/01/2018-07/31/2018; for new students only) $442

**Overview of the U.S. Healthcare System for International Students:**  
[https://vimeo.com/72268541](https://vimeo.com/72268541)

For more average price data (in U.S. dollars) on selected items, please visit this Bureau of Labor Statistics website:  

**SOURCES**
- [https://www.goabroad.com/articles/study-abroad/money-mistakes-to-avoid-in-the-us](https://www.goabroad.com/articles/study-abroad/money-mistakes-to-avoid-in-the-us)
- [https://www.collegeboard.org/](https://www.collegeboard.org/)
- [https://financialaid.colostate.edu/cost-of-attendance/](https://financialaid.colostate.edu/cost-of-attendance/)