

## Having a Plan to Pay for College

This session is presented by the Financial Aid Office, but it's not about applying for financial aid. Hopefully, you've already watched our video on that. Planning for college involves understanding both all the costs, and all the resources that are available to you. It is critically important to have a plan for how you will pay for your education expenses and your living expenses while you are attending college. You may have been awarded financial aid, and chances are your awards may cover your new education expense, but not all your living expenses. If your living expenses are not covered, you will have a hard time concentrating on school.

It's probably time to develop a budget for your new situation as a student. What are your living expenses going to be, and are they more or less than what you incur today? Is your income going to change when you start college? There are lots of tools available out there to help you create a budget, from very simple, to more complex. If you have never developed a budget, this is the time to do so.

Let's go through your new education expenses at SCC, and some strategies for paying for them. If you have been awarded enough financial aid to cover your SCC expenses, then your award letter will explain how that aid will be used, so that you do not need to pay all the expenses up front.

The first major expense is your tuition and fees. If you believe you are a North Carolina resident, be sure that your residency determination is in-state, as in-state tuition is much less expensive than out-of-state. Tuition and fees are charged each semester based on the number of credit hours for which you register, but the maximum charge per semester is around \$1,300 for an in-state student with 16 or more credit hours, and around \$4,400 for out-of-state. If you are taking fewer than 16 hours, your bill will be less, so you want to be sure you sign up for the hours you can afford.

Tuition payments will be due in August for the Fall semester, in January for the Spring semester, and in May for the Summer semester. SCC also offers a tuition payment plan that will break up your total bill into payments throughout each semester.

The second expense you will need to plan for is books. At the start of each semester you will have to purchase textbooks, software access codes, and various school supplies. These can easily run five to six hundred dollars a semester, or more, depending on what your program of study requires. You absolutely will want to talk with your program advisor and ask them for a list of all required items. Be sure to also consider whether or not you will need to purchase additional computer equipment, especially if you will be taking online classes.

Once you're registered for classes, you'll be able to look up the ISBN numbers of your classes' required textbooks, and start finding the prices. The SCC Bookstore offers new and used textbooks, and also offers book rentals and payment plans to help spread the costs over the semester. If you have enough financial aid, you'll be able to charge purchases at the SCC bookstore against your awards, like you do your tuition.

The third expense you will need to plan for is transportation expense. Most students need to commute to campus between two and four days per week and depending on where you are driving from, your gas expense for a 16-week semester may be significant. In addition to gas expense, be sure to factor in maintenance that may be needed to keep your vehicle running reliably so that you can always get to

class. If you are in one of our Health Science programs that requires regular travel to clinical sites, you need to be prepared for this additional expense.

To help pay for transportation expense, you may wish to try carpooling with other students from your area. If your program provides course scheduling flexibility, you may want to try to reduce the number of days you have to travel to campus, for example taking all Monday-Wednesday classes one semester. Any financial aid refund you receive can be used to help with transportation expenses.

There may be other categories of your current living expenses that also change when you start college, perhaps food or childcare. It's important to make a projection of all of the expenses that you are going to add to go to school.

The next thing you need to know to be able to finish your budget is about how long you will be attending SCC. Look at the course catalog for your program, and see if you can take the number of courses each semester that it will require to finish in two years. You might need to take fewer classes than shown, or you might have to take some extra remedial courses first, or you might be taking general courses while you apply for admission to a selective health science program. These are all reasons that you might need longer than two years at SCC.

Now that we've gone over what it will cost to attend school, you will need to ask what money you have to pay for college--not just for your first semester, but for your whole program of study. Do you have savings or family support? Will the tuition payment plan give you enough added flexibility? If you've been awarded financial aid grants or scholarships, is it enough to cover your tuition and fees, books and supplies?

SCC does participate in the federal student loan program, but we encourage you to consider loans as the last possible resort. We know there are a small group of students who need a student loan to pay for college. However, our data tells us that the majority of the students who request loans are students who have not planned for the costs associated with their education--who have not done what we have been talking about in the last few minutes. Please make it your goal to get through SCC without a student loan, especially, if you are in a program where you are going to be completing a four-year degree elsewhere after you leave SCC. You may need to borrow then, when you are at a higher cost institution, so save any student loans for then.

There are serious consequences to taking out a student loan you cannot repay. Being delinquent, or defaulting on a loan can ruin your credit. And even if you can repay your loan, a student loan payment of several hundred dollars a month can seriously impact your ability to meet your other financial needs.

Hopefully we have the same goal. We want you to join us here at SCC and we want you to be a successful student. One of the most common reasons students withdraw is that they are experiencing financial stress. So, be sure that you have a financial plan that works for you before you start. Maybe you're all set, or maybe you will have to go part time, or maybe you will have to wait a semester or two and save some more money. But, be sure you have a plan that works for you and sees you through all the way to graduation.