

NEWS FROM

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Financial Aid Tip of the Month, May 2008

Make college more affordable by saving money on non-billable expenses

When it comes to comparing the costs of various colleges, remember that on the broadest level, costs are divided into billable and non-billable costs.

Billable costs are what you have to pay to start college. At a minimum, it includes tuition and fees. If you're going to live in school-provided housing, billable costs will also include room and board. These costs are called billable because the school will bill you for them.

Non-billable costs include everything else — textbooks, supplies (such as pens and notebooks), transportation and personal items (shampoo, clothes, entertainment, laundry, etc.).

It's in the room and board and the non-billable costs where you can save money, sometimes lots of money, by smart shopping. Textbooks are expensive, so you may save money by buying used books whenever possible. You can buy many textbooks online. Instead of buying notebooks and pens at college bookstores, buy these items at discount stores.

If you're attending a school nearby, you can save room and board by commuting from home. It's also possible to cut down on room and board costs by sharing an apartment with friends. However, some colleges require freshmen to live on campus their first year, sometimes for the first two years.

So, unless you don't have to worry about how to pay for college, it's a good idea to compare schools' billable and non-billable costs when you're checking out colleges. Once you've done that, you and your parents can sit down and discuss ways to save on non-billable costs.

For more information about financial aid and college planning, visit www.alstudentaid.com; write KHEAA—Alabama, 100 North Union Street, Suite 390, Montgomery, AL 36104-3761; or call 334-265-9720, toll free (800) 721-9720.