



IowaCollegeAid.gov
Your Financial Aid Connection

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NEWS RELEASE

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Don't Let Spring Break 'Break the Bank'

Iowa College Aid Offers 11 Tips for an Affordable Spring Break

Des Moines, IA, March 14, 2013 – With spring just around the corner, many college students are looking forward to that time-honored, rite of passage - spring break. However, before planning for a week of bliss on an exotic beach, the Iowa College Student Aid Commission (Iowa College Aid) urges students to consider the financial burden an excursion such as this could potentially create. Iowa students graduate with average student loan debt nearing \$30,000, so piling on a thousand or two more for a fun-filled trip with friends is not the soundest financial decision.

“We want students to do some serious thinking before using credit cards or student loans to pay spring break expenses,” says Karen Misjak, executive director of Iowa College Aid. “It often takes students much longer than expected to pay off that debt. In the case of student loans, they may still be paying for that trip ten years later, and in some cases, even longer.”

To help students enjoy their break without breaking the bank, Iowa College Aid offers the following spring break tips:

- 1.) Set a budget – Create a budget that your bank account can handle. As you plan, make certain that your travel, overnight, food, and additional expenses are covered within your budget.
- 2.) Stay local – When deciding upon a spring break location, consider sites and cities that are local. Airfare and gas costs can add up quickly, but by reducing the distance you are traveling you can save money and also have more time to relax!
- 3.) Do your research – Research hotels, campsites, and other overnight options to ensure that you are getting the most for your money. Waiting until the last minute to make these arrangements could cost you.
- 4.) Travel on less-traveled days and times – Consider traveling on days and at times that are less heavily traveled by others. According to independenttraveler.com, Monday afternoon through Thursday morning is generally less traveled. By booking a flight or filling up your gas tank on these days you will likely spend less than you would on a Friday through Sunday. If you intend to fly to your destination, plan to catch a flight in the morning as flights at this time tend to be significantly cheaper than those that take off later in the day.

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- 5.) Pack well – By packing necessary items like your sunscreen and other gear you can avoid the additional cost of purchasing these items once you get to your destination.
- 6.) Consider driving – Airfare can be costly, so before jetting off to your dream destination, consider organizing a carpool with friends to cut down on cost.
- 7.) Buy groceries – Save on the cost of food by purchasing groceries when you arrive instead dining out for each meal. Try to eat in for at least two meals each day to dramatically cut back on food costs.
- 8.) Cut coupons – During the weeks leading up to your trip, be on the lookout for coupons and group deals. Be sure to check out sites such as restaurant.com and groupon.com to find deals online!
- 9.) Bring your Student ID – Many restaurants, theaters, and museums offer student discounts so be sure to pack your student ID! Don't be afraid to ask if there is a student discount available before you pay for anything!
- 10.) Don't take out loans for the trip – If you can't afford to go on the trip without taking out students loans or charging it to your credit card, pass on the trip for this year. Instead, stay home and plan out a budget so that you can go on a trip next year!
- 11.) Participate in a volunteer opportunity – If spring break at home doesn't sound appealing, look for volunteer opportunities that allow you to travel, expenses paid, in exchange for your work. Not only will you get to experience a new place, you will have the chance to meet new people, help those less fortunate and build your resume!

“Decisions students make while in college have a lasting impact on their financial futures,” stated Misjak. “We hope these tips help college students make smart and informed decisions.” More information about Iowa College Aid and its products and services that help Iowa families plan, prepare and pay for college can be found at www.IowaCollegeAid.gov or by calling 877-272-4456.

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About the Iowa College Student Aid Commission

Iowa College Aid provides college access, financial literacy, and outreach services to Iowa's students and families as they prepare, plan and pay for college. Iowa College Aid also administers state scholarship, grant, work study, and loan forgiveness programs totaling nearly \$60.0 million annually, administers the Federal Family Education Loan Program (FFELP) program, provides borrowers with assistance to avoid the serious consequences of default, conducts research and distributes higher education data, and offers Iowans assistance in obtaining student financial aid and college-related information. Through its role, Iowa College Aid also serves as the state-designated administrator of the U.S. Department of Education's College Access Challenge Grant, which is designed to increase the college-going culture in Iowa. Additionally, Iowa College Aid is the administrator of the Federal GEAR UP Grant, a multi-year state-wide grant which is being used to provide early awareness programming and outreach initiatives to thousands of Iowa's students and families. More information is available at www.IowaCollegeAid.gov.