

**UNDERSTANDING
FINANCIAL AID
MASTERING YOUR
FINANCES**



What does your credit report say about YOU?

Don't be caught off guard when it comes to your creditworthiness.

Lenders will check your credit report if you apply for a loan.

So it's important to know what kind of information they'll find.

- Does your credit report include any past-due amounts or charge-offs?**
- Close any open accounts that you do not use.**
- Limit applications for new credit cards to 3 per year, (more than that adversely effects your credit rating.)**
- Don't go over your credit limit on credit cards**
- Pay your bills on time.**

Even if you're confident about your status, you should review your credit report annually to ensure its accuracy. To get a better idea of what your credit says about you, contact the national bureaus your lenders are most likely to use:

KNOW YOUR SCORE!

TransUnion—www.transunion.com

Equifax—www.equifax.com

Experian—www.experian.com

Another good source to check your credit score is—www.myfico.com

In the US:

516-656-9250 ext. 23

866-USTATIA ext. 23

fax: 516-656-9263

loans@eustatiusmed.edu

In the Caribbean:

011-599-318-2600

fax: 011-599-318-2088

loans2@eustatiusmed.edu

Penny wise is plenty wise.

Even for the most parsimonious cheapskate, frugality alone won't pay for college. But it can't hurt.

No doubt, pinching your pennies will help your financial aid dollars go further. And there may be many ways you can reduce costs during graduate school. For example, you can:

Share living expenses with roommates.

Use public transportation.

Keep in touch by using e-mail rather than long distance telephone calls.

Realize that your life wouldn't be that difficult without a cell phone. Don't renew your contract.

**Consume wisely.
Challenge your perceptions about
money and need.
Don't use your credit card unless
you know you can pay off the
entire balance each month.
Credit card interest can bury
you.
Pack a lunch.
Drink tap water.
Take care of yourself. It's cheaper
to be healthy than sick.**

**This is, of course, good advice for
anybody, in school or out. The
sense of prudence you hone as a
grad student out of necessity will
serve you well beyond your
school years.**



Programs that offer a much needed shot in the arm.

You may want to check out various scholarships and loan forgiveness opportunities offered through the federal government. For more information, visit the National Health Service Corps. (<http://nhsc.bhpr.hrsa.gov>) and the National Institute of Health (www.nih.gov)

A few words about scholarships and fellowships.

A scholarship is, in effect, “free money.” As you might imagine, however, finding free money can be an onerous task even though most schools offer graduate level scholarships based on merit or need.

Check within your community, including your religious organizations, volunteer groups, ethnic societies, clubs, employers, state agencies, service industries and every philanthropic organization



With such a wide scope of opportunities, the internet has become a great tool for searching for scholarships. Check out, for example, www.collegeanswer.com, a free online service that allows you to create your own set of parameters to narrow down and facilitate your unique scholarship search.

Don't neglect to search for fellowships and research, as well. You may be eligible and primed for a private or national fellowship, such as the Fulbright, Mellon, National Research Foundation or National Science Foundation. (Apply directly with the specific organization.)

Know all your loan repayment options.

One final note: after you complete your graduate education, you'll be presented with several repayment options for your student's loans. Before you decide, make sure you understand the advantages and consequences of each plan. And then budget accordingly.

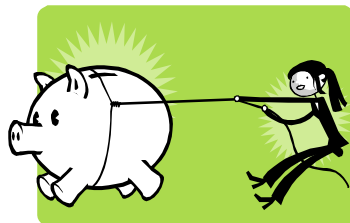
Mastering your finances

No doubt, maintaining a good credit report is important in today's economy. When it comes to your graduate studies, however, it can be absolutely critical. Why? Most of the financial aid available to you will be in the form of loans. And many proprietary loan programs use creditworthiness as a determining factor in their lending practices. If you have outstanding credit card balances, try to pay the balance down. Even better, pay them off.

Yet, you'll need more than a good financial record. You'll need a good financial plan, as well. Working on your MD will impose some significant lifestyle changes on you and your family, such as living on a tighter budget.

So before you begin medical school, be realistic about your future earning power when determining the amount you borrow to pay for your education.

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Recent research suggests that borrowers can manage monthly student loan payments that are up to 12 percent of their gross monthly income.

(Payments exceeding this debt-to-income ratio may become burdensome.)

Of course, this is a general rule. Your ability to repay will depend entirely on your specific situation and lifestyle. Only you can determine what may be burdensome or not.

Also, many private loan programs may give you as much as 20 to 30 years to repay. As a result, your monthly payments may be significantly lower.

Even so, borrowing a student loan is a big commitment and weighty decision. So before you accept a loan, think long and hard about where your education will take you and how well your planned career will enable you to make payments over the long haul.

**Above all,
Do not borrow
beyond your
means!**

**Don't get
caught in a
trap!
Remember
to defer your
loan
payments.**



If you've taken out a student loan for your undergraduate studies, notify your lender that you're continuing your education. You may be able to delay or defer payment on your old student loans.

For example, if you're planning to enroll at least half time during your graduate studies, your lender may be able to extend your anticipated graduation date (if you've been continuously enrolled) or grant an in-school deferment for your outstanding federal loans. You may even be able to defer or delay payment on your private non-federal student loans—but only your specific lender can tell you whether you're eligible or not.

Ask your lender or loan servicer to send you the proper certification form and return it to our office for proper certification of your enrollment status, complete with anticipated graduation date. And follow up with your lender to ensure that the documentation was received and processed accordingly.

