First-Year Student Guide

Key Things to Know as a First-Year

DeSousa-Brent Scholars Program

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Buying Books

Finding the Books You Need

You haven’t received an email from your professor informing you about required books. Time is ticking, and school is about to begin. You’re probably wondering: “How do I know what books to buy for my classes?” Do not worry! Everything you need to know about your textbooks is on the school’s website. You can simply access this information through the campus bookstore website. You may do so either by logging into the Portal and selecting Campus Bookstore under Quick Links, or by visiting the Campus Store website itself. Once the page has uploaded, under the heading, Textbooks, click Buy Textbooks. Scroll down to search for books by course. You will then be able to see which books are required for a particular class. In order to acquire this information, you will need to know the course number and section for each class you are enrolled in.

Campus Store

You may purchase your books through the Campus Store online or place a hold on the books you want to buy until you arrive at school. Placing your books on hold at the Campus Store is a great idea because it ensures that you will be able to purchase all of your required books for your classes without having to compete with other students. If you decide to place a hold on your books online, be sure to visit the Campus Center when you are ready to buy your books, and as soon as you can.

Also, you have the option to rent textbooks through the website. If you find that the career path you are taking does not require you to keep a certain book after finishing the class, you may want to rent your book(s). You may access the website for more information about renting books. However, all textbooks must be returned by 5 p.m. on December 20, 2013 for the fall semester.

Always remember that the Campus Store has all of the books for each course. If at anytime you want to buy a book that you think may help you in one of your classes, you may purchase it.

Return Policy

Sometimes, you may end up dropping a class and find that you no longer need the books that you have purchased. Please return books in a timely manner with your receipt to receive a refund of your money. The Campus Store gives students the first week of school (until the first Friday) to return any purchased books for a full refund. After the first week, there is no refund. However, you may still return your book(s) with your receipt and a Drop-Slip. Usually, towards the end of the semester, the Campus Store takes back many books that students no longer want or need. You may receive a small return payment depending on the demand of the book at the bookstore.

For more information about books (or swag!), visit the Campus Store website.
You may also contact any of the staff by phone or email via the website if you have any questions, comments, or concerns.

**Online Deals**

Yes, there are other ways to buy books!!! In case the Campus Store prices are over your head, or you’re trying to get an affordable deal without paying more than you want, buying your books online can sometimes be beneficial. Usually you can find books for cheap that are used, fairly new, or BRAND new! You can also rent books online for a cheaper price compared to the bookstore. However, **be sure to purchase the correct edition of the book** for your class (editions may be very different). Also, you must remember to return them in a timely fashion so your credit card doesn’t get billed automatically for late fees.

Some reliable websites that many students purchase or rent books from are:
- Amazon.com
- Bigwords.com
- Chegg.com
- Bookreenter.com
- Textbookrecyling.com
- Studentbooktrades.com
- Directtextbook.com
- Bookbyte.com
- Campusbooks.com
- eCampus.com

Many of these websites automatically compare book prices from different websites or vendors so you can get your money’s worth! All you need is the name of the book and the authors name or the ISBN number (which you can obtain from the bookstore website while searching for books) and you’re one click away from saving. The most exciting thing is that you can SELL YOUR BOOKS on some of the websites listed above and make some extra cash at the end of the semester or school year.

**Tip:** When buying a book online, consider buying from vendors that have high customer ratings.

**Contact Upperclassmen**

What if you don’t have the funds to buy some of your books? Or, you really need the money for something else? Sometimes that is the case for many college students. However, there’s always a way out of something, right? Well, at least sometimes. If you find yourself scrambling for money to buy your books for a semester, do not hesitate to contact an upperclassman. Many upperclassmen have taken classes that
you are currently enrolled in and may still have their books. Some may let you have it for free, borrow it, or charge a fee. Contacting them ahead of time before classes start is always good idea because you’re probably not the only student trying to get your hands on a “free” textbook.

“But, I don’t know any upperclassmen!” No worries. Believe it or not, many students simply log into Facebook, yes...Facebook, and make a post concerning the book they’ll need. Usually they get a response... and a book. Therefore, take advantage of all your resources; it doesn’t hurt to ask in time of need. Besides, it’s better to be prepared for your class with a used book than not to be prepared at all.

**Tip:** If you do not have a Facebook page, consider making one. As you see, it can come in handy when you’re looking for books!

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**Working on Campus**

Thinking about making a few bucks while in college? Not a bad idea. Many students work on campus to help pay bills or buy necessities. It is a common misconception that a student must have work-study to work on campus. Students without work-study are still allowed to apply for jobs on campus.

Working on campus is fairly convenient for students. Your work schedule is made according to your class schedule. Although this is the case, when you begin working, always let your supervisor know if a certain schedule does not work for you. Do not wait too long, when it is affecting your overall academic life at school, to mention your concern to your supervisor. Sometimes it may seem like you have to get your last hours in for the week in order to acquire more money. But remember that you are a student first! If at any time things are getting hectic with school, let your supervisor know ahead of time. Many students usually call off during midterms or before other exams in order to ensure that they do well. So, if you’re calling out for the same reason, do not feel “different.” It is normal, and it is understandable. Nonetheless, you also want to establish a good reputation at your job. With that being said, time management is key when working and going to school.

**Work Study Process**

By now, you should know if you have work-study or not. This information is usually available in your Financial Aid Portal. If you log into your Portal, select My Financial Aid at the top, scroll down, and you will see all of the aid you are receiving towards your tuition. If you have work-study, it will be listed there. Your Financial Aid tells you the maximum amount of money you can acquire for a semester doing work-study. According to Financial Aid, you are not allowed to
receive more money than allotted. However, there are some jobs that will pay student workers after their work-study money has run out. Keep in mind that this is not every office. Be sure to talk to your supervisor about working with him/her after you have acquired your maximum amount of work-study money.

Postings

Emails are sent out about jobs on the first day of classes. The moment you receive an email about work-study jobs, do not wait! Apply, Apply, Apply! Each job usually has a description of what the office or department does, what type of job needs to be done, and what positions need to be filled. Moreover, many offices/departments will indicate how many opening positions are available. With all of the above information, you can determine where you want to work. Be sure to apply for more than one job. You are NOT guaranteed the job you apply for just because you have work-study.

Applications

There is usually a standard employment application used for all jobs. Nonetheless, some jobs will ask you to fill out a separate application. Some jobs require a cover letter and resume and/or an interview session. Whatever job you apply for, be sure you are prepared! The Career Development Center is a great place to visit when filling out job applications and to learn more about on campus employment.

Payroll

Congratulations! You got the job! Now, you have to follow the proper procedures to earn your money. All of the paper work you will need to fill out is located in the Portal. Simply log into your Portal, select My Financial Aid, and scroll down to the bottom of the page. There you will see Federal Work Study New Hire Forms. You may sign up for payroll and direct deposit if you want your checks to be sent to your personal bank account. All forms should be turned in to the Business Office located in Glendening Hall.

Non-Work Study Jobs

If you do not have work-study, you can still apply for jobs. If there is a specific place that you would like to work, inquire with the office or department that you’re interested in about job opportunities.
Your Student Account

Understanding Your Financial Aid Package

It is important that you understand your bill statement. Knowing how much is needed for school vs. how much is billed to your account is essential. You can access this information by logging into your Portal. In order to see your account, click on My Student Account. On this page, you will be able to see your school bill and aid. Your school bill is comprised of tuition, housing fees, meal plan, etc. Your aid comprises all grants, scholarships, waivers, and loans. If you are unsure about your bill, do not hesitate to call the Financial Aid Office.

Accepting or Declining Awards and Loans

All of your awards and loans are located under My Financial Aid in the Portal. Be sure to accept all scholarship, grants, and loans in a timely manner. Failure to do so can result in the loss of an award.

Moreover, be sure that the total amount of loans on your account is what you actually need. Sometimes you may not need to borrow as much money as indicated on your Financial Aid report, or you may not need to take out a loan at all depending on your financial circumstances. Definitely avoid borrowing more than you need, in order to keep your debt—and the interest you’ll have to pay on it!—minimal. Once again, if you’re unsure, do not hesitate to contact the Financial Aid Office. They are always there to help!

A Hold on Your Student Account and Its Effects

If you have not settled your bill with the Business Office, or you notice that you have an amount due on your student account, it is important that you pay your bill. Not paying your bill can hinder you from enrolling in classes or even graduating. Please be sure to talk to the Business Office and settle all payments.

Paying Your Bill

You can pay your bill through CashNet via the Portal. As a student you can enroll in a payment plan and pay a certain amount once a month until you no longer have a balance. Parents are also allowed to use CashNet to pay your student bill. For more information, contact the Business Office or log into your Portal, select My Student Account, scroll down to Business Office Forms, and select Payment Plan.

You can find more info on billing and payment here.
Extra Money

Who Gets a Refund Check?

Money that is leftover after your school bill has been paid is usually refunded if you request it. This money can be refunded to students for their personal needs. In order to obtain this money, you must complete a Refund Request Form.

Proper Procedure and Management

You can obtain a Refund Request Form through the Portal. Log in, select My Student Account, and scroll down to Business Office Forms. You will be able to not only fill out a refund request form, but you may also sign up for direct deposit to your personal account.

Tip: Many students transfer a certain amount of money to their debit account before their refund is deposited to their personal accounts. This debit is the same as the one on your OneCard. If you need money for books, it is best if you transfer money to your debit on your OneCard. Refund checks are not deposited into personal accounts until late September or early October. All transactions can be made on the Portal under My Student Account: OneCard Management.

OneCard Management

Using Your OneCard

Your OneCard can be used anywhere on campus. It will allow you to get into your residence halls and academic buildings. You can use it to buy food from the Daily Grind, The Pub, The Great Room, and The Grab and Go. You will need it to check out books, DVD’s, video cameras, etc., at the Library. Basically your OneCard is used for everything! Always have it with you and try not to lose it!

OneCard Balances

Managing your OneCard can be done on the Portal. You can view your balance for your Debit, Dining Dollars (Flex), and meal swipes. To access this information, select My Student Account, and on the right side of the page under Account Management click: OneCard Management.

Dining Dollars and Debit

Dining Dollars (Flex) can be used only to purchase food and beverages. It is accepted at the Daily Grind, The Pub, The Great Room, and The Grab and Go.
Your debit can be used to purchase anything at the Campus Store and Daily Grind. It can also be used at two off-campus merchants: Cookz Deli and Sheetz. You are not permitted to purchase alcohol or tobacco with your student ID cards.

You can add money to your debit anytime by accessing the OneCard terminal, which is located by the Campus Store. Other options to deposit to the OneCard debit account are:

1. **Online** using a credit card.
2. At the cashier’s window located in the Business Office (first floor, Glendening Hall)
3. By mailing/bringing a check to the Business Office including your name and ID # on the check.

*L*ost/Stolen OneCard

If your OneCard is lost or stolen, it is important that you deactivate it through the Portal via OneCard Management. To replace it, you will have to pay a fee of $25. The fee will be billed to your SMCM student account.

**Changing Your Schedule**

**Adding and Dropping a Class**

If you are enrolled in a class that you no longer wish to be in, or if you are interested in adding a class to your current schedule, you should fill out an Add/Drop form. Forms can be found in Glendening Hall at the Information Desk or online through the Portal. The Add/Drop form is located under My Academics on the Portal. Scroll down and on the right side of the page, click on Drop/Add under Office of the Registrar Forms.

If you are adding a class to your schedule, be sure that you are not overloading. The maximum amount of credits you can take without paying extra tuition is 19 credits. If you are enrolled for more than 19 credits, you will have to pay $195 for each additional credit. Before turning in your Add/Drop form, you will need a signature from the professor for the class that you are adding. You do not need a signature from the professor whose class you are dropping. All forms can be turned in at the Front Desk in Glendening Hall.

*Deadlines and Fees*

You are given the first two weeks of classes (the Schedule Adjustment Period) to add or drop classes without a fee.
Important Dates:

**Sept 16-27:** Any time after the first two weeks of classes, you will be charged $25 to add a class or to drop a class. Charges are individual; therefore, you will have to pay separately to add a class or to drop a class.

**Sept 30- Nov 8:** You may only withdraw from a class with a grade of “W” and a $25 fee. “W” stands for “withdrawn” and will appear on your transcript. It doesn’t affect your GPA, though, so it may be worth pursuing if you know you are about to fail a class. It is better than an “F” on your transcript. If you fear you might fail a class, always discuss it with your professor and your advisor before you withdraw from the class. Don’t suffer in silence, and don’t be afraid. They are here to help you!

## Roommate Issues

### Proper Handling

There may be times when you have issues with your roommate. This may lead to conflicts and, overall, an unhealthy relationship between you and your roommate. If you’re getting uncomfortable, and it seems as if nothing is working, talk to your RA. A mediation session will be provided for both of you. If that doesn’t seem to work, visit the [Office of Residence Life](#) in Glendening Hall, and inform them that you are still having roommate issues. You *may* be given the option to switch roommates, but it all depends on ResLife’s assessment of the severity of the situation.

*Whom to Inform or Contact*

The [Office of Residence Life](#) (ResLife) is the number one place to go when having a living issue. They are a supportive team, and their goal is to help you live as comfortably as possible. You can always call the office with your concerns, and your call will be directed to the appropriate person: 240-895-4207.

## Offices and Services

Have a question about something? Never hesitate to use the resources you have at St. Mary’s College of Maryland. For more information about services here at SMCM, visit the [Offices and Services](#) page on the College website.