

Requirements:

This is a document to post on the Psychology department's website as a resource for graduate students looking for budgeting and/or financial planning advice.

- New graduate students with a focus on international students
 - If you live here you'll have these expenses
- Resources
- Sections: sample rents, food, utility (cost of living)
- 3 sample budgets
- Additional funding for summer?
- Student income:
 - 9 month contract (can be extended by 12 months), biweekly

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1. CREATING YOUR BUDGET

The hardest part about creating a budget is knowing where to start. Resources and other tools will be available and linked to help you set your financial goals.

I would recommend creating a monthly budget tracker as many of these fixed expenses occur then. Biweekly income can be put together with the overall monthly expenses. However, you may choose to create a budget specifically tailored to your own needs. I find the most success with monthly tracking because biweekly is too short and a semester budget is too uncertain and subject to many changes.

Personally, I like to overestimate my costs and expenses and underestimate any income so that it allows me to make better decisions when it comes to managing my finances. I also like color coding money coming in and money going out then breaking it down by time/dates. Having a rough idea of how much you are starting with and the amount of money spent for each month or even each quarter can help you adjust your budget as needed.

2. COSTS & EXPENSES

It is important to track fixed costs and expenses in order to budget accurately. This section will provide you with the cost of living around UMBC as well as other fixed, recurring, and other variable costs.

2.1 Fixed Expenses

These are expenses that do not change such as your rent, car insurance, utilities, and tuition. The cost of living will always vary from location to location however, here is a quick chart below to help you have a rough idea of what it may look like.

2.1.1 Yearly Fixed Expenses

This will include tuition and fees. Typically, students pay tuition and fees on a semester basis however, this was the cost shown on the UMBC website. Additionally, direct costs are costs billed directly to the student and indirect costs are variable estimates that are not billed.

2021-2022 Graduate Cost of Attendance			
2021-2022	In-State Per Year	Out-of-State Per Year	Type
Tuition/Fees	\$15,048	\$23,994	Direct
Rent/Utilities/Food	\$22,500	\$22,500	Indirect
Books	\$800	\$800	Indirect
Transportation	\$2,416	\$2,416	Indirect
Other	\$1,684	\$1,684	Indirect
Direct Loan Fee	\$178	\$178	Indirect

PLUS Loan Fee	\$888	\$888	Indirect
Total	\$43,514	\$52,460	

2.1.2 Semester Fixed Expenses

This will typically include any books or academic supplies. Below is an example for the ABA program. Here is the [full Handbook](#) for [HSP - ABA Program](#) for required courses.

Required textbooks/readings/course material roughly cost \$300 per semester where each course would be given a budget of \$100 for required materials which is more than enough. Students estimate spending \$100 to \$300 on course materials per semester. Most courses have professors who provide journal articles and don't have required materials.

2.1.3 Monthly Fixed Expenses

This will include the cost of rent, utilities, insurance, car payment, groceries, and banking fees.

Average Cost of Rent & Utilities per Location (Monthly)			
Type	Location	Rent	Utilities
1 Bedroom Apartment	Catonsville, MD	\$1,300	unknown
1 Bedroom Apartment	Baltimore, MD	\$1,500	\$252.00
1 Bedroom Apartment	Columbia, MD	\$1,300	\$138.20
1 Bedroom Apartment	Laurel, MD	\$1,700	\$138.20
1 Bedroom Apartment	Arbutus, MD	\$1,600	\$140
1 Bedroom Apartment	Ellicott City, MD	\$1,200	unknown (around \$217?)
1 Bedroom Apartment	Elkridge, MD	\$1,400	unknown

Basic utilities are gas, electricity, and water. Here is a great resource that goes into more depth about [estimating the cost of apartment utilities](#).

In Baltimore, MD the average electricity, gas, and water cost is \$159.00, \$48.56, \$33.76 respectively (article last updated April 8, 2021). The total average cost being \$252.00.

A garbage bill should also be taken into consideration when creating your budget. More often than not, landlords may include trash and recycling services into your utility bill but it's always good to verify.

Internet services are also another utility depending on your ISP.

Here, I also assume the average college student is not paying for Cable TV services. Rather, streaming services will be accounted for and listed under the Subscriptions category.

Cell phone services are also extremely important in this day and age. Some assumptions for phone services will include little to no data usage, buying or leasing a device, and the ability to

text and call. Free wifi is provided on campus and UMBC has their own VPN called GlobalProtect so data usage is really not needed in this case.

Finally, renter's insurance is not a utility but may be factored into your budget if you'd like (it's only \$15 to \$30 a month but totally up to you).

Monthly Expenses		
Type	Average Cost	Your/Personal Cost
Car Insurance (average in the U.S.)	\$103.33 (\$1,240/year)	
Car Payment (average in the U.S. for a used car)	\$300	
Gas (average gas in MD \$2.759 * average gas tank size 12 gallons) = \$33.108 (average 25 miles per gallon) = 300 mi Catonsville = 2.7 mi Baltimore = 9.4 mi Columbia = 17 mi * 2 = 34mi * 20 = 680mi Laurel = 17 mi Arbutus = 2.2 mi * 2 = 4.4mi * 20 = 88 mi Ellicott = 9.3 mi Elkridge = 7.5 mi Assume: Student goes to campus 5x a week, roundtrip = 20x month	Anywhere between \$33.108 and \$75.0448 (680mi / 300mi = 2.267 * \$33.108) depending on where you live not accounting for leisure activities	
Transportation (if no car) UMBC transit (unavailable until 5/20/21) All Access College Transit Pass UMBC ZipCar (unavailable until Spring 2021)	Free \$52.90 (\$25/year)	
Internet - basic	\$30 - \$35	
Phone - mint mobile	\$15 - \$30	
Groceries (varies from location to location)	\$200	
Subscription Services Netflix - Basic Spotify Premium Student + Hulu Plan Amazon Prime Student	\$8.99 \$4.99 \$6.49 (OR \$59/year)	

2.2 Variable Expenses

They are usually subject to change depending on how much you spend. This section will be skipped.

2.3 Secondary Expenses

These include leisure expenditures and unnecessary expenses. It's always nice to treat yourself!

- Restaurants/food (going out to eat)
- Clothes and shoes
- Personal care items
- Salon services
- Hobbies or recreational activities
- Entertainment

I would recommend having a rough idea of your income minus total expenses for the month then taking 10% or 20% of your paycheck and putting it into a savings account. Then the amount leftover can be used for secondary expenses. I also typically save calculating secondary expenses for last.

3. FINANCIAL AID

It's also important to take financial aid into consideration. This can be in the form of

- Scholarships (by semester/year)
- Loans (by semester/year)
- Grants (by semester/year)
- Parental Support (weekly/biweekly/monthly)

4. INCOME

Any income made. It will usually be in the form of biweekly paychecks. Passive income should also be noted however, if the difference is not largely noticeable, I would recommend keeping it in your savings account.

Graduate students in the Psychology department are also able to sign 9 month contracts (standard) for employment but this may be extended to 12 months (summer funding, international students) if additional funding is needed.

Stipend				
	Yearly	Bi-weekly	Health Insurance	University Fees
9-month contract (no summer work)	\$20,300	\$922.73	Covered by department	Covered for first 3 years
12-month contract	\$23,990	\$922.69	Covered by department	Covered for first 3 years

5. SAVINGS

Savings - Emergency Fund

Here, I recommend a standard savings account for long-term investing and an emergency savings account/fund. The latter should have a minimum of \$100 in it to cover small expenses but aiming for \$500 is ideal.

I highly suggest implementing [the 50 30 20 Rule](#) for guidance on personal finance. This is where 20% of your income goes towards your savings account, 50% towards your necessities like fixed payments, and 30% to discretionary (non-essential) items. This may not be feasible for a graduate student but it is a good rule of thumb for tracking your spending and finances.

Student Discounts

There are many discounts available for students online. Personally, I have used <https://www.myunidays.com/> a lot for netflix and other applications/subscriptions that require students to verify their email address. As long as you have your general student information and a university email account, you will be able to access many of their rewards and benefits. Other brick and mortar stores also offer student discounts if you just ask! (Vineyard vines have student discounts, AMC theaters, etc.) All you have to do is show them your student ID. Other membership programs include <https://www.studentbeans.com/us> and <http://www.isic.org/> however I have not used these personally.

Some popular student discounts and freebies are

Subscriptions: apple music (\$4.99 per month), youtube premium (\$6.99 per month), spotify student with Hulu and Showtime (\$4.99 per month)

Some free applications to help you find the best deals:

- <https://www.joinhoney.com/>
- <https://www.retailmenot.com/>
- <https://www.slugbooks.com/>

Rewards and Benefits of Building Credit

Best credit cards for college students:

Discover Student IT

Long-term Investments

(This is probably the least important aspect of this guide)

I would recommend investing with <https://www.acorns.com/>, it is a micro-investing application free for students. It works by automatically rounding up to every dollar spent. This means your change will go towards your acorns account.

Best Budgeting Apps

My favorite app for personal finance is <https://mint.intuit.com/> it gives you an overview on every account in your name including loans, credit cards, bank accounts, etc. It also breaks down how much you spend and tracks all your finances.

6. RESOURCES

6.1 Helpful Links

6.2 Tips from Other Grad Students

Will have a questionnaire or poll for graduate students to send their tips for budgeting. This may include the best areas for renting an apartment, favorite local restaurants, or best places to save on school materials.

6.3 Funding Opportunities

Email newsletter(?) sent out to graduate students.

Possibly have a whiteboard/bulletin board <div> box for updated opportunities.

7. SAMPLE BUDGETS

7.1 Templates

In-State

Budget Item	Academic Year Quarter	Academic Year	Summer Quarter	12 Month Budget
Rent				
Food				
Personal Expenses				
Transportation				
Books and Supplies				
Campus Health Service Fee				
Cardinal Care Health Insurance				
Total Non-Tuition Expenses				

Item	Cost per Item/Day	Cost per Month	Cost per Year
Morning snack (3x/week)			

Library Fines (1x/week)			
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Annual Costs

Tuition	Books & Supplies

Monthly Costs

Housing	Utilities	Transportation	Healthcare	Debt	Groceries and Eating Out	Shopping and Other

Student Budget Worksheet

CATEGORY	MONTHLY	YEARLY
INCOME		
Employment		
Parental Support		
Scholarships		
Financial Aid		
Public Assistance		
Other sources		
INCOME SUBTOTAL		
EXPENSES		
Tuition		
Textbooks		
College Fees		
Housing (rent/mortgage)		
Telephone		

