

# Not Another Budget Cut!

## Money-saving ideas for campus clubs

By Butch Oxendine, editor in chief

**A**re you a campus leader who really strives to be a steward of your students' fee money? Do you ferret out every possible way to scrimp, pinch pennies, squeeze a dollar, and get the most bang for your buck? Just a handful of student groups across the nation have mega-million-dollar budgets. Most get barely funded by Student Government and have to raise money just to pay for their basic functions and programming. If you're like nearly every student group, you're probably struggling to stretch your limited funds, trim the fat, recycle, and be as efficient as humanly possible. In tight financial times, it's important to look at ways to cut your budget without cutting services.

Check out these 20 practical and proven money-saving tips that you can use right now to squeeze every last dollar out of the meager budget you do get. (*Editor's Note: Order Student Leader's new 101 Money-Savings Ideas for Student Groups and Campus Clubs workbook for just \$9.95 or get 25 for \$7.95 each—visit [www.studentleader.com](http://www.studentleader.com) to place your order. Sorry, but we've saved the best cheapskate ideas for the book!*)

**1. Get tech savvy.** By using e-mail and the web, you'll improve communications. "We passed several resolutions about how the minutes of all our meetings would be done," says Daniel O'Hanlon, speaker of the **Monroe Community College** Student Government Association in New York. "Every person who needs to get a copy of our minutes is e-mailed a copy that is confirmed when they open the e-mail. The MCC SGA has 98 people that need a copy of the minutes. That's a lot of paper, work load on secretary, time, postage, etc. that'll all help in cutting the costs of just the SGA. We're hoping that some of the other 49 clubs will try this process."

**2. Pack your own lunch.** When you go on a club-sponsored trip, bring your own drinks and snacks to avoid spending cash on fast food—and eat better besides. If you have a big group and are staying overnight, book a hotel with a kitchen where you can prepare your own food. If you're heading to a major city, get a cheaper hotel in the suburbs, and then commute via metro or buses to your meetings to avoid the cost of a rental car entirely.

**3. Use cheap gas.** When renting a car or van for group outings, use regular unleaded gas and try to get the lowest price possible before you fill up—you'll save at least \$3.50 on a tank over premium. Also, don't take optional insurance coverage on rentals if you already have personal coverage.

**4. Don't pay sales tax.** If you're an official campus club, you'll probably be able to use the school's exempt status to avoid paying an extra five to 10 percent on your bills.



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**5. Get it donated.** "In my previous capacity in charge of undergraduate mentoring (a division of our Student Senate) at the **University of Rio Grande & Rio Grande Community College** in Ohio, I contacted businesses and promoted their services to our members in exchange for some freebies or half-price discounts on pizza for functions," says Tambla Doering, student body vice president. "We also had donations or discounts from various businesses for a variety of things like tents, bales of hay, and prizes for a little acknowledgement of thanks in our student newspaper and/or local paper. Not only do the discounts and freebies help out organizations at our school, they encourage students to do business with companies making donations and giving the discounts."

**6. Trade, trade, trade.** If they won't give you freebies, you can give local businesses publicity and advertising in return for printing, food, office supplies, and more. Work in concert with other campus clubs so your bargaining power is enhanced, or get Student Government to set up the deal for all your campus groups.

**7. Block-book blockbusters.** "Join organizations such as the National Association of Campus Activities (NACA) where you are able to block-book concerts, speakers, and entertainers with other schools in your region at a lower cost than normal," says Rachel Chiavaras, former student body president for both **Columbia Basin College** and **Washington State University Tri-Cities Campus**.

**8. Buy supplies in bulk.** You can always find it cheaper somewhere if you buy ahead of time, buy in bulk, and don't wait until the last minute. Several student groups could buy in volume rather than placing separate orders for office supplies or promotional items. At the beginning of the budget year, each campus club should submit a detailed list of the supplies they'll need. Then, student activities or SG can place one large order. The bigger the order, the more likely you'll be able to get a major discount, which will end up saving money for all campus organizations.

**9. Get a discount.** Ask for a non-profit or student discount on everything you buy. If you don't ask, you won't get it. Most local companies will do just about anything to win students' business. You should expect to get at least a 10-percent discount or more on everything you buy for your group.

**10. Cut a long-distance deal** if you're allowed to choose your carrier. At *Student Leader*, we've negotiated to get our costs down to about 4 cents per minute—and we didn't even have to sign a long-term contract.

**11. Phone for free.** Use toll-free numbers when you call campus leaders at other colleges (they're usually available). Often, the toll-free numbers are for the school's admissions office, but they may transfer you.

**12. Don't make pay-phone calls** while traveling for your organization. Instead, buy a pre-paid phone card that gets you a cheaper per-minute rate, or use cell phones with unlimited long-distance calling.



**13. Wait until after 5 p.m. or 11 p.m.**

**to send faxes.** Unless you get a much lower rate from your long-distance carrier, be sure to take advantage of non-peak-time calls.



**14. Cater your own events**

instead of hiring a pricey firm. You easily can make punch, fix your own snacks, and set up a decent-looking spread for simple receptions—assuming this is permitted by your campus food-service vendor. For more formal affairs, you can negotiate on price and maybe even barter in return for advertising or helping a company land other campus groups as customers.

**15. Recycle and reuse.**

Don't overlook simple yet effective ways to recycle or reuse anything you can. Use scrap paper for messages and notes to your staff. Copy on the back of once-used paper. Reuse incoming boxes and packing materials for outgoing shipments. "One, it helps the environment. Two, it keeps our cost on paper down. And three, we get to use a variety of colors which makes it a bit more interesting than plain white," says Lauren LaRusso, 2002 president of the Douglass College Governing Association at **Rutgers University** in New Jersey.

**16. Turn off the lights!**

Even if you're not paying an electric/utility bill, flip off the lights in your office when not in use. Also, turn up the air conditioner, or just turn it off. Get a timer that automatically shuts off the lights if you forget.

**17. Make your own copies**

(or better yet, don't even make copies). Invest in a SG copy machine so that student groups can do their own work instead of paying a local copy shop. Also, get a computer, inkjet color printer, and good graphics software so you can produce your own certificates and awards, banners, buttons, stickers, and flyers—even letterhead and business cards. Shame on you if you're still sending stuff to a professional typesetter.



**18. Buy used equipment**

such as computers, fax machines, and copiers; then, set up a service contract that includes parts and labor. Plenty of local companies repair different brands, so you won't have to choose a manufacturer-recommended company. You'll pay a set monthly or quarterly fee for all repairs and supplies, which will save in the long run and help plan your budget.

**19. Be a yard-sale pro.**

If you're patient, you can scour yard sales and get a \$1,000 lateral file for \$75—and it may only need a little touch-up and cleaning. Also, at most local office-supply stores, you can find slightly damaged desks, filing cabinets, tables, and chairs at big discounts.



**20. Hire your own.**

"One excellent way to save money is on concerts and live music. Almost every school has students who are part of a band, many of which are quite good," says Yehuda Katz, chief of staff for the **Brooklyn College** SG in New York. "These students are more than willing to play for free to get free publicity. In the upcoming year, our SG plans to use this to create frequent activities revolving around the bands. No-cost bands frees up a lot of money that can make the rest of the event even more kick-ass."

If you can use even a few of these budget-stretching ideas, you easily could save hundreds, and potentially thousands, of dollars a year that can go toward more services, programming, or publicity for your campus organization. **SL**



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