Today’s beach read...

**Missing Us Already?**

Hopefully you’ve found some time this summer to go to the beach, read a good book, & relax. Back here at WPI we’ve been busy all summer awarding next year’s financial aid to all of our returning students. What a busy summer it’s been so far! This year we reviewed a whopping 3,005 students in just 5 short (and busy!) weeks.

Anxious to know what your aid package will look like for next year? The wait is almost over! Award letters will be hitting the mail on Tuesday, July 5th. Check your mailbox!

If you don’t receive your financial aid award letter, check our online portal to see if you have any outstanding requirements at www.wpi.edu/+fastatus.

**Savings Challenge #6**

Declutter your way to savings

Nothing good comes from having a cluttered living space. In fact, a Princeton University study found that when your environment is cluttered, “the chaos restricts your ability to focus. The clutter also limits your brain’s ability to process information.” So start decluttering & you may see an improvement in your grades! It’s worth a shot.

While good grades & a clear mind is all well & good, we’re here about money! And believe it or not, decluttering can have some pretty impressive financial results. While going through all that accumulated junk you could find cash money! Long lost gift cards, loose change, even undeposited checks could turn up!

As if that’s not reason enough to get started, decluttering can even increase your credit score! A Harris Interactive study found that 23% of Americans paid bills late & had racked up fees simply because they couldn’t find their bills! When you’re dealing with student loans this can be especially bad – so declutter now to avoid this issue down the road.

So go through your living space (no matter how big or small), keep only what you need & sell (money!) or donate the rest. Have fun!

**Alternative Loan Options**

We encourage students to maximize their federal loan borrowing (Subsidized & Unsubsidized Direct Loans) before using alternative/private loans, & parents are encouraged to compare the Federal PLUS Loan to the alternative/private loan options they may be considering.

**Federal PLUS Loan:**

For parents, the federal government offers the Parent PLUS Loan with a fixed interest rate of 6.31% for the 2016-2017 academic year. Payment may be deferred while the student is enrolled at least half time. [More info...](#)

**Private loans:**

WPI is partnered with ELM Select, a great tool which provides students & parents with information about alternative/private loan options. ELM allows you to search through all of the lenders that our students have used in the past & compare several items such as loan rates, length of repayment, monthly payment amounts, etc. If you’re looking to borrow from a private lender, ELM is the place to start! [Check it out today!](#)
Outside Scholarships
All outside scholarships must be reported, even if it is a renewable/annual award. Our online form is available here. If you are seeking a credit to be used toward your bill, you must remit a PDF copy of your outside scholarship award letter to outsideaid@wpi.edu. Make sure to include your student ID!

How will outside scholarships affect my financial aid award?
Outside scholarships will be applied to your account in the following order: Any unmet need will be the first amount offset by outside scholarship funding.

Once all unmet need has been exhausted, we will adjust the funds in your award in the following order:

- Federal & Community Service Work Study
- Federal Perkins Loan/Institutional Loan
- Federal Direct Subsidized Loan (this actually converts to a Federal Direct Unsubsidized Loan)

Depending on funding & allocation amounts, the Federal Perkins Loan/Institute Loans & Federal Work Study/Community Service Work Study may be adjusted in reverse order.

Be sure to report all outside scholarships as soon as possible. That way we won't have to adjust your financial aid award mid-year.

Don't Need All Of Your Financial Aid?
Reduce your borrowing!
We strongly feel that you shouldn't borrow more than you actually need. Those interest rates can cost you big! Take some time to sit down & go over your budget for the year. Determine how much money you really need. If you find that you don’t actually need all of the loan money that you’ve been awarded let us know! Here’s how:

Send our office a completed Award Reduction/Cancellation Form letting us know which loan(s) you want to either reduce or cancel all together. That’s it! We’ll take it from there!

If, as you progress through the school year, you realize you actually do need that loan money we can always put it back on the system (up until one week before classes end). So challenge yourself to keep your borrowing to a minimum, but know that any decision not to borrow is always reversible if need be. So why not?

5 Pros & Cons of Credit Unions
Trying to decide if switching to a credit union is right for you?

Pros

Superior service: Credit Unions are cooperatives owned by their members; their mission is to provide their members with affordable financial services, not gouge them as profit centers.

Lower interest rates: Credit unions traditionally pass on the savings from their not-for-profit status, meaning higher rates on savings accounts & lower rates on loans & credit cards.

Fewer strings attached: Banks have fees for almost everything, but most credit unions have no minimum balance required to avoid fees.

Lower fees than most banks: Credit unions do their best to keep costs low for their customers. They may eliminate products/services to cut costs rather than add fees.

Shared ATMs and branches: Many credit unions have joined forces to offer their members easy cash access via Co-Op ATM networks & shared branch alliances.

Cons

Limited eligibility: Unlike banks, you cannot open an account at any credit union you choose. You must meet certain criteria, such as employee groups, associations, residential areas, etc.

Less rewards: If you pay off your credit card in full each month, it may be better to search for a credit card with a better rewards program. A recent study found that banks offered an average of 6% cash back, while credit union credit cards only offered 1.5%.

Fewer bells & whistles: You may have to sacrifice having a mobile banking app. Credit unions may not be on the cutting edge of technology, but they can meet the financial needs of most people.

Fees are rising: Fees may be lower, but that may not always be the case. Credit unions are not immune from governmental regulatory pressures.

Not all are created equal: As with anything, make sure to do your research before deciding whether or not a credit union is right for you.

Source: Bankrate.com