Parent Newsletter: A Welcome

By Amanda B. Carter, Deputy Director

After all the stress and anxiety of helping your child decide where they will spend the next 4 years of their life, the day is fast approaching when you’ll actually be dropping them off on campus. The summer months have definitely flown by for the Financial Aid Office as we prepare to welcome your student into our community in a few short weeks. We’re excited to have them join us on campus!

The Financial Aid Office’s Parent Newsletter will hopefully help you prepare for this most important trip to Rochester. During the academic year, we’ll deliver more editions of the Newsletter, but this one is designed to help answer any lingering questions about financial aid and student employment before you start your trek to campus.

Included in this special edition you’ll find Frequently Asked Questions, instructions on UR ePAY (the University online billing system), a spotlight on an important office on campus, an opportunity to meet one of our dedicated staff members as well as one of our outstanding student workers, and an opportunity to provide our office with feedback on your experience so far.

We hope you find this Newsletter informative. Don’t hesitate to connect with our office if you have any questions not answered in the Newsletter or feel free to schedule a time to meet with your financial aid counselor when you’re on campus at the end of August. We look forward to working with you over the next four years. We hope you enjoy your time as a University of Rochester parent!

Meliora!
Do It Yourself
UR ePAY

By Long Vu, Assistant Director

UR ePAY is the University of Rochester’s online billing system. The Bursar’s Office posts bills through this online portal for both students and parents to access.

If students have new activity or unpaid charges on their student account, they will automatically receive an e-mail that their billing statement is available to view in UR ePAY. The e-mail will be sent to the student’s official University e-mail account. If students have added an e-mail address for an authorized payer(s) in UR ePAY (such as a parent, guardian, spouse, or third party sponsor), that person will also receive an e-mail notification.

Students can access UR ePAY from their University Blackboard account or, if you are an Authorized payer, you can access UR ePAY on the Bursar’s Office website at http://www.rochester.edu/adminfinance/bursar/epay.htm.

Once you are in UR ePAY, select View Accounts from the menu on your left to access your most recent billing statement. You can also navigate to statement history from View Accounts. If your student hasn’t already set you up as an authorized payer, they’ll need to log into their UR ePAY account and click on Authorize Payers in the left-hand menu.

NOTE: The billing statement is a “snapshot” of the charges, credits and anticipated credits to the student account as of a specific date. This information is updated each time the student is billed, which is either once a month or once a semester. The statement does not reflect changes to the account that occur daily between billing cycles. If you need a revised payment amount prior to the due date, please contact the Bursar’s Office.
Spotlight on: The Bursar’s Office

By Emily Hessney, Financial Aid Counselor

The Financial Aid Office works with many different offices on campus over the course of the year. We’ll dedicate time in our newsletter to let you know about those relationships and provide some insight on the ways we work to support your student. In this release, we’ll focus on the Bursar’s Office. What does the Bursar’s Office do, and how do they work with Financial Aid? I sat down with Kathy Blackmon, University Bursar, to have a conversation about the role and functions of the Bursar’s Office at the University.

EH: What exactly does a Bursar do?

KB: The Bursar bills and collects tuition, fees, room and board for all students. Our office also provides cashiering services for University departments.

EH: How does the Bursar’s Office work with Financial Aid?

KB: Our offices share information constantly, particularly regarding student financial aid so the Bursar can bill for the correct amount. The Bursar’s Office, in turn, shares external scholarships with financial aid. We work together to make referrals to the appropriate office. Our offices also meet on a regular basis to talk about what’s coming up, deadlines, potential issues, and resolutions.

EH: What kinds of issues can the Bursar’s Office help parents and students with?

KB: We can explain how the bill is calculated, provide revised payment amounts if the bill changes during a billing cycle, let students know if they will be receiving a refund, and inform students how to request a refund. We can also let parents and students know how to resolve disputes with other departments that contribute charges to the bill, such as Residential Life, Dining Services, and University Health Services.

EH: How does the UR e-Pay system work?

KB: UR e-Pay is an online portal for student billing statements. It allows students and authorized payers to view current and prior statements, and to make payments online if they choose. It’s important to keep in mind that the system is not in real time, and does not auto-update when changes are made. Parents and students should contact our office by phone at (585) 275-3931 or email at bursar@admin.rochester.edu if they have questions concerning their statement.

EH: What’s the most important thing for parents to know about the Bursar’s Office?

KB: It’s our goal to provide the best customer service possible; we welcome your inquiries. When you call our office, you can typically get through fairly quickly to a Student Account Representative who will assist you. If you’re not sure which department to contact, you can always start with us!

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Financial Literacy

By Vanessa Deshane, Financial Aid Counselor

During the fall 2013 semester, the Financial Aid Office implemented a financial literacy program to help our students make good financial decisions in college and beyond. We kicked off the program with a monthly financial literacy blog. We’ve featured topics including thrifty ways to say thank you for Thanksgiving, methods to organize and prioritize your financial responsibilities, and budgeting your holiday spending.

We’ve also introduced our new financial literacy mascot, Wallis Wallet, named for our location in Wallis Hall. Wallis will be used throughout the program to help students identify resources related to financial literacy. As we continue to build the program, we hope to offer more and more resources for students to learn about managing their finances.

Also featured as part of our financial literacy program is a Thrifty Thursday feature on Twitter. Quick tips are tweeted every Thursday @URFinAid. We’ve also added a Financial Literacy section to the Financial Aid website with links to the blog as well as other great resources for students.

Please stay tuned for our upcoming Financial Literacy blogs and programs as they continue to evolve.
Meet a Student Worker: Gala Tubera

By Vanessa DeShane, Financial Aid Counselor

The Financial Aid Office at the University of Rochester administers the student employment program. We help students find jobs at the University that provide them with skills that they can use long after they’ve earned their degree. The students aren’t the only ones who benefit from the student employment program. Our staff and faculty are able to work with some truly amazing individuals over the course of the year. Here’s an example of one of them.

VD: Tell me about yourself.

GT: I am a rising senior majoring in History. I am originally from Hawaii and I have worked in the Financial Aid Office during my time at Rochester. I am also the President of our Sihir Belly Dance ensemble and have been belly dancing since freshman year. I have two cats.

VD: What is your favorite part about being a University of Rochester student?

GT: The best part of being a student at the U of R is that you meet so many different types of people. The curriculum is set up so that you’re taking classes with people who have completely different interests and perspectives. Having discussions in class in this kind of environment has really helped me broaden my own perspectives of my major and the world in general.

VD: What has been the most challenging thing you have done as a student here?

GT: The most challenging thing about the U of R for me tends to be balancing class, extracurricular activities, work and personal life during finals week. During most of the year it’s not too hard, but it always seems that the most important days each semester fall within one week of each other.

VD: What do you feel is your greatest accomplishment?

GT: My greatest accomplishment would have to be the life I have built at the U of R. I am getting a great education, my friends and job are great and I love the city of Rochester. Even when finals week gets hard, my life here is still awesome.

We Value Your Input...Our Parent Survey is Now Available!

We are constantly looking for ways to enhance the service we provide to you and your student. To ensure we accomplish this objective, we are seeking your feedback about the experiences you’ve had with the Financial Aid Office. Please consider completing our brief Parent Survey online.

Your feedback will help us to better serve our current and future students and their families. Thank you for participating in this survey!
Parents typically come to campus with various financial aid and student employment questions. We’ve included a few of the more frequent ones here with the hope that answering them now will help make your student’s transition to campus smoother. You can always stop by the Financial Aid Office during your few days on campus at the end of August to ask any other lingering questions as well.

Q: What documents can a student use to complete their I-9? How and when can a student complete an I-9?

A: When students complete Part I of their I-9 online, it will provide them with a list of acceptable documentation for completing Part II. Part II requires original documents; photocopies will not be accepted. Part I can be completed at any time online; students can schedule an appointment with the Financial Aid Office to complete Part II. There will also be opportunities at the Job Fair and Financial Aid Lab during Orientation to complete I-9s.

Q: How does a student find a job on campus?

A: Students can search the FAJobLink online database for job opportunities on campus. The database is updated regularly by on-campus employers who are hiring. Students can access FAJobLink via their Blackboard* accounts. Students are also encouraged to network with employers on campus. The Job Fair is a great opportunity to do so—it takes place during Orientation every August!

*Please note: Incoming students aren’t able to access their FAJobLink account until Orientation.

Q: Is merit aid renewable each year? Can merit aid be reconsidered in future years?

A: Merit aid is renewable each year. Some merit scholarships do have a minimum GPA requirement; encourage your student to check with their financial aid counselor to learn more. Merit scholarships are not evaluated from year to year; however, students are encouraged to apply for continuing student scholarships in the spring semester. More information can be found on the Financial Aid Office’s website.

Q: Is need-based aid renewable? What is the application process?

A: Students must reapply for need-based aid each year. Our office will notify students via email in January of their application requirements for need-based financial aid. The returning student application deadline is May 1, so students must make sure to submit all their materials on-time to be considered for financial aid in the following academic year.
The Financial Aid Office is comprised of 18 staff members who are happy to assist you. We sat down with Charles Puls, Associate Dean and Director of Financial Aid, to learn a little bit more about him.

EH: How long have you been at the University?

CP: Ten years.

EH: How long have you worked in financial aid?

CP: 23 years. I’ve worked at several institutions—most recently, Boston College in undergraduate financial aid. Before that, I worked at some large public schools: IU Bloomington and UMass. I’ve also worked at a very small institution, Massachusetts College of Pharmacy. My very first job after grad school was in financial aid at Dartmouth.

EH: What attracted you to financial aid?

CP: I think of one night in particular, when I was working late to read files, and had the realization that I was having fun doing it—I was enjoying the analysis. The analysis has always come naturally to me, and I love seeing how it helps people in the process. Financial aid makes sense to me, and I felt that was the area of higher education where I could have the greatest impact.

EH: What’s your favorite part of your current role?

CP: Figuring out ways to get more input to help me think about changes and improvements to our policy and our office. Any decision made with others’ input will always be better than a decision made on my own in my office.

EH: What are your hobbies?

CP: I’m hoping to travel more—perhaps to Dubai or Bermuda. I’m also hoping to cook more, and learn to use a crockpot this winter! I would like to continue writing as well—whether it’s preparing pieces of my dissertation for publication, or contributing articles to ongoing conversations in the world of financial aid.

EH: What’s your favorite part of your current role?

CP: Figuring out ways to get more input to help me think about changes and improvements to our policy and our office. Any decision made with others’ input will always be better than a decision made on my own in my office.

SA: Is there anything specific that has drawn you to, not only the financial aid office, but the University as a whole?

CP: UR is so unique, which allows me to spend time thinking about how to implement things in the best way to meet our student’s needs. I hear about all the other ways schools approach financial aid, and I enjoy looking at how those approaches could best be adopted to achieve UR’s goals.

SA: Any encouraging words for the Class of 2018?

CP: Talk to us. If you’re having trouble, come let us know. There are so many people on campus that can help. Don’t feel like you have to tackle it all on your own.