

# FINANCIAL \$URVIVAL

## Student Handout

### DOLLARS AND SENSE

**Spend less than your income and save the difference.** This money can come in handy for special purchases and emergencies.

**If you spend more than your income, look carefully at your expenses and reduce or eliminate some of them.** Making a budget will help you identify and keep track of your expenses. Look carefully at even small purchases that, over time, can eat away at your income.

**If you use a credit card to make purchases, charge only what you can afford to repay.** Try to pay off monthly credit card balances in full to avoid interest charges. Remember, balances on credit cards that are not fully repaid are loans on which you pay interest. Avoid regularly paying just the minimum amount due. Doing so will take longer and it will ultimately cost more to pay off your balance.

**Pay all bills, loans and credit card statements on time.** Late payments usually result in additional charges. Late payments may also negatively affect your credit report.

**Negative information on your credit report can lower your credit score and harm your ability to get future loans, rent an apartment or even get a new job.** Credit scores are computed based on information in your credit report and help lenders make judgments about granting you a loan or a credit card. Of course, failing to pay back loans will lower your score. Your score can also be reduced by making late payments, holding multiple credit cards or carrying large balances.

**Avoid overdrawing a checking account or “maxing out” your credit card.** Fees are usually charged if you overdraw your checking account or exceed your card's credit limit. The credit limit, or credit line, is the maximum amount you can borrow or spend when using your card. “Maxing out” your credit card could lower your credit score.

### CHECK YOUR CREDIT REPORT

You should check your credit report annually to be certain that it is accurate. All loans and credit card accounts in your name are listed. The following credit bureaus collect the information that is found on your credit report and make copies available to you and potential lenders.

#### Equifax

1-800-997-2493      [www.equifax.com](http://www.equifax.com)

#### Experian

1-800-311-4769      [www.experian.com](http://www.experian.com)

#### TransUnion

1-800-888-4213      [www.tuc.com](http://www.tuc.com)

Generally, there is a small fee charged to receive a copy of your credit report from the bureaus. However, if you have been denied credit, a copy of your credit report is free.

### LEARN MORE ABOUT MONEY AND CREDIT MANAGEMENT

**National Foundation for Credit Counseling**  
[www.nfcc.org](http://www.nfcc.org)

**Credit Talk**  
[www.creditalk.com](http://www.creditalk.com)

**America Saves**  
[www.americasaves.org](http://www.americasaves.org)

**66 Ways to Save Money**  
[www.ftc.gov/bcp/conline/pubs/general/66ways/](http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/conline/pubs/general/66ways/)