

## Send Off a Frugal Freshman

➤ You've just sent an enormous check to your kid's college—the least he could do is minimize the ongoing burn. Set him on a cost-conscious track, and you might have enough left in the bank to pay the next tuition bill.

**PICK PLASTIC IN ADVANCE** Help your kid choose a credit card before she gets to campus and is hit with tons of offers. Shop student cards that have limits under \$1,000, rates under 19% and no fees. Best pick: Citi's mtvU (citi.com), which rewards timely payments and good grades. Secured cards, which allow users to borrow up to the amount of a deposit, are also an option, says Curtis Arnold of CardRatings.com; these build in a safety net should your child fall behind.

**DINE ON A DIME** Universities usually start students with a default meal plan, often costing \$1,600-plus per semester. But most kids don't eat 21 square meals a week from the cafeteria. Brown

University students use only 80% of what they've paid for, confirms the school's director of dining services. Ask about flexible options, like a mix of meals and "dining dollars." And identify the window for switching plans.

**CHECK OUT ONLINE CHECKING** The on- or near-campus bank is only worth the convenience if you can get an account sans service fees and minimum balances, says Greg McBride of Bankrate.com. If not, an online-only bank might be better; ING Direct (ingdirect.com) has no fees or balance requirements and offers free withdrawals at 32,000 ATMs.

**TROLL FOR TEXTBOOKS** Freshmen spend an average of \$900 on books. Pare that by having your kid shop online. Campus bookstores can't match the discounts or used-book selection. The latest *Organic Chemistry* by L.G. Wade lists for \$175, but aggregator Campusbooks.com found a new copy for \$57 on TextbooksRus.com.

—ANDREA BARTZ



...**Labor (Intensive) Day** Nearly 50% of small biz owners take only major holidays off—if even those days, according to a survey by Sam's Club...