



Yale College



The Community Initiative

Advice for Incoming First-Years

Summer 2019



The Community Initiative

EMPOWERING FIRST-GENERATION LOW-INCOME STUDENTS AT YALE

Welcome

Hello new and old FGLI friends!

I would like to welcome you on behalf of the Community Initiative, a Yale College effort that aims to empower and support first-generation and/or low-income (FGLI) students financially, academically, and socially. Please discover more about us and the resources available to you by exploring our website, fgli.yalecollege.yale.edu. As a recent FGLI alum and as the current Woodbridge Fellow for the YCDO & Poorvu Center, I feel honored to lead the work of helping fellow FGLI students create a home within Yale where they can thrive professionally and interpersonally.

While there is still plenty of time before the 2019-2020 Academic Year starts, I want to share some brief advice to incoming first-years on how to prepare for the transition into Yale that might be relevant to [first-generation and/or low-income students](#). Check out the following document, **Advice for Incoming First-Years**, created by our administrative team and FGLI students, to serve as a brief list of quick actions you can take before coming to campus. Advice is separated into the three ways we support FGLI students during the academic year: financially, academically, and socially.

If you have any further questions, feel free to shoot me a message at fgli@yale.edu or at jorge.anaya@yale.edu. Please remember that you are loved and belong at Yale.

[Video from Michelle Obama](#)

Warmest wishes,

Jorge Anaya

He, Him, His

Coordinator, The Community Initiative

Woodbridge Fellow, Yale College Dean's Office & Poorvu Center



Budgeting

“I have money to manage?” For some of you that might have received allowances or worked during your time as a high school student, managing money for your or your family’s expenses might not be a foreign process. Regardless of work experience, managing your money to use for your experience at Yale requires a different way of working with money, rooted in [Financial Aid’s philosophy](#) of your college education being an investment for which three parties - Yale, your parents and yourself - are responsible to pay.

Yale’s increased financial support over the past decade has increased both the amount FGLI students receive and given rise to the significant increase in numbers of FGLI students on campus, resulting in [the largest number of students with a \\$0 Effective Family Contribution \(EFC\) in Yale’s history](#). However, there are still expenses that you as a student will be responsible for, such as transportation to and from school, wardrobe needs, school supplies, and social outings with friends. (*For more information, see [Financial Aid page](#)*). Familiarizing yourself with common college student expenses and when they come up during the year is important to maintaining your financial and personal well-being during your time at Yale.

Making your money last for the whole year

Students on financial aid are expected to arrive on campus with some savings that they have access to (from personal savings and/or outside scholarships). Some students will also receive a **Start Up Grant** (amount determined by Yale Financial Aid), which is divided in two; each half will be made available to you at the beginning of each semester. Many students find on-campus jobs, but it’s important to know that the hiring process means that it is common for students not to receive their first paycheck from their on-campus job until October. Therefore, it’s especially important to budget carefully for the first six to eight weeks of the semester.

A portion of your savings and your Start Up Grant are intended for you to use pay for the books, course materials, and daily living expenses every college student is responsible for (see a sample description of expenses below). In particular, the Start Up Grant is **not** intended to cover major expenses such as transportation home or a new laptop. It also should not be used as emergency funds for your family back home. If you or your family have a financial emergency while you are at Yale, please consult with your residential college dean, your financial aid counselor, and/or the Yale College Dean’s Office’s [Safety Net](#) program.

This is where budgeting becomes part of your transition to Yale. Budgeting is defined as an estimate of income and expenditure for a set period of time. Based on this definition chances are if you have had money to manage, you’ve budgeted before! The difference at Yale, of course, is the new expenses that come as a result of attending college. To this end, we offer these brief tips on how to start:

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- **Develop a thorough plan for your large expenses each semester.** This should occur ideally before the semester starts and revised during the first couple of weeks as you learn more about the expenses for that particular semester. If this is your first semester at college, it may be helpful to look at this [chart of estimated college costs](#) offered by the College Board to give you a general guideline before you arrive. Below is specific advice for budgeting for some of the biggest expenses that can occur in the first few weeks of class: transportation, books and supplies, and personal expenses:
 - **Transportation:** Note that the cost of flights and any transportation to and from home, which might have been covered by previous visiting programs such as Bulldog Days and FSY, **is no longer covered** by the university. These costs, which might be significant if you're traveling a long distance, can have a large impact on your yearly budgeting plan. Book flights and other forms of travel as early as possible in order to get the least expensive prices. Also, while Hartford's Bradley Airport is the closest major airport to Yale, students can often find substantially cheaper flights to New York or Newark. It is possible to take public transportation (bus/subway/commuter train) to New Haven from LaGuardia, JFK and Newark.
 - **Books and Supplies:** Some courses will expect you to purchase books, course packets, and lab supplies within the first few weeks of the semester. As soon as you decide to take a course, look at your syllabi and make a list of what materials you need by what date, and prioritize obtaining materials that you need right away. If you have limited funds at the beginning of the semester, you may need to wait to buy some materials until after you start collecting paychecks from student jobs. If you receive university financial aid, an amount averaging about \$500 per semester has already been factored into your aid package. You should be looking to use those funds to help cover a portion of your textbook expenses each semester. For suggestions on how to find free and lower cost books and supplies, see [here](#).
 - **Personal Expenses:** Try to limit everyday purchases as much as possible until you get a better sense of your actual budget and expenses. Don't go overboard in shopping for your room or incidental expenses like coffee and food outside of our meal plan.
- An important part of budgeting is **staying updated and consistently looking at how much money you have**, which can be difficult to remember to do during busy periods of the semester. We recommend you schedule bi-weekly financial check-ins with yourself so you don't find yourself with an empty wallet in the later part of the semester when things can get crazy.
- Check out more tips to manage your money - **including a FREE financial literacy course by FGLI alumna Tara Falcone!** - at finlit.yale.edu.

If you are coming from a warm climate and have to update your wardrobe for the winters, bookmark our [Winter Clothing Grant](#) page from our website and ask us more during the fall semester! The Yale College Dean's Office (YCDO) has allotted certain funds to help lower-

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income students get started with the purchasing of winter gear they may need during their time at Yale. These grants may be in addition to funds you receive from outside scholarships, earnings, or a Yale Start-Up Grant.

Student Employment

Many upper-level students will testify to the work that goes into transitioning to Yale, describing it almost as its own course. In your first semester, you should focus on your academic and social transition to college. That said, the reality is that many FGLI students need to find campus jobs. You should expect to find a job that totals around 6-10 hours per week; working more than 10 hours per week can have a detrimental effect on your academics. Check out the [Yale College Council's \(student government\) Student Jobs](#) document as a starting guide to searching, applying, and entering your first student job. Keep in mind some positions open early in the fall, so mark any relevant dates in your calendar! It also may be helpful to put together your résumé before you get to campus. Yale offers the following excellent online guide: [Résumé Resources for Undergraduates](#).

Further resources:

More specific financial advice in The Money Manual in our website:

fgli.yalecollege.yale.edu/financial-guidance/money-manual

Managing Your Finances at Yale (Powerpoint Presentation) [link needed]

National Public Radio Story: [Students Provide Guides for Paying For College](#)

Preparing Academically for Yale

For all first-year students, adjusting to Yale's academic and professional cultures is challenging. As a centuries-old institution, there are many unwritten expectations and ways of doing things that many professors, advisors, and administrators take for granted. It's what's known as Yale's "hidden curriculum."

The Academic Strategies Program, in partnership with the FGLI Community Initiative, works to make this hidden curriculum visible to all students at the university. The program is led by junior and senior peers—the majority of whom who identify as first-generation and/or low-income—who have themselves experienced navigating Yale and are eager to share what they have learned. They also share evidence-based mindsets and approaches that can help your academic transition to college-level work.

As you will hear often from your first-year counselors, residential college deans, and other peers and advisors: **no matter how successful you were in high school, doing well at Yale requires making adjustments to how you approach your academic work.** The Academic Strategies Program helps you recognize when to make changes and offers practical strategies for working more effectively.

The program offers workshops and 1-1 mentoring sessions on topics like managing your time, cultivating faculty mentors, developing new ways of studying for exams, and more. For more details about our programming, please visit our [Academic Strategies website](#). Our workshops start September 9th, and our 1-1 Peer Mentoring schedule goes live on Monday, September 16. If you'd like to meet with a mentor before September 16, please contact Karin Gosselink, Director of Academic Strategies, at karin.gosselink@yale.edu.

And check out our Academic Strategies web guides for more information and advice on how to get a strong start at Yale:

[Surviving Shopping Period](#)

[Starting Smart: How to focus your academic efforts from your very first class](#)

[Academic Resources](#)

[Managing Your Finances at Yale](#)

Preparing Socially for Yale

Yalies often cite the people as the reason they choose Yale, noting that just as much learning, if not more, happens *outside* the classroom as does in it. At the heart of our strategy to support FGLI students is our commitment to ensure you can imagine yourself as part of a larger community, rooting for you through the challenges you'll face and celebrating you through your accomplishments. Here are a few reminders as you begin your social experience on campus, where we hope you will make a home and create fond memories with your own community that you will take with you past your four years:

- **You aren't alone.** Even the most independent people need a solid social support system, and the FGLI experience can easily give the misperception that there are few on campus that can relate to your experience coming to Yale as a first year. 20% of Yale's Class of 2022 were Pell-Grant eligible and 18% will be the first to graduate from a four-year college, so chances are if you are finding the elite culture a little jarring, there is a strong chance you are not alone.
 - Check out our [Facebook Page](#) and our [FGLI Alumni](#) to connect with current students and alum near you before the fall!
 - It doesn't hurt to say it again: our Community Initiative team is more than happy to listen to any related feelings you might be having.
- **Be prepared to be a bit uncomfortable - but remember that this isn't always a bad thing!** Much of the discomfort can come from the fact that you're meeting people from (literally) across the globe, all who are on this new journey with you. Part of the beauty of this experience is allowing yourself to meet people from different backgrounds & cultures, and social tendencies are part of this diversity. Take this as a learning opportunity, remembering that you are teaching others just as much as others are teaching you.
- **Wade in, don't jump in.** Part of what makes Yale so amazing is the extremely wide range of things to do outside of academics - but remember you only have so much free time! Without limiting your ability to explore new interests, we recommend identifying two extracurricular activities during your first term: one for yourself that continues on an existing interest or activity, and another to expand your horizons and exposes you to new experiences and communities.
 - Check out some of the existing student organizations for FGLI students! fgli.yalecollege.yale.edu/social-support/student-groups
- **Updating family & friends.** Communication with friends & family back home can be crucial during your transition into Yale. Starting the first week, the school year can become extremely busy. Make sure to schedule time to update your family and friends in advance, as this can quickly become something that falls aside among other priorities like classes and deadlines. (They'll appreciate it too!)
- **Reach out to our Ambassadors!** Our team of Ambassadors, student employees helping run programming and projects under the YCDO, are FGLI student themselves who are more than eager to befriend other FGLI peers. Learn more about them here: fgli.yalecollege.yale.edu/our-community/our-team