

To Budget or Not to Budget

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By Niyah Heaggans

During Homecoming season at Hampton University, with its week's worth of expensive parties and high-priced networking, budgeting poses a challenge for students.

The week kicks off with a carnival-style festival and ends with a football game. In between there is a fashion show, a step show, and off-campus parties. Of nine campus events, only four are free.

"My budget is tight. I'm a broke college student with no job," said Antionette Gerald, a freshman at Hampton University.



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This is Gerald's first homecoming and while she appreciates her parents giving her \$200 to use, that has to last the whole week. She plans to attend the football game, bonfire, concert, and one off-campus party.

That will cost \$45 but she will also have transportation costs, such as Lyft or Uber to Norfolk and Portsmouth, where the parties are being held.

"I want to have a good time and live my best college life," Gerald said.

Some students actually save during the summer just for Homecoming. Ajeya Hughes saved \$700 in addition to the \$100 allowance her parents give her each month.

Hughes plans on attending several events on campus and off. She's spent \$100 so far, which wasn't in her budget. In spite of under-budgeting, she's going to spend all she needs to have her best homecoming.

"I spent way more than I intended but, hey, it's college," Hughes said.

Despite going over budget, Hughes wants the full extent of "the authentic Hampton Homecoming experience," so the money is a minor hiccup in her plans.

Upperclassmen say they do a better job of budgeting based on their experience with previous homecomings. Junior Alexandra Howard has found

ways to save money by setting priorities.

Howard lives off campus. Without a meal plan, her main priority is buying groceries and paying her rent. She plans to do her own hair and nails to save money. She will also carpool with friends.

Howard has more free time to attend events this year because she is no longer in the band. As a member of the Marching Force, her Homecoming didn't start until the Saturday after the football game.

During Howard's freshman and sophomore year, the band held practice every day from 4:45 p.m. to 10 p.m. By the time the band was released, most events were either almost over or band members were too tired to attend.

By not being in the band she has no restrictions on events, therefore, there's no restrictions on money.

"It being my first year not in the band, I want to get the full undergrad experience and enjoy the HU family," Howard said.

The men on campus typically spend less on clothing during Homecoming, and some say they don't care as much as the women on campus.

For women, Homecoming is about getting dressed to the nines and being seen. The narrative for the men is just having a good time.

"I want to make it my best one, but I'm not too pressed about it," said Reginald Baker.

Baker is a senior who has little free cash and is also saving for graduation. He doesn't have a job, but he makes money providing rides for freshman and playing piano at a local church, and his grandparents help him out here and there.

He plans on attending two parties and the football game but complained about the rise in event ticket prices since his freshman year.

"Tickets cost way too much this year. A party that would be \$10 or \$15 was \$30 a month in advance," Baker said.

He saved money by doing his Homecoming shopping in the summer as well as going to thrift stores to score deals.

Homecoming season can be overwhelming for new students because college is a new experience and college homecomings are different from high school. Still, it's possible to have a good time on a budget, students say.

"I stayed way under my budget and just want to have a great time with my girls," said junior Ayanna Johnson

After reviewing past experiences, students say the key to homecoming budgeting is simply planning and partying within their means.

10 Budgeting Tips

1. Thrift shop for your new outfits
2. Buy your tickets when they raise the price once

3. Look for sales when online shopping
4. Mix and match clothes you already have
5. Choose two major parties to go to
6. Buy outfits you can wear more than once
7. Check group messages for ticket deals
8. Gather your friends and plan your week
9. Be reasonable
10. Party within your means