



2-18-2015

The Price I Didn't Know I'd Pay

Anonymous
Gettysburg College

Follow this and additional works at: <http://cupola.gettysburg.edu/surge>

 Part of the [Education Economics Commons](#), and the [Inequality and Stratification Commons](#)

Share feedback about the accessibility of this item.

Anonymous, "The Price I Didn't Know I'd Pay" (2015). *SURGE*. 237.
<http://cupola.gettysburg.edu/surge/237>

This is the author's version of the work. This publication appears in Gettysburg College's institutional repository by permission of the copyright owner for personal use, not for redistribution. Cupola permanent link: <http://cupola.gettysburg.edu/surge/237>

This open access blog post is brought to you by The Cupola: Scholarship at Gettysburg College. It has been accepted for inclusion by an authorized administrator of The Cupola. For more information, please contact cupola@gettysburg.edu.

The Price I Didn't Know I'd Pay

Abstract

\$255 textbook. \$52 clicker. \$150 fleece at Rosemont 310. \$1000+ dues to a sorority. These are as much a part of Gettysburg life as Servo Thanksgiving, chicken finger Friday, and Springfest.

Fitting into this lifestyle has been a daily struggle for the last four years. [*excerpt*]

Keywords

Surge, Surge Gettysburg, Gettysburg College, Center for Public Service, Class Economic Disparity, Education, Finances, Financial Aid

Disciplines

Education Economics | Inequality and Stratification

Comments

Surge is a student blog at [Gettysburg College](#) where systemic issues of justice matter. Posts are originally published at [surgegettysburg.wordpress.com](#) Through stories and reflection, these blog entries relate personal experiences to larger issues of equity, demonstrating that –isms are structural problems, not actions defined by individual prejudice. We intend to popularize justice, helping each other to recognize our biases and unlearn the untruths.

SURGE

[VERB] : to move suddenly or powerfully forward or upward

THE PRICE I DIDN'T KNOW I'D PAY

February 18, 2015

\$255 textbook. \$52 clicker. \$150 fleece at Rosemont 310. \$1000+ dues to a sorority. These are as much a part of Gettysburg life as Servo Thanksgiving, chicken finger Friday, and Springfest.

Fitting into this lifestyle has been a daily struggle for the last four years.

I come from a large family where money is tight. Even though I've become an expert at finding the best textbook deals at Amazon, I wonder each payday if I should consider picking up a fourth job. I have spent this year dividing my earnings to pay for graduate school applications, the GRE, and transportation to interviews. These investments in my future have added to a new dimension of stress and I worry that I haven't sent enough money home to help cover my family's monthly bills.

The financial strain is tough, but the issue lies deeper than what I can and cannot afford. It's about struggling to feel included and accepted into a campus culture that assumes all students have money or have parents to hit up.

We are encouraged to discuss race, gender, politics, and identity throughout our academic and curricular activities, yet I wonder why we don't talk about issues of class and economic disparity. I wonder why I still feel ashamed to tell my friends and professors, "No, I'm not excited to go home for break." Life would feel very different on campus if it was acceptable to say that going home means leaving the oasis of Gettysburg, with three guaranteed meals a day, a warm dorm room, and facilities only a phone call away. Going home means returning to a stressful situation where there's little heat, fear that the pipes may freeze, and a leaking roof.

But, it's not my limited resources, inability to wear Lilly Pulitzer or go out to eat with friends on a whim that get to me. I am not ashamed that it's tough for me and my family to make ends meet. It's those personal



experiences on top of the institutional examples that make revealing this part of my identity a challenge. It's the institutional assumption that everyone has access to money that is silencing and isolating.

It's the multiple faculty members who require a note from the Health Center to excuse my absence from class without acknowledging that some of us don't have the \$20 co-pay or the ability to Student Charge the visit to my parents. The cost of being sick is not just in the lecture missed, but the price of a valid excuse as well as the isolation felt by the assumption that obtaining a note from the Health Center is not a financial burden.

It's the fact that study abroad is touted from the time a student enters an Admissions Open House as accessible to all students. "Whatever you pay to go to Gettysburg, is what you'll pay to go abroad." While this is true, this mantra doesn't acknowledge that the upfront cost of purchasing a plane ticket in April for reimbursement only in September can be a deal-breaker.

It's the frequent question, "Why didn't you rush?" that assumes that just because my friends joined a sorority that I should be able to afford the hefty society's dues in addition to all the hidden costs of buying shirts for every event or outfits for pin wear.

It's the conversation I overheard at Bullet in which a student expressed embarrassment for receiving financial aid. Over 70% of students at Gettysburg receive some sort of financial aid, yet our campus culture makes it uncomfortable to acknowledge this reality.

While Gettysburg College has a long way to go to make college financially accessible to all students, my ability to attend is a testament to progress made. For this I am grateful. However, if I knew four years ago that "getting the dot" meant that I would endure a culture that assumes wealth and isolates those without, I may have reconsidered.

Let's move beyond the access conversation so we can name and address the institutional and social challenges that hinder low-income students on a daily basis.

Anonymous

This post is written anonymously not out of shame, but to protect my family's identity. To contact me, email surgegettysburg@gmail.com