Glossary: College Terms for Students and Parents

**ACG:** Academic Competitiveness Grant. Also referred to as the “get in, get out” grant, these grants are awarded in addition to the Pell grant to students who take the ‘rigorous academic core’ in high school and stay on track in college by completing a specific number of credits in their freshman and sophomore years.

**Accreditation:** Recognition of a college or university by any of the regional or national accrediting bodies, indicating that the institution has been judged to be meeting its objectives.

**ACT Assessment/Test:** American College Test is a group of tests required or recommended by most colleges as part of the admission process. The tests measure educational development in English, mathematics, reading and science reasoning. ACT scores range from 1-36.

**Admissions Officer/Counselor/Representative:** A professional staff member in the admissions or enrollment services office who provides information and advice for prospective applicants, parents, counselors and others.

**Admissions Standards/Entrance Requirements:** Academic requirements for admission to Montana’s 4-year public colleges based on GPA, test scores, writing proficiency score, and completing the Regent’s College Prep courses.

**Advanced Placement (AP):** A test given to high school students, usually at the end of their junior or senior year, after they have completed certain AP or Honors courses. Many colleges give advanced standing and/or credit for these tests if a student earns a score of 3, 4, or 5.

**Aid package:** A combination of financial aid (possibly including a scholarship, grant, loan or work) determined by a college financial aid office.

**American Indian Fee Waiver:** This waiver covers tuition and registrations fees at any MUS institution for Indian students who meet specific eligibility requirements.

**Associate Degree:** A degree granted by a college or university for a program that requires two years of full-time study.

**Associate of Applied Science Degree:** A degree granted by a college or university for a program that requires two years of full-time study in a technical, hands-on program.

**Bachelor Degree:** A degree granted by a college or university after satisfactory completion of a four-year program.

**Calendar:** The system by which the institution structures its school year. Three common types are semester, quarter and the trimester.

**Catalog:** A general reference publication providing information about the school. It may also be referred to as the Bulletin or Register.
**Class Schedule:** A publication containing information on the courses and sections to be offered for a given term, including names of instructors, days, hours, places of meeting and credit designation.

**COA:** Cost of Attendance. The total estimated amount, including tuition, fees, books, transportation and personal expenses, that it will cost to go to college. It is usually expressed as a yearly figure and is used to calculate financial need.

**College Goal Sunday:** An event held in February to assist students and families in seeking federal financial aid by completing and submitting the FAFSA form.

**College of Technology:** A two-year, technical college affiliated with either The University of Montana—Missoula or Montana State University—Bozeman. COTs may offer general education transfer courses in addition to technical programs.

**Community College:** Montana has three community colleges (Flathead Valley Community College in Kalispell; Miles Community College in Miles City; and Dawson Community College in Glendive) which are funded and governed by their local communities. The Montana community colleges are associated with the Montana University System.

**Credit-hour:** A unit of academic credit that often represents one hour of class time per week for a period of study.

**Deferment:** 1) if referring to admission, deferment permits an accepted student to postpone enrollment for a certain length of time; 2) if referring to financial aid, deferment is a postponement or delay or payment obligation on a student loan.

**Deposit:** A fee payable within a specified date of acceptance for admission verifying their intention to enroll. The fee may or may not be refundable.

**Early Action:** An application whereby you apply early, receive early notification, but you do not need to accept the admission offer prior to May 1.

**EFC:** Expected Family Contribution. The amount that your family is expected to contribute toward your education.

**Faculty:** The person at a college or university who is engaged in teaching, research, service or related administrative responsibilities.

**FERPA:** Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974. A federal law designed to protect the privacy of education records, to establish the right of students to inspect and review their education records, and to provide guidelines for the correction or inaccurate data.

**Fee Waiver:** Permits eligible low-income students to submit college applications or test registration forms without the fee. The waiver may be granted by a high school or college.
Glossary: College Terms for Students and Parents

**FAFSA**: Free Application for Federal Student Aid. The primary form used to determine your eligibility for financial aid.

**Grade Point Average (GPA)**: GPA is figured on class letter grades (A=4, B=3, C=2, etc.) multiplied by credits, divided by total credit hours taken.

**Grant**: An award of money which does not have to be repaid. Typically grants are based on financial need. For example, the amount of a **PELL grant** is determined by a student’s **EFC**.

**Honors program**: Any program offering opportunity for superior students to enrich their educational experience through independent, advanced, or accelerated study.

**Loan**: Borrowed money that must be repaid with interest.

**Major**: The subject of study in which the student chooses to specialize; a series of related courses, taken primarily in the junior and senior years.

**MUS**: The Montana University System (MUS) consists of 11 publicly-funded colleges and universities. The MUS is governed by the Montana Board of Regents and the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education (OCHE).

**Open Admissions**: Two-year campuses of the Montana University System (community colleges and colleges of technology) maintain an open admissions policy. High school graduation (or the equivalent) and proof of immunization are required for admission.

**Orientation**: Events planned by the college to help students adjust to college life.

**Pre-professional**: Courses which prepare students for later specialized or technical training. For example, “premed” includes pre-professional courses in chemistry and biology which are prerequisite for later specialization in medicine.

**Prerequisite**: The beginning course in a series. It must be taken and passed before enrolling in the next class.

**Private colleges/universities**: These institutions are funded by student tuition and private donations rather than state and federal money. Montana’s private colleges are Rocky Mountain College in Billings, Carroll College in Helena, and the University of Great Falls in Great Falls.

**Regent’s College Prep Courses**: Fourteen courses that students who plan to attend a four-year Montana college must take from 9th to 12th grade.

**Registrar**: The administrative officer of a college or university who maintains the academic records.

**Residency status**: In public institutions, the classification of a student as a resident or non-resident of the state in which the school is located.

**Rigorous Academic Core**: Seventeen courses that students take to meet admission standards at Montana’s 4-year colleges without taking the ACT or SAT test. The
Glossary: College Terms for Students and Parents

rigorous core also qualifies students for consideration for the Academic Competitiveness Grant (ACG).

**Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP):** A financial aid requirement which requires students to pass 2/3 of attempted credit hours. After four college semesters, a student must have a 2.0 GPA.

**SAT:** Scholastic Aptitude Test is a test of verbal and mathematical abilities given by the College Entrance Examination Board. The test is required or recommended by many colleges as part of their admission process.

**Scholarships:** Non-repayable awards to students based on merit or merit plus need.

**Semester:** Half of an academic year, usually fourteen to sixteen weeks.

**Student Aid Report (SAR):** The information you will receive approximately 2-4 weeks after your FAFSA has been processed. It will report your Expected Family Contribution (EFC).

**Student Support Services (SSS):** Funded by a federal grant, these offices are located on college campuses to provide academic and emotional support for first-generation, low-income college students.

**Transcript:** The official record of high school or college courses and grades, generally required as part of the college application.

**Tribal College:** Federally recognized and tribally governed colleges offering 2- and 4-year degree programs. Seven tribal college are located in Montana—one on each Reservation.

**Verification:** A random selection of FAFSA forms are selected by the Department of Education to be verified.

**Wait list:** A term used by colleges to describe a process in which they may initially delay offering or denying admission, but rather extend the possibility of admission in the future.

**Work-study:** Money you earn while enrolled in school that will help pay your educational expenses. Specific jobs, both on- and off-campus can qualify for work-study positions.