



Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education

Montana Resident Undergraduate Student Financial Aid – Montana Access Scholarship

Montana Access Scholarship – Eligibility Criteria and Procedures

Statutory authority: 20-26-102 Montana Codes Annotated (MCA)

The purpose of the Montana Access Scholarship Program is to provide access to higher education by establishing a financial aid program available to Montana resident postsecondary students and adult learners who demonstrate financial need. This program is funded by a 1:1 match; funds are raised by the Montana University System (MUS) Campus Foundations and then matched by the state of Montana, up to the amount appropriated by the legislature each biennium. The Montana Access Scholarship will be awarded in accordance with Board of Regents Policy 940.8 – *Montana Resident Undergraduate Student Financial Aid*, and the following eligibility criteria and procedures.

- A. A student is eligible to receive a Montana Access Scholarship providing the student:
1. is a Montana resident pursuant to the Board of Regents Policy 940.1 – Residency Policy;
 2. is an undergraduate student enrolled at a qualifying campus in a certificate, associate, or first bachelor's degree program;
 3. has filed a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and is Pell Grant Eligible;
 4. is enrolled full-time (12+ credits/semester); **OR** part-time (6+ credits/semester) in a certificate or 2-year program **AND** is 25+ years of age;
 5. is meeting Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) as determined by the campus; and
 6. meets the federal Title IV selective service registration requirements.
- B. AWARD AMOUNTS
1. An applicant who is awarded a Montana Access Scholarship in the fall semester by the Financial Aid Office at their campus, will receive \$1,000 for the academic year, as long as the student continues to meet the requirements of Section A (\$500 fall and \$500 spring).
 2. If a student is awarded funds in the fall but does not qualify for the spring award due to non-enrollment or failing to meet the requirements of Section A, the campus should award the unused \$500 to another qualifying student (spring semester only).
 3. Recipients may appeal termination or non-renewal of awards directly to the financial aid office at the home campus.
- C. ELIGIBLE INSTITUTIONS

Foundations at the following MUS campuses will be eligible to raise funds toward the match requirement for purposes of the Montana Access Scholarship:

1. A campus of the Montana University System (MUS), as defined in § 20-25-201;

2. A Montana community college, defined and organized as provided in § 20-15-101;
3. A Montana Access Scholarship is not transferable between eligible institutions.

E. AUTHORIZATION TO DISTRIBUTE FUNDS

1. Except for funds donated from private sources, the obligation for funding the Montana Access Scholarships is an obligation of the State. The Board of Regents is not required to provide a scholarship to an eligible student without a line item appropriation to the Board for this purpose.
2. State appropriation and Foundation matching fund amounts will determine the number of Montana Access Scholarships to be awarded by each eligible institution.
3. Funds from a Montana Access Scholarship must be used toward the cost of attendance at a qualifying postsecondary institution. Funds for the Montana Access Scholarship will be distributed directly to the institution.

F. ADMINISTRATION

1. OCHE will develop and maintain appropriate procedures that enable the Montana Access Scholarships to be administered in accordance with MCA and Board policy.
2. OCHE is charged with the central administration of the Montana Access Scholarship and is responsible for the disbursement of appropriated funds to each MUS campus.
3. The MUS campuses are charged with the execution of the individual student awards according to the established eligibility criteria set forth in the operating procedures.

G. REPORTS

1. OCHE shall submit an annual report to the education interim committee provided for in § 5-5-224 MCA regarding the Montana Access Scholarship Program pursuant to 20-26-102(2)(c). The report will include, but not be limited to the number of access-based financial aid recipients, the amount and type of access-based financial aid awarded, the effect of access-based financial aid on the retention and credential completion by recipients of access-based financial aid, and any measurable impacts on the Montana workforce.