

College Application Weeks

Sept. 22nd - Oct. 3rd 2025



College Application Weeks (CAW) provide high school seniors the opportunity to learn about Montana colleges and universities and complete a college application during the school day, thereby opening the door for many students who might not otherwise take this important step toward college.

Participating high school seniors not only have an opportunity to apply to a college, but **also can utilize the central application at ApplyMontana.mus.edu to apply to any school in the Montana University System for FREE.** Montana's tribal colleges and private universities will also offer free applications during College Application Weeks.

Please use the information and resources in this toolkit to create meaningful College Application Weeks in your school during the 2025-26 school year.



EVENT IDEAS

MPSEOC College & Career Fairs

The Montana College & Career Fair connects students with hundreds of colleges, universities, military branches, and career representatives—all in one place—giving them access to opportunities and resources they may not even know exist. With **300+** vendors participating statewide, it's a unique chance for students to explore diverse pathways and gather valuable guidance for their future.

College Gear Giveaway

Most colleges love giving away swag! Reach out to any Admissions offices for items you can use as prizes or incentives to get students excited about applying. Here are some contacts for MT schools:

<u>Montana State University</u>	<u>UM Western</u>	<u>Dawson Community College</u>
<u>University of Montana</u>	<u>MSU Northern</u>	<u>Flathead Valley Community College</u>
<u>Montana Tech</u>	<u>Rocky Mountain College</u>	<u>Miles Community College</u>
<u>MSU Billings</u>	<u>University of Providence</u>	<u>Carroll College</u>

College Pride Activities

There are multiple ways to build excitement with the use of your community. You can:

- Create a **college bulletin board** that provides details for colleges in your state.
- Establish a College Pride Day where **everyone wears college colors/college gear to school**.
- Encourage teachers, staff and community members to **show their college pride on their classroom doors or windows**.
- Create a **photo booth** at your event for students to show off that they applied.
- Have fun with **college trivia questions during morning announcements** or have students play **Human Bingo** to learn more about the college-going experiences of your staff.
- Set a **goal for application submissions** and have your students keep track of their progress by creating a bulletin board where they can share their news.

Get Community Support

Announcing your events through social media and local media coverage can build momentum and collaboration in your community.

- Having local business partnerships could allow for businesses to provide **treats or discounts** for students who show proof of an application submission.
- You could also invite recent grads to share their journeys and advice with an **alumni panel**.

Designated CAW Time

Hold college application workshops during advisory, homeroom, or senior events so students can get staff guidance and peer support, with resources also available for non-college options. If staff are limited, consider recruiting community volunteers to help.

“College & Career Corner”

Transform a corner of the Library or Counseling Office into a ‘College Corner’ filled with guides, brochures, and eye-catching decorations to spark curiosity about life after graduation.

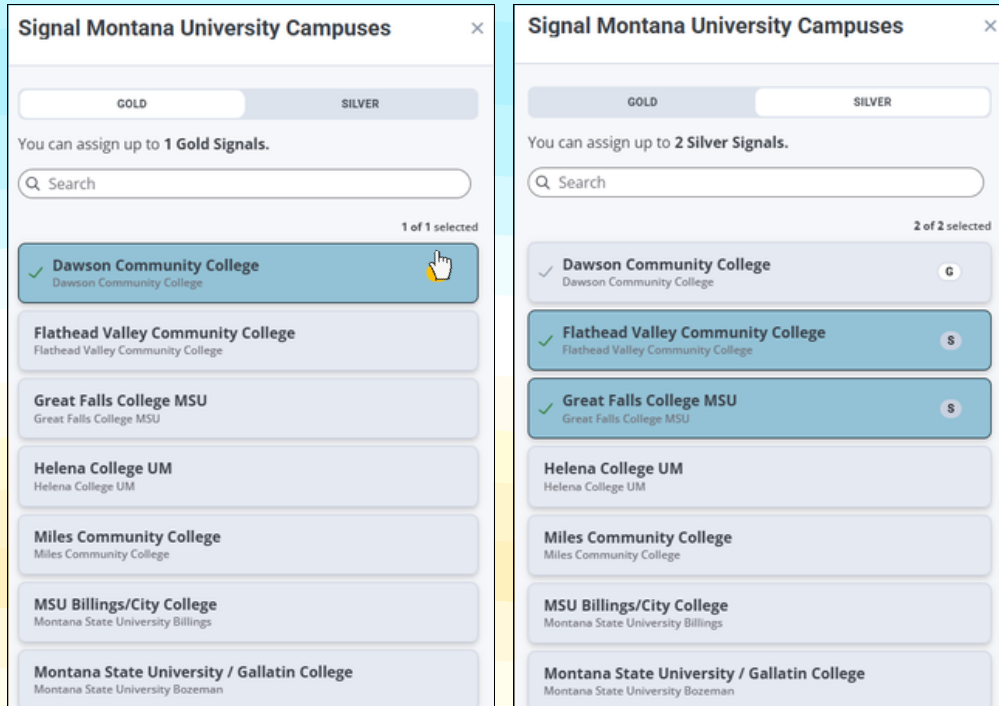
After-school Application Party

Create an after-school Application Party with music, food, and swag, where seniors can work on college applications, get help with essays (if needed), financial aid, and the FAFSA. Seniors could also connect with underclassmen in a Peer Buddy Zone to share goals, majors, and “what’s next” after graduation to provide an “expert” in the room.

Updates to Apply Montana

The Apply Montana application has numerous updates for this year's cycle.

In addition to a new look and streamlined user experience, applicants now have the option of ranking the schools on their application in the SIGNALS section.



An updated tutorial for Apply Montana is available at mus.edu/college-access/.

2-YEAR PROGRAM OPTIONS

Alternatives to the traditional 4-year college path are becoming more popular among students. The following resources can help students navigate shorter degree and certification pathways in the Montana University System.

You might share these **MUS 2 Years or Less flyers** so students can quickly view options based on career clusters.

Students can do similar exploration through the **Career Pathways**, **Career Preferences**, and **Sprint Degrees** pages at applymontana.mus.edu.

Students can also search for shorter college options using the Degree Type filter on the **Program Finder** at applymontana.mus.edu.

CONTACTING CAMPUSES

Partnering with Higher Ed: A Simple Way to Boost Student Success

Reaching out to colleges and universities can be one of the easiest and most effective ways to increase support for your students. Most higher ed institutions are eager to collaborate with local schools and can provide a wide range of resources at little to no cost. For example, many admissions offices will happily send **free swag** (pens, t-shirts, pennants, and more) that you can use to build a college-going culture in your school.

Beyond giveaways, higher ed partners are often ready to provide **hands-on financial aid support**, including assistance with **FAFSA completion workshops**—a critical step in helping students access scholarships and aid. Many colleges can also provide opportunities for families to participate and feel connected during the transition to higher education through information nights.

In addition, colleges can share **tools and resources that promote academic success and readiness**—everything from application tips to mentoring connections and insights about transitioning after high school. By tapping into these partnerships, you can create a stronger culture of college-going, reduce barriers for students, and expand the network of support that helps them thrive beyond graduation.

In summary:

Ask for Swag – Contact admissions offices for free items (pens, pennants, t-shirts) to use as incentives or decorations.

Host FAFSA Help Sessions – Invite financial aid staff to co-lead workshops with you or offer virtual support for families.

Plan Family Engagement Nights – Partner with colleges to offer sessions that walk families through what to expect after high school, how to navigate common first-year challenges, and simply ways they can support their student's success in college.

Set Up Student Workshops – Request reps to lead sessions on essay writing, applications, or transitioning to college life.

Create a College Presence on Campus – Use provided brochures, guides, and swag to build a “College Corner” or bulletin board.

Leverage Alumni Connections – Ask colleges to connect you with recent grads who can share authentic student perspectives.

FAFSA ASSISTANCE

College financial aid offices are often very open to partnering with school staff, offering expertise to help students complete the FAFSA and understand their aid options. Many are also willing to join evening events, providing on-the-ground support for families and reducing the burden on counselors to guide the process alone.

How Counselors Can Utilize This Partnership:

- Reach out to local college financial aid offices early in the fall to ask about availability.
- Invite staff to co-host or present at FAFSA nights or family support events.
- Request materials (flyers, handouts, checklists) you can share with students.
- Ask about translation services or resources for families who may need additional support.
- Build an annual partnership—many colleges are happy to return each year once a connection is made.

By tapping into higher ed expertise, counselors can simplify a complicated process, strengthen family engagement, and provide students with direct access to the people who understand financial aid best.

ANOTHER PATHWAY

Military Academies: A Path to Serve, Learn, and Lead

What is a Military Academy?

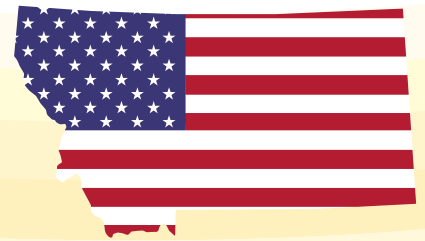
Colleges run by the US government that combine world-class education, leadership, and military training. Students graduate as commissioned officers in the Army, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard or Merchant Marine.

Why Choose This Path?

- No Tuition or Loans - education fully funded
- Free Housing, Meals, & Healthcare
- Guaranteed Employment after Graduation
- Build Leadership, Discipline & Teamwork
- Strong Academics in STEM & Beyond

How to Apply:

1. Choose Your Academy
Army (West Point), Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard, Merchant Marine
2. Confirm Eligibility
 - US Citizen
 - Age 17-22 by July 1 of entry year
 - Unmarried, no dependents
 - Social Security number
3. Apply for Nomination
 - Most academies require a nomination (MT deadline by **Nov. 1**)
 - Coast Guard Academy: no nomination needed
4. Complete Exams & Applications
 - Medical exam & Candidate Fitness Assessment
 - Submit transcripts, test scores, essays, recommendations, interviews



Montana Nomination Contacts

- Senator Tim Sheehy
- Senator Steve Daines
- Representative Ryan Zinke
- Representative Troy Downing
- Vice President JD Vance (cannot nominate for Marines)

Key Dates

- **February 1** - Start watching for Service Academy Days in school bulletins and online
- **April 1** - Application acceptance begins for Service Academy nominations
- **June 1** - Suggested deadline to take the SAT or ACT
- **November 1** - Deadline to have all nomination materials received by Senator Daines' Missoula office
- **December 1 - 3** - Selection Board interviews conducted; final nomination decisions made and communicated shortly after



Need more info?

Learn more at
Apply Montana



AN EARLY START

Course selection is a great way for high school students to prepare for college.

Make sure your students are aware of the **MUS College Preparatory Program** and **MUS Rigorous Core Requirements** so their high school classes get them ready for their post-graduation goals. Meeting these requirements can make students eligible for selective admissions and financial aid opportunities.

MUS also provides affordable dual enrollment through **One-Two-Free**. This program offers **two dual enrollment courses, or up to six credits**, through the MUS to all eligible students **for FREE**. One-Two-Free also allows students who demonstrate hardship to apply for a scholarship to cover tuition for additional Dual Enrollment courses.



Get students started at [**mus.edu/dualenroll/begin.html**](https://mus.edu/dualenroll/begin.html).

RECOGNIZING YOUR EFFORTS

In partnership with the American College Access Campaign (ACAC) and the Montana Post Secondary Educational Opportunity Council (MPSEOC), OCHE will be relaunching the **School of Excellence** award, given to the Montana school that best exhibits the College Access Arc of Events mission of working to ensure all Montana students have an equal opportunity to attend and succeed in college.

Each school can work toward the School of Excellence by participating in the 2025-26 College Access Arc of Events (College Application Weeks, FAFSA Completion Month, and Decision Days) and other efforts helping students consider and reach their postsecondary goals. A great way to start is by attending MPSEOC's College and Career Fairs circuit and Counselor Update this fall.

OCHE's College Access Team will reach out in the spring so you can share how you've helped your students during the 2025-26 school year. After gathering your feedback, the Team will work with MPSEOC to determine and announce this year's School of Excellence.