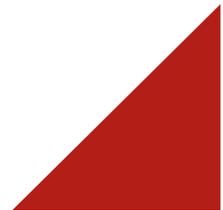


MONTANA FINANCIAL

AID



**A SENIOR'S GUIDE ON
WAYS TO SAVE AND
PAY FOR COLLEGE**





COLLEGE IS AFFORDABLE!

Deciding to go to college is one of the best financial investments you can make. Students who earn a college degree earn hundreds of thousands of dollars more over a lifetime than those who don't. Attending college in Montana is one of the best bargains in the nation! Tuition at our public and private colleges and universities is much lower than at similar schools in other states. Plus, with your talents, we'd love for you to stick around and make Montana a better place!

Dream. Believe. Achieve.

Most Montana students receive some form of financial aid to help pay for college. Read this guide carefully to learn how you can begin finding and applying for money to pay for your education.

Many students use financial aid to cover college costs. Grants, work-study, and low-interest loans help make college affordable. Financial aid is available from a variety of sources for college, career school, graduate school, and professional school.

The first step toward getting federal aid for college is to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Completing the FAFSA is free and easy, and will give you access to the largest source of financial aid needed to pay for school. The good news? The FAFSA is simpler than ever!

APPLYING FOR AID



1

Create an FSA ID

Students, and parents, need to create an FSA ID online at fafsa.gov. The FSA ID is used to confirm your identity when accessing your financial aid information.

2

Complete the FAFSA

The FAFSA stands for FREE Application for Financial Student Aid. The FAFSA is available online at fafsa.gov on October 1. Paper copies of the FAFSA available by calling 1-800-4-FED-AID.

3

Select the Correct FAFSA

Seniors who are planning to attend college in the fall, after high school graduation, should complete the academic year FAFSA.

4

Choose Your Schools

Students must list at least one college to receive FAFSA info. The schools listed will use your FAFSA to determine the types and amounts of financial aid you may receive. You can list up to 10 schools on the FAFSA to receive your results electronically.

5

Make it Official

Before your FAFSA can be processed, you'll need to sign and submit it by using your FSA ID. **You have to fill out the FAFSA every year you're in school to stay eligible for your aid.**



List all schools you're considering, even if you haven't applied yet. Schools will process your FAFSA after you have been accepted.

DOCUMENTS



What information do I need?

1. The FAFSA asks for information about you (your name, date of birth, address, etc.) and about your financial situation. Here is what you'll need to fill out the FAFSA:

2. FSA ID

Your FSA ID* – In order to sign your FAFSA electronically, you'll need a FSA ID. Get yours at fsaid.ed.gov.

3. Social security number*

It can be found on your social security card, W-2 forms, bank statements or legal resident card.

4. Driver's License

If you don't have a driver's license, then don't worry about this step.

6. Records of untaxed income/assets

This includes a whole bunch of variables that may or may not apply to you, like child support received, interest income, and veterans non-education benefits. Includes savings and checking account balances, and investments like stocks, bonds and real estate.

5. Tax Records

Use income records from the tax year **two years prior** to the academic year for which you are applying.

The FAFSA does allow you to automatically import your tax information into the FAFSA using the IRS Data Retrieval Tool. Using the Data Retrieval tool will reduce the likelihood of your FAFSA being selected for verification – saving you and your family time.

*If you're a dependent student, you will need this information for your guardian(s) as well.

7. FAFSA Deadlines

Montana priority:

December 1st

Montana final:

April 15th

Federal final:

June 30th

NEXT STEPS



I submitted
my FAFSA.
Now what?

Finding Sources of Financial Aid

Very few students get all of their financial aid for college from one source. When you are searching for financial aid, consider a variety of options.

The Federal Government offers over \$150 billion in aid each year. Visit studentaid.gov to learn more about federal student aid. Federal loans have fixed interest rates. Each year they change the rate but it usually stays between 4–6%. It adds up!

Your FAFSA information is shared with the colleges you list on the application. The financial aid office at each school uses your information to figure out how much federal student aid you qualify for. If the school has its own private funds to use for financial aid, it might use your FAFSA information to determine your eligibility for that aid as well.

Information from the FAFSA helps determine your Expected Family Contribution (EFC). Once your FAFSA has been processed, each school will send you an Award Letter informing you of the type and the amount of financial aid that you may be eligible to receive.



Planning &
Choosing a
College.

websites

MONTANA UNIVERSITY SYSTEM – MUS.EDU
Information for students and parents about enrolling and succeeding in the Montana University System.
BIG FUTURE – BIGFUTURE.COLLEGEBOARD.ORG
Find the best college fit for you, explore careers and related majors, and learn how to pay for it.
MPSEOC – MONTANACOLLEGES.COM
Search for information about Montana colleges.

COLLEGES offer financial aid programs to students. Visit the financial aid webpages of colleges you are considering, and apply to all of the scholarships you may be eligible for.

GROW YOUR FINANCIAL AID KNOWLEDGE



LOANS

Money borrowed from a bank, government, or private lending company. A loan must be paid back. Loans offered by the government often have lower interest rates and can be paid back over an long period of time.

SCHOLARSHIPS

Awarded to students based on financial need, academic achievements, community service, athletic talent, band, and/or other factors. Scholarships do not have to be repaid and can come from a variety of places, like government, colleges, and private companies.

WORK-STUDY

Sets you up with paid part-time employment while enrolled in college and can help you pay part of your college costs. You can apply for work study by submitting the FAFSA.

GRANTS

Free money - doesn't have to be repaid. Grants come from the state and federal government as well as colleges. Grants are based on financial need or family circumstances.

SUBSIDIZED LOANS

Subsidized loans are available to students based on financial need. These loans have a fixed interest rate and no payments are made while you are in school

UNSUBSIDIZED LOANS

Unsubsidized loans are available to all students, regardless of financial need. Accrues interest immediately. You submit interest payments while you are in school.

PARENT PLUS LOANS

Helps cover college costs. Parents of dependent students must meet credit requirements and are responsible for paying the loan back. Plus loans have fixed interest rates.

LOAN CONSOLIDATION

Allows you to consolidate (combine) multiple federal loans into one. The result is a single monthly payment. Research the pros and cons to consolidating your loans.

MONTANA SCHOLARSHIPS & AID

SEARCHING FOR SCHOLARSHIPS

It's never too early to begin searching for scholarships! You should plan to begin your scholarship search at least a year before starting college. To find scholarships ask your GEAR UP Liaison, high school counselor, or financial aid staff at the post secondary school you wish to attend. You can also search for them online.

Montana high school students have the ability to use Scholly to find the scholarships they qualify for in seconds, without sign-ups or long forms. For free access go to reachhighermontana.org/scholarships and begin your search!

MONTANA GEAR UP MESA PROGRAM

The GEAR UP Matched Education Savings Account (MESA) program helps hardworking students with limited incomes save for college expenses. For every \$1 saved, the GEAR UP MESA program matches it with \$5.

Requirements: Be a member of a household with annual income under a certain level and have earned income.

1. Be enrolled at a MT GEAR UP school.
2. Make monthly deposits of at least \$25 and for at least six months.
3. Participate in finance training.
4. Maintain contact with program reps.

MONTANA STEM SCHOLARSHIP

How much is the award?

Students who meet the requirements earn \$1,000 the first year and \$2,000 the second year (contingent upon funding).

How do I apply?

Submit an application online, available after December 1 - www.mus.edu/scholarships

Deadline: Applications are due March 15, 2017.

Eligibility Requirements: Graduate high school

- Be a resident of the state of Montana.
- Be accepted by an eligible Montana campus.
- Have a cumulative GPA of at least 3.25.
- Complete four years of college prep math and three years of college prep science.
- Declare a STEM or Healthcare major (visit www.mus.edu/scholarships for a list).
- Enroll in and complete 15 credits a semester.

NATIONAL MERIT SEMI-FINALIST SCHOLAR

Tuition shall be waived for Montana students receiving a National Merit Semi-Finalist Scholarship. This scholarship will be valid through the first consecutive two semesters of enrollment, excluding credits earned prior to graduation. The holder of the scholarship must enter one of the Montana University System campuses within nine months after high school graduation. Must maintain high academic standings. The scholarship is not transferable, and becomes void three years from the date of issue.

How much is the award?

This scholarship waives the cost of tuition, excluding fees, at a Montana University Campus.

How do I apply?

For info or questions email: mtscholarship@montana.edu.

MONTANA SCHOLARSHIPS & AID

AMERICAN INDIAN TUITION WAIVER

The Montana Board of Regents adopted this policy in order to increase access to higher education for resident American Indian students. The policy requires that the campuses of the Montana University System waive tuition for eligible undergraduate American Indian students.

How much is the award? This policy allows only waivers of tuition. Fees, program fees, and other charges are not waived by this policy.

How do I apply: Complete an American Indian Tuition Waiver application form. This form is available at each financial aid office or online at the American Indian/Minority Achievement website: mus.edu/aima.

Eligibility Requirements: Persons who have one-fourth (1/4) American Indian blood or more, or are enrolled members of a recognized Indian tribe that is located within the state of Montana are eligible for a waiver upon demonstration of financial need. "Financial need" is defined as having at least one dollar of remaining need after subtracting Expected Family Contribution, all Title IV grant aid, and institutional aid from the cost of attendance.

MUS HONOR SCHOLRSHIP

- Must graduate from a high school accredited by the Montana Board of Public Education.
- Must have been enrolled at a high school for at least three years prior to graduation.
- Must have a cumulative GPA of at least 3.4 at the end of the 7th semester
- Must be on track to meet the Montana Board of Regents Rigorous Core Requirements.
- Must take the ACT or SAT test by Dec. 31
- Must be a U.S. citizen and Montana resident.

How much is the award?

The average value at a 4-year Montana campus is \$4,000 a year or \$16,000 for four years.

How do I apply?

Students need to apply and be accepted by one of the eligible campuses. Submit the application online, available after December 1, at www.mus.edu/scholarships.

REACH HIGHER MONTANA SCHOLARSHIP

Reach Higher Montana and Graduation Matters Montana (GMM) Circle of Success Scholarship applicants must be Montana residents who will be attending a Montana college or university at least half-time in the coming academic year

Eligibility Requirements:

- Graduating seniors who are attending a GMM school or serve on the GMM Student Advisory Board.
- Plan to attend a Montana university or college at least half-time.
- Maintain a 2.5 GPA.

How much is the award?

Students receive a \$1,000 scholarship toward their tuition.

How do I apply?

For more information visit reachhighermontana.org.

Deadline

Applications are due March 1 of each year.

Terms Cafe



Financial aid vocabulary can be challenging.
Here's a list to help

AWARD LETTER Document you receive from a college that explains the terms of the financial aid that the college is offering you. The information includes the types and amounts of financial aid offered, what you're expected to do to keep the award, and a deadline for accepting the award

COST OF ATTENDANCE The total amount of college expenses before financial aid. Cost of attendance includes money spent on tuition and fees, room and board, books and supplies, and living expenses.

DEFERMENT A postponement of payment on a loan under certain conditions. During the postponement, interest does not accrue on Direct Subsidized Loans, Subsidized Federal Stafford Loans, and Federal Perkins Loans. All other federal student loans that are deferred will continue to accrue interest. Any unpaid interest that is accrued during the deferment period will capitalize.

DEPENDENT STUDENT A student who does not meet any of the criteria for an independent student. An independent student is one of the following: at least 24 years old, married, a graduate or professional student, a veteran, a member of the armed forces, an orphan, a ward of the court, someone with legal dependents other than a spouse, an emancipated minor, or someone who is homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

EXPECTED FAMILY CONTRIBUTION A measure of your family's financial strength. States and colleges use this number to help determine your financial aid award. The EFC is calculated using information you supply about your family's financial circumstances on FAFSA.

FINANCIAL AID PACKAGE The total amount of financial aid (federal and non-federal) a student is offered by a college or career school. The school's financial aid staff combines various forms of aid into a "package" to help meet a student's education costs.

INTEREST A loan expense charged for the use of borrowed money that is calculated as a percentage of the unpaid principal amount of the loan ($\text{principal} \times \text{interest rate} \times n = \text{interest}$).

CAPITALIZATION/PRINCIPAL Capitalized interest on student loans increases the total amount you have to pay back on your loan principal. It's unpaid interest that added to your student loan amount after periods when you don't make payments. The principal is the base amount you owe on your loan. Interest and capitalization are additions to your principal.

MERIT AID Financial aid given to students based on their personal achievements. Most scholarships are considered merit aid, as they are generally awarded for success in school, the arts, athletics, band, or another area.

NEED-BASED FINANCIAL AID Financial aid (grants, scholarships, loans, and work-study opportunities) given to students because they and their families are not able to pay the full cost of attending a certain college. This is the most common type of financial aid.

PROMISSORY NOTE The binding legal document that you must sign when you get a federal student loan. It lists the terms and conditions under which you agree to repay the loan and explains your rights and responsibilities as a borrower.

STUDENT AID REPORT The report sent to your family after you submit the (FAFSA) that tells you what your Expected Family Contribution (EFC) is. Read carefully.

TUITION WAIVERS Tuition waivers are non-cash scholarships. The Montana University System offers various fee waivers to students who meet specific criteria. Tuition waivers, however, do not cover registration, mandatory class, or other miscellaneous fees.



MONTANA



GEAR UP