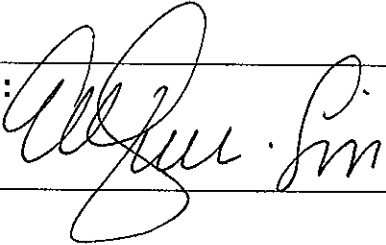


## Form A: Title Page

### Montana College Access Challenge Grant Sub-Grant Application Coversheet

<b>Institution:</b> Helena College University of Montana	
<b>Project Director:</b> Valerie Curtin	<b>Telephone:</b> 406-447- 6913
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<b>Finance or Business Office Contact, Name &amp; Title:</b> Russ Fillner, Assistant Dean/Fiscal & Plant	
<b>E-mail:</b> russ.fillner@umhelena.edu	<b>Telephone:</b> 406-447- 6917
<b>Certification by authorizing official (V.P. of Student Services or equivalent)</b>	
<b>Name:</b> Elizabeth Stearns-Simms	<b>Title:</b> Assistant Dean of Student Services
<b>Signature:</b> 	

## **Project Abstract**

Financial literacy has become a substantial topic during these hard economic times, with subjects like savings, credit, and budgeting at the forefront. As the Montana Board of Regents Affordability Taskforce has reported, the average Montana student loan debt is also on the rise. On a more macro level, student loan debt is EVERYONE's business. There will be approximately \$112.7 billion in new student loans issued for fiscal year 2013 in the nation. The Congressional Budget Office estimates just on the loans issued in fiscal year 2013, it will cost tax payers \$34.8 billion in default collections. With students struggling to pay tuition, and accruing large debt, many institutions are seeking ways to provide their students the basics of money management and inculcate financial literacy. Clarity, simplicity and interactivity are essential components to accomplish this mission.

Helena College wants to prepare students for a strong financial future and successful loan repayment. In order to accomplish this, Helena College has created a Financial Literacy/Default Prevention Team consisting of several leaders (students, faculty and administrators) from all aspects of the college. Financial Literacy is the key to students obtaining not only their educational dreams, but financial stability as well. With this, future generations are assured the opportunity to fund their personal educational goals.

Helena College aspires to increase all students' knowledge regarding financial literacy through various avenues. In order to truly impact our students, we will identify the profile of the student body as well as characteristics of at risk students. This will allow Helena College to create targeted, useful and measureable interventions that will produce the greatest impact. Just as Jeff Baker, Department of Education, has stated regarding 'getting the right money, to the right people, at the right time' in regards to financial aid; Helena College wants to get the right information, in the right media, to the right people, at the right time for financial literacy.

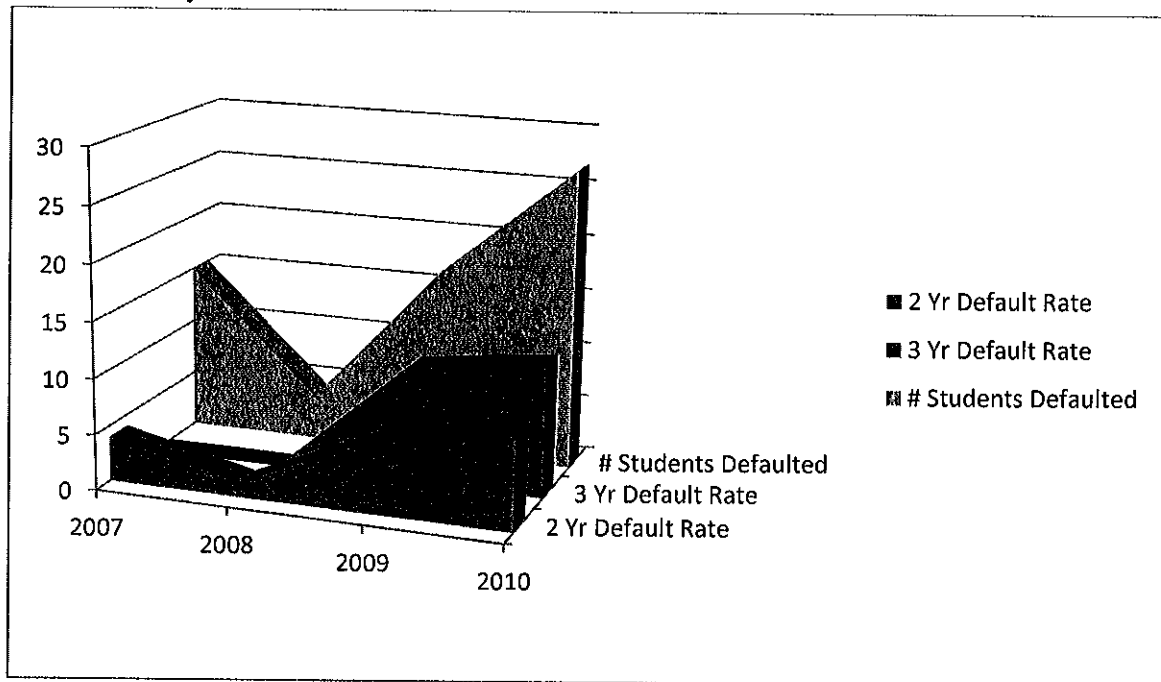
Once there is a well-established financial literacy program on campus, Helena College desires to move this into the community via the continuing education program as well as into the surrounding secondary institutions through partnerships with other entities such as GEAR UP, OPI, TRiO, and College Goal Montana.

## Project Narrative

### Demonstrated Need

Statistics show that loan cohort default rates (CDR) are increasing for most schools, educational costs continue to rise, more students are borrowing more money, and the combination of Stafford and private loans equal greater debt. High CDRs negatively reflect on school quality, result in provisional certification, loss of Title IV eligibility, and threaten access to all funding sources.

Helena College's student loan default rate has been increasing at an alarming rate for the last few years.



The current 2 year cohort default rate is 8.7. The 3 year cohort rate will only be higher. If the default rate continues to increase at the current rate, Helena College is in danger of receiving sanctions from the Department of Education by the year 2015. These sanctions would then impact the students' accessibility to Helena College.

Default prevention is the right student admitted to the right educational program, with the right student support services delivered at the right time, leading to program completion and employment.

In order to effectively implement any type of intervention, we have identified the average student population of Helena College based on the last five years as follows:

Helena College Entering Student Enrollment Profile Fall 2007-2011						
	Fall 2007	Fall 2008	Fall 2009	Fall 2010	Fall 2011	5 Yr Mean
<b>Total 1st Time Students*</b>	333	342	486	425	391	395
<b>Enrollment Status:</b>						
Full-Time	73%	71%	71%	74%	70%	72%
Part-Time	27%	29%	29%	26%	30%	28%
<b>Gender:</b>						
Male	55%	50%	51%	54%	45%	51%
Female	45%	50%	49%	46%	55%	49%
<b>Race/Ethnicity:</b>						
African-American	0%	1%	0%	1%	1%	1%
American-Indian/Alaskan Native	5%	3%	4%	5%	3%	4%
Asian	2%	2%	1%	2%	1%	2%
Hispanic	2%	2%	2%	2%	4%	2%
Other	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%
White	78%	82%	83%	83%	85%	82%
Unkown	11%	8%	9%	6%	4%	8%
<b>Average Age</b>	23	24	25	26	26	24.8
<b>Legacy:</b>						
Parents education less than 4 year degree or unknown	67%	74%	69%	60%	56%	65%
<b>College Preparation:</b>						
Placed in Developmental Writing	50%	69%	36%	38%	37%	46%
Placed in Developmental Math	48%	52%	53%	64%	67%	57%
Entering with GED/ATB	15%	12%	16%	18%	17%	16%
<b>Financial Need:</b>						
Receiving Financial Aid	66%	64%	76%	80%	81%	73%
Received Pell Grant	43%	40%	48%	60%	63%	51%
Pell Recipients with EFC=0	22%	21%	31%	41%	43%	32%
Received Subsidized Loan	39%	45%	50%	62%	63%	52%
Average Subsidized Loan Amount	\$3,026	\$2,880	\$3,021	\$3,053	\$3,083	\$3,013
Received Unsubsidized Loan	27%	39%	44%	50%	54%	43%
Average Unsubsidized Loan Amount	\$3,442	\$3,981	\$4,047	\$4,307	\$4,396	\$4,035
<b>Retention:</b>						
Fall to Subsequent Spring Semester	73%	75%	77%	77%	77%	76%
Fall to Subsequent Fall Semester	55%	54%	52%	59%	59%	56%
*includes 1st time freshmen and transfers						

As is evident on average more than 50% of our population places into a developmental level math or writing course, over 60% are first generation students, and over 30% have a zero expected family contribution (EFC). The average student also borrows approximately \$7,000 per year. The Montana Board of Regents Affordability Taskforce has already comprised data that shows low and moderate income students incur higher levels of debt, as well as non-traditional students at 2-year campuses, and 90% of Pell Grant recipients in Montana borrow with an average indebtedness of nearly \$27,000. Although there are many areas that could benefit from much needed attention, the Financial Literacy/Default Prevention Team felt the students most at risk for loan default

either have a balance owing, little to no Pell eligibility remaining, are not meeting Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP), or have a borrowed greater than \$15,000 in student loans to date.

### **Plan of Action**

With the above profile in mind, Helena College has a number of projects outlined to increase financial literacy awareness, decrease average student loan indebtedness and decrease Helena College's cohort default rate.

- 1) Develop a Financial Literacy/Default Prevention Team to collaborate and coordinate strategies to effectively strengthen financial literacy programs in an effort to reduce student loan debt with representation from
  - a. Student Government
  - b. Leadership
  - c. Faculty
  - d. Division Chairs
  - e. Student Services
  - f. Business Office
  - g. TRiO
  - h. Access to Success
  - i. Continuing Education
  - j. Outreach Manager
  - k. Financial Aid
- 2) Formally incorporate financial literacy topics into the Student Success course curriculum utilizing *Dollars and Sense* workbooks, the [www.getmoneysmarts.org](http://www.getmoneysmarts.org) website, and Helena College Student Assistance Foundation Outreach Manager to include, but not limited to:
  - a. Budgeting and debt management
  - b. Saving plans
  - c. Financial plan development and goal setting while in college
  - d. Credit reports/scores
  - e. Repayment plans for student loans and personal debt
  - f. Loan forgiveness programs
  - g. Planning for financial management after college
- 3) Create an online Student Success course via Moodle for greater access to all students on and off campus.
- 4) Financial Aid web page link to video snippets covering the topics in #2, as well as financial aid processes on YouTube for better comprehension of the topics, and to hold attention of the viewer.

- 5) Create budget, banking, saving and credit financial literacy requirements for students with past due accounts, students with greater than \$15,000 loan debt, students who have reached 450% of Pell maximum levels, and students not meeting satisfactory academic progress (SAP) requirements.
- 6) Create prior learning assessments for real life experience in order to award credits towards degree/certificate program. This will shorten time for degree/certificate completion; therefore, borrowing a lesser amount of loans.
- 7) Create standardized advising templates for all degree/certificate programs to assure students stay on track towards degree/certificate completion.
- 8) Conduct financial literacy topic workshops on campus.
- 9) Require in-person loan entrance counseling every academic year, allowing for exceptions for online only students.
- 10) Mandate orientation to ensure all students receive the necessary information to be successful in college, as well as make connections to staff, faculty, and student government members shortly after arrival on campus.
- 11) Improve early awareness response system with attendance software for faculty.
- 12) Two financial aid personnel obtain AFCPE Financial Counseling certification to be an accredited financial counselor in order to better serve student population with financial issues one-on-one, conduct seminars and workshops.
- 13) Conduct seminars for Continuing Education, TRiO and Access to Success programs.
- 14) Incorporate financial literacy and tax preparation components into College Goal Montana program on campus. – Future/ long term goal
- 15) Create a student money management center with students (peer mentoring) from the Accounting, Business and Office Technology programs. – Future/ long term goal
- 16) Train students to conduct financial literacy workshops for internships/grants. – Future/long term goal

### **Outcomes**

- 1) Financial Literacy Default Prevention / Team to meet two times per month through December 2012, decreasing to once per month January to July 2013.
- 2) Student Success Course offered spring 2013 with the new financial literacy curriculum. Students to have a greater knowledge of financial literacy subjects as listed in second plan of action stated above. This will be measured by taking a pre-test at the beginning of the Student Success course that includes questions regarding financial literacy to establish a baseline. At the end of the term, there will be a post-test to see what subjects/information was best retained. Goal is to achieve a 50% increase of subject mastery.

- 3) Student Success Course offered online for the spring 2013 term to accommodate more students and give this population the opportunity to master this information. Goal is to have at least 5 students register for spring 2013.
- 4) Post links to YouTube videos showcasing financial literacy subjects by January 2013. Goal is to have 25 hits per video by May 2013.
- 5) Create a required program for the target audiences of students with past due accounts, students with greater than \$15,000 loan debt, students who have reached 450% of Pell maximum levels, and students not meeting satisfactory academic progress (SAP) requirements by January 2013. Goal is to have 100% students who fall into the above criteria complete the program with an actual personal budget for each student.
- 6) Compile and analyze statistical information to quantify prior learning assessments.
- 7) All degree/certificate programs will have a standardized advising template by January 2013. All advisors to incorporate usage for registration from this date forward.
- 8) Conduct at least 2 workshops on a financial aid topic during the spring 2013 term. Goal is to have at least 10 students per session. If students attend both sessions, they will have the privilege of registering for classes prior to the general student body as well as a chance at a \$500 book voucher. Will provide both a pre-test and post-test to note students' mastery of subject matter.
- 9) All new students applying for Stafford loans and beginning academic enrollment in the spring are required to attend an in-person student loan entrance counseling, unless student is taking online courses only. 100% participation rate.
- 10) Revamp Orientation program to include additional financial literacy sessions (currently have one session covering budgets for 3 twenty minute sessions. Require all new students to attend Orientation by Spring 2013 with 100% participation rate.
- 11) Purchase and implement Starfish Retention Solutions by Summer 2013 term to assist staff, faculty, leadership, and students to collaborate more easily across campus. (Please refer to Appendix A)
- 12) Register two financial aid staff into the AFCPE Financial Counseling Certification to increase knowledge base of counselors and effectively implement the future projects as outlined above in numbers 14, 15 and 16. Counselors to coordinate progress by meeting on a bimonthly basis starting December 2012. (Please refer to Appendix B)
- 13) Conduct 3 financial literacy seminars among targeted students participating in TRiO and Access to Success by the end of the Spring 2013 term. Offering both a pre-test and post-test to gauge students' understanding of subject matter.

### **Long-Term Impact**

With a collaborative effort throughout the college, Helena College will decrease the amount of time needed for program completion, decrease the average amount of student loan debt, and increase awareness of financial literacy.

Although the focus is centered on the target population of students not meeting SAP standards, high loan indebtedness, have a balance owing, and/or low Pell eligibility remaining the projects outlined above will benefit the majority for years to come.

The curriculum creation, video equipment, AFCPE certification and initial purchase of Starfish Retention Solutions are all a one-time cost. With minimal maintenance fees, all of the projects outlined above will continue to benefit students for years to come. The AFCPE certification for financial aid administrators will better enable the creation of additional peer mentoring programs in the future.

### **Data Reporting**

Minutes will be taken at all Financial Literacy/Default Prevention Team meetings. Pre-tests and post-tests will be conducted at all workshops/seminars and courses specific to financial literacy subjects. Surveys will be conducted and gathered after orientation. The pre-tests and post-tests will be analyzed to see what format best suits the majority of students' financial literacy comprehension. A comparison of loans borrowed during the Fall and Spring term will be noted to see if there was a decrease in the average amount borrowed per student. A more detailed report will drill down to see what interventions each student had participated in and what their loan amounts were from the Fall to Spring terms. Attendance will also be gathered as a baseline for future reference after the installation of Starfish Retention Solution software.



## Appendix A

### BENEFITS OF STARFISH

#### Providing Benefits for Your Whole Community

Most colleges and universities provide Starfish to the entire undergraduate population. Some institutions extend this to graduate students and non-credit-earning students because they are seeking to make collaboration on campus easier. Some just focus on one group of students such as athletes, TRiO students, or students in developmental classes. Regardless of your specific scenario, **Starfish EARLY ALERT™** and **Starfish CONNECT™** provide benefits for all members of the academic community.

---

- **Students**

- Know immediately when the institution has a concern about your academic performance and which support services are available to help you.
- Schedule time online to meet with your advisor, tutor, instructor, financial aid counselor, or anyone else at the institution who can help you.
- Receive notifications from the institution in a variety of convenient methods, including email, text, and Facebook messages.
- Get motivated as a result of receiving positive, encouraging messages from instructors and others in your success network.

- **Leadership**

- Retain valuable tuition dollars through greater student persistence.
- Promote a holistic student success culture where every student matters, while accelerating your chances of saving those identified as at-risk students.
- Get a more complete picture of the problem so you know what resources it will take to address it "" how many students are struggling, with which kinds of problems, when in the academic year, what kinds of students, in which departments.
- Optimize your student service offerings through powerful analytics that illustrate how your efforts to support students are working.
- Support accreditation efforts by documenting student support efforts and correlated outcomes.
- Augment student recruitment strategies by promoting a comprehensive student services approach that helps assure parents that their students will be supported.
- Plan your budget expenditures efficiently. Our annual license plan includes software, hosting, all upgrades, system performance monitoring, and product support.

- **IT Administration**
  - Keep the impact on IT to a minimum. Starfish is provided in an on-demand, Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) format, where our solutions are hosted, managed, secured, and maintained by Starfish at our SAS 70 Type II-compliant facilities.
  - Be assured that the security and privacy of student information are priorities. All Starfish employees sign confidentiality agreements that acknowledge the laws and regulations concerning FERPA and student privacy.
  - Enjoy frequent improvements and innovations. Starfish expands the functionality of its systems continually to meet the evolving needs of our client community. Starfish clients automatically receive the latest updates and feature releases at no additional costs.
- **Faculty**
  - Communicate concerns about a student to people who are trained to provide help, without having to know how the institution addresses every kind of problem for each kind of student. Reporting concerns takes only minutes!
  - Manage communications to all students, both those doing well and those at risk, based on parameters that you set yourself.
  - Keep track of student attendance and let Starfish automatically report when a student has an attendance issue.
  - Send automatic, positive messages to students who are doing well.
  - Save time by accessing Starfish through your learning management system and eliminate redundant data entry by having your grade book entries raise automatic flags on underperforming students.
- **Tutoring, Financial Aid, Disability Specialists, and Support Offices**
  - Alert the students with the most need for your services with specific advice and directions for how to engage your services.
  - Stay connected with advisors, counselors, and student success staff about how you are serving students.
- **Advising, Counseling, and Student Success Staff**
  - Know more quickly who needs help. Don't lose track of students because of forgotten emails, notes, and voicemails.
  - Help students faster by having one-click access to a student's full profile and performance history, including grades.
  - Close the loop with faculty and others who report concerns to let them know that a reported concern has been followed up on, increasing faculty utilization of the process.

- Keep track of your efforts to intervene with a student, including your email history.
- Prioritize your efforts through various cohort management options that let you focus on one specific student population at a time.
- Monitor a student's progress through mutually agreed-upon milestones that are maintained within the student folder.
- Take advantage of predefined templates that help you work more efficiently without losing the personal touch.
- Refer students to other campus services, including tutoring, and keep track of whether the student showed up.

## **Appendix B**

### **BENEFITS OF AFCPE CERTIFICATION**

The AFCPE Accredited Financial Counselor self-study curriculum includes, but is not limited to:

Financial Counseling and Debt Management:

- Counseling and the communication process
- Using listening skills
- Using counseling skills
- Problem solving and intervention strategies
- Physical environment and multiple-client interviews
- Financial counseling issues
- Credit cards
- Credit reports
- Consumer fraud
- Using public agencies to assist clients
- Strategies to reduce client debt
- Child support, alimony and repossessions
- Housing and student loan debt
- Bankruptcy

Accredited Financial Counselors have certified skills to assist individuals and families in the complex process of financial decision making, including the ability to:

- Educate individuals in sound financial principles.
- Assist individuals in the process of overcoming their financial indebtedness.
- Help individuals identify and modify ineffective money management behaviors.
- Guide individuals in developing successful strategies for achieving their financial goals.
- Support individuals as they work through their financial challenges and opportunities.
- Help individuals develop new perspective on the dynamics of money in relation to family, friends and individual self-esteem.

## Form B: Goals and Objectives

Please provide a detailed description of the activities and services that your organization plans to provide using CACG funding in order to address the needs of underrepresented students.

A. Goals and Objectives Please provide measurable goals and objectives.	B. Activities and Services List the activities and services that will be conducted to accomplish the goals and objectives.	C. Proposed Outcomes List anticipated outcomes based on the implementation of services and activities.
<p>Example: To increase underrepresented students' and families' knowledge of postsecondary education financial options.</p>	<p>Example: conduct informational workshops with parents and students to share sources and availability of financial aid; develop materials/handouts outlining financial aid and financial literacy opportunities.</p>	<p>Example: 2011 survey results (85% participation rate) indicates that 95% of participating students are more knowledgeable about financial aid and financial literacy opportunities.</p>
<p>1. Increase financial literacy knowledge among students with a) past due accounts, b) &gt; \$15,000 in loan debt, c) LEU 450% Pell, d) on an academic plan or on financial aid probation, e) in TRIO program or f) registered for Student Success course either on campus or online.</p>	<p>Students will be required to take a pre-test and post-test with program. Students (a) through (d) will also be required to supply a copy of their budget to the financial aid office in order to release their aid for the following term.</p>	<p>Since all targeted student populations are a captive audience within the program design, there will be 100% participation with a 70% average increase between pre and post-tests.</p>
<p>2. Decrease overall average of loans borrowed per student.</p>	<p>In-person loan entrance counseling for all new students for Spring term. Conduct Financial Literacy workshops throughout Spring term. Student Success Course infused with Financial Literacy</p>	<p>The average amount of student loans borrowed for Spring term will have decreased by \$100 from Fall term.</p>
<p>3. All campus personnel will have an increased awareness of how financial literacy/default prevention affects students.</p>	<p>This will be infused with all other activities outlined in plan of action, (i.e. new Student Success course bolstered with financial literacy topics).</p>	<p>College personnel will be able to identify at least 3 ways a student can reduce and/or minimize their debt.</p>

## **Budget Narrative**

### **Budget**

As one might guess, the start-up costs are always the largest when creating and maintaining any new project. The total budget requested for all proposed financial literacy projects at Helena College is \$37,328. Once all projects are in place, there are very minimal finances required to continue from year to year.

This includes \$6,500 for two contract employees to develop curriculum as well as create, edit, and link videos that will be able to benefit students well into the future.

There is a one-time cost to purchase a video camera and a Macintosh computer to more easily manipulate and edit videos estimated to cost \$2,100. These videos are aimed to not only educate about components of financial literacy, but financial aid processes as well.

The \$1,950 requested for two financial aid administrators to become certified Financial Counselors would be a tremendous benefit to continue to build on the curriculum infused in the Student Success course, as well as workshops, not to mention one-on-one interaction with students.

The largest purchase is the Starfish Retention Solution software at \$25,000. There will be an annual fee for this software that Helena College will include in the budget starting with fiscal year 2014. This software has many benefits as can be seen in Appendix A.

Helena College is also committed to continue to fund the two \$500 book vouchers for students who are actively taking advantage of financial literacy information.

The indirect costs of \$1,778 were calculated to assist with use of facilities, printing and administration of the grant.

### **Administrative Capacity**

The Financial Literacy/Default Prevention Team comprises of personnel from all areas of the college who have varying years of experience. The team includes the Dean of the college, tenured faculty, Assistant Dean of Student services and Financial Aid Director, all of whom have greater than 15 years of experience in their respective areas. This team will be deciding how to implement the projects outlined in the project narrative.

Faculty will be implementing new curriculum regarding financial literacy as part of the already existing Student Success course. The creation of this curriculum will be

contracted out to a current adjunct faculty member or other individual that has teaching experience at the college level, as well as a base knowledge of financial literacy subjects. This individual can consult with the Director of Financial Aid, Student Financial Services, or any other resource to create the best curriculum possible.

There will need to be an individual familiar with creating and editing video as well as building links for the video snippets on the college's website. This will also be a contracted position.

The Assistant Dean of Student Affairs is very familiar with the Starfish Retention Solution software and has implemented this at three other institutions during her tenure. She is very aware of the dividends that can be realized by this software, as well as some of the pitfalls to avoid. Since we have several departments with little depth, this should assist in creating a more efficient and effective way of communicating with both college personnel and students.

## Form C: Budget Narrative

Please provide a justification and specific detail for each budget category addressing expenditures.  
**GRANT FUNDS WILL BE PROVIDED ON A REIMBURSEMENT BASIS**

Budget Category	Expenditure	Detail
1. Salaries and Wages	\$5,000	Contract employee #1 to create curriculum, shell for online course, pre-tests, post-tests, required budget program for target audience in #5 of action plan, and standardized advising templates. Contract employee #2 to create, edit, submit and create links for video snippets.
2. Employee Benefits	\$1,500	Benefits calculated at 30%.
3. Travel		
4. Materials and Supplies	\$150	Texas Instruments BA II Plus Professional Calculator - \$150 for two aid administrators in AFCPE course
5. Indirect Costs	\$1,778	Calculated at 5% of total budget.
6. Equipment	\$2,100	Video equipment for YouTube snippets: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Video camera - \$600</li> <li>• Macintosh laptop to more easily edit videos - \$1,500</li> </ul>
7. Other	\$27,800	Starfish Retention Solution - \$25,000 initial purchase AFCPE financial advisor certification program - \$1,800 for two aid administrators. 2 - \$500 book vouchers to students for raffle after completion of workshop series.
Total	\$38,328	



## Form D: Statement of Assurances

### COLLEGE ACCESS CHALLENGE GRANT PROGRAM

(Authorized under Title VII: Part E of Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended)

THE APPLICANT HEREBY ASSURES THE COORDINATING COMMISSION FOR POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION:

A. Administration of the activities and services for which this entity seeks assistance under this grant will be by or under the supervision of the applicant.

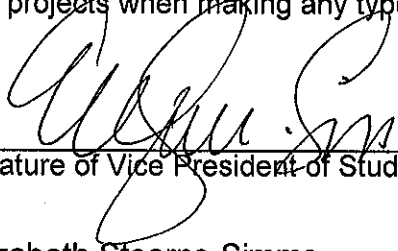
B. The project will comply with all applicable Montana state laws.

C. The applicant will keep project records, including receipts for expenditures, and afford access to these records at any time. The Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education, Office of Student Financial Services (SFS) may find it necessary to assure the correctness and verify the reports.

D. I assure compliance with federal statutes and regulations governing the College Access Challenge Grant Program, Title VII Part E of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, and the Department of Education General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) (specifically 34 CFR, Parts 74, 76, 77, 79, and 80).

E. I agree to comply with section 511 of the U.S. Department of Education Appropriations Act requiring grant recipients to acknowledge the amount and percentage of Federal and nongovernmental funding for projects when making any type of public announcement about awards.

1 OCT 2012  
Date

  
Signature of Vice President of Student Services

Elizabeth Stearns-Simms  
Typed/Printed Name of Vice President of Student Services

Helena College University of Montana  
Institution