

FINANCIAL AID AND SCHOLARSHIPS

Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships

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www.msubillings.edu/finaid (<http://www.msubillings.edu/finaid/>)

Graduate students who wish to apply for financial assistance at Montana State University Billings must be enrolled for at least five credits in a graduate degree, (post bachelor licensure, re-licensure, teacher licensure or endorsement program requires six credits). Some aid is available for summer term, but most aid is allocated for the regular academic year. A non-degree graduate student is not eligible to receive financial aid.

Students applying for financial assistance are considered for all aid options for which they request and are eligible. The amount of financial aid offered is generally a combination of loans and employment. The aid offer is based on the evaluated financial need of the student. The estimated financial need is the difference between the cost of attending Montana State University Billings and the ability of the student to contribute to those education costs as determined by federal methodology.

To apply for financial aid, students must complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) financial aid application. Students can apply through FAFSA on the web at [studentaid.gov](https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa/) (<https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa/>)

Priority packaging will be given to those students who have a complete FAFSA and have submitted the required documentation to the Financial Aid office by December 1st. Students should allow up to two weeks for the office to receive the FAFSA. We will then begin communications with the student regarding any additional information that needs to be submitted before we can evaluate aid eligibility. After all requested documentation has been submitted, it can take four to six weeks before an aid offer is generated. The FAFSA must be filed annually and typically becomes available for the upcoming academic year (Fall/Spring) on October 1st of every year.

What Does College Cost?

To help students make an evaluation of their financial needs, each year the Office of Financial Aid & Scholarships develops a financial aid budget, called the Cost of Attendance (COA). The COA is the **estimated** cost of completing a full year at MSU Billings. It is important to note that the COA is a tool used by the Office of Financial Aid & Scholarships to determine student eligibility for financial aid and does not reflect the actual bill that will be paid to MSU Billings. You can review the COA at this webpage (<http://www.msubillings.edu/finaid/CostOfAttendance.htm>).

General Eligibility Requirements

All financial aid recipients must meet the following eligibility requirements:

- Be enrolled/accepted for enrollment in a degree or certificate program.
- Be a citizen or an eligible non-citizen.
- Maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress (see section below).
- Cannot be in default on Perkins Loans, Stafford Loans, or PLUS Loans at any institution.
- Cannot owe an overpayment of Pell or SEOG.
- Cannot have borrowed in excess of loan limits.
- Have need, as defined by individual program requirements (except for unsubsidized Stafford Loans and PLUS Loans).
- Meet any other program-specific criteria.

Aid Types

Students who apply for financial aid are considered for all aid programs for which they are eligible. Loans and work study must be applied for through the Financial Aid Office. Graduate scholarships, assistantships and waivers are administered by the Office of Graduate Studies working in concert with the Financial Aid Office. The most common types of financial aid received by graduate level students are listed below.

Loans

Student loans, which have a lower interest rate than commercial loans, must be repaid after a student has graduated, ceased taking classes, or dropped below five-credit enrollment. Interest rates and repayment requirements vary according to the type of loan. For more information visit the webpage (<http://www.msubillings.edu/finaid/Loans.htm>).

Students who wish to be considered for a loan and/or work study must complete the FAFSA. Other forms of documentation (tax returns, verification form, etc.) may also be required.

The Financial Aid Office will generate a financial aid offer which is consistent with eligibility requirements and legal limits. The degree or certificate program in which the student is enrolled determines the types of aid and limits of aid available.

1. Graduate students can borrow up to \$20,500 a year in Federal Direct Unsubsidized Loans. However, students cannot borrow more than the cost of attendance minus any other financial aid. Federal Graduate PLUS Loans are offered to students whose other aid does not cover the full cost of attendance; however, this loan requires a credit check to be conducted. A student who is enrolled for less than five credits is not eligible for any aid.
2. Students working toward licensure alone (and not simultaneously on a degree) or in a Fifth-Year Program, are limited to subsidized loans of \$5,500 per year and unsubsidized loans of \$7,000, and six credit hours are required.
3. There are aggregate loan limits that apply and can affect eligibility.

Eligibility for financial assistance ceases if a student's program plan is not approved within one calendar year of when the student takes the first post-baccalaureate class.

Work Study Employment

Work study positions and part-time campus employment are available. To be eligible for work study, a student must show demonstrated need, be accepted for enrollment, and maintain satisfactory academic progress toward a degree while employed. Work study hourly pay varies with the type of work and student's experience. Work study students are paid every other week. Since work study is tied to demonstrated financial need, the amount a student earns can impact loan limits and other types of financial assistance. Graduate Assistantships are available as work-study positions. Graduate assistantships may include research, scholarly activity, professional service, assistance with campus programs, or teaching assistance. A student must take at least six credits to be eligible for an assistantship and must be accepted into a graduate degree program.

A Job Locator service is located in Career & Employment Services. The Job Locator assists any enrolled Montana State University Billings student to find part-time work with area businesses. This service is free to all Montana State University Billings students.

Applying for Tuition Waivers and Assistantships

A unified application form for tuition waivers, graduate assistantships and teaching assistantships is available from the Office of Graduate Studies. Typically, tuition waivers and assistantships are allocated on an academic year basis (for fall and

spring semesters). Only students accepted into a Graduate Degree program are eligible for Assistantships.

To receive a tuition waiver or an assistantship with a tuition waiver for a second semester, students must maintain a 3.00 cumulative grade point average and continue to be enrolled for at least the **minimum nine credits**. Moreover, the supervisor, unit chair, and/or dean must be satisfied with the recipient's performance.

Partial Tuition Waivers

The purpose of tuition waivers is to recruit and retain exemplary graduate students, reward academic achievement, and recognize service and benefit to the campus community. Students must be enrolled for at least six credits in a **degree program** to be considered for a tuition waiver. Tuition waivers are considered to be part of a student's financial aid package and, therefore, may reduce loan eligibility. Tuition waivers apply to the tuition and registration fee only and do not reduce other mandatory fees.

Graduate Assistantships

Graduate assistantships are offered in each college with graduate programs and in other divisions on campus. Graduate assistantships are varied and may include teaching, research, scholarly activity, professional service, or assistance with some campus program. Teaching assistants work with faculty in planning, delivering, and evaluating instruction. Graduate Assistantships should enhance the student's professional development, and supervisors have a responsibility to provide graduate assistants with training and support to enable the student to learn advanced skills. Please visit our website (<https://www.msubillings.edu/grad/>) for a complete listing of job descriptions, graduate assistantships are also available as work-study positions. Every attempt is made to award assistantships based on alignment of the student's abilities and job description attributes. Teaching assistantships typically do not exceed 15 hours per week, research assistantships typically do not exceed 10 hours per week. Other graduate assistantships are variable but do not exceed 19 hours per week. A student must take **at least six credits** to be eligible for an assistantship and must be accepted into a graduate degree program. A student may hold only one campus employment position per semester.

Veterans' Benefits

Information concerning veterans' educational benefits may be obtained from Montana State University Billings Military and Veterans Success Center, 406-657-2968, located in COE 106, or the local office of the Veterans Administration.

Montana State University Billings Scholarships

Some scholarships at Montana State University Billings are awarded exclusively to graduate students. Application forms and additional details are available from the Financial Aid Office, the Graduate Studies office, or online (<http://www.msubillings.edu/grad/scholarships.htm>).

C. Rockne Copple Endowed Scholarship

The C. Rockne Copple Endowed Scholarship is available to a graduate student working towards a Master's Degree in Clinical Rehabilitation and Mental Health Counseling or School Counseling. The recipient must have Degree Candidacy status, must have a minimum overall GPA of 3.25 or above, be enrolled for a minimum of 9 credits fall and spring semesters, and include three letters of reference with their application.

College of Education Graduate Scholarship

The College of Education is dedicated to preparing competent, caring and committed professionals for Montana's schools; conducting socially significant research to improve the human condition; providing community services aimed at improving the quality of life experienced by Montanans; and providing graduate education designed

for the continuing development of professionals. The College of Education Graduate Scholarship is available to a College of Education graduate student with a 3.75 overall GPA or above. The recipient's Plan of Study must be accepted. Additionally, the applicant must have demonstrated ability to provide leadership in Montana schools or human services and provide a letter of reference from their faculty advisor.

Elaine Marie Smith Endowed Scholarship

The Elaine Marie Smith Endowed Scholarship is available to graduate students working towards a M.S. in Clinical Rehabilitation and Mental Health Counseling. If no Clinical Rehabilitation and Mental Health Counseling majors are eligible, a student working towards a M.S. in Special Education will be considered. Recipients must be U.S. Citizen, have completed one year of graduate study or have candidacy for a graduate program approved through an accepted Plan of Study, overall 3.0 GPA or above, participate in activities pertaining to field of study is a factor, full-time student, and financial need.

Helen Wilson, Robert Waterman, and Robert McRae Endowed Scholarship for Graduate Studies

The Helen Wilson, Robert Waterman, and Robert McRae Endowed Scholarship for Graduate Studies is available to a graduate student with an overall GPA of 3.25 or better. The recipient must be a full-time graduate student (9 or more credit hours each semester) and have approved admission status. Additionally, applicants must provide (1) a one-page statement providing evidence of outstanding scholarship, research, and creativity, (2) a one-page statement providing evidence of commitment to community service and related accomplishments, (3) a one-page statement detailing professional experience and leadership, (4) a current resume or curriculum vita, (5) an undergraduate transcript (copies cannot be from the existing graduate file).

Montana Center for Inclusive Education (MCIE) Graduate Scholarship

The Montana Center for Inclusive Education (MCIE) Graduate Scholarship is available to students with a disability that meets the definition of the Americans with Disability Act. The recipient must be a Montana resident, have a 3.25 overall GPA, and must have unmet financial need. Recipients must be enrolled for a minimum of 6 credits per semester.

Shannon Weatherly Memorial Endowed Scholarship

The Shannon Weatherly Memorial Endowed Scholarship is available to a graduate student working towards a M.S. in Special Education. The recipient must have an overall 3.5 GPA or above, be a part-time student, must have completed at least nine graduate credits, and have Plan of Study approved by an advisor.

Stepping Forward Foundation Scholarship - Graduate

The Stepping Forward Foundation Scholarship – Graduate is available to graduate students who exhibit a strong desire to succeed. Recipients must have a 3.0 overall GPA or above, must be enrolled for a minimum of six graduate credits per semester, and must have definite financial need.

More Financial Aid Information

Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress Standards

Students are expected to maintain certain academic standards and make satisfactory progress toward a degree to receive federal and state financial aid. In accordance with Federal and State laws and regulations, MSU Billings has established a policy to define and administer standards of academic progress for all students. Detailed information explaining the financial aid satisfactory progress standards, including the appeal and reinstatement process, is available online (<http://www.msubillings.edu/finaid/SAP.htm>).

Verification Process

Some students' FAFSA information will be selected by the Department of Education for a process called verification. The Financial Aid Office may complete the verification. We have also established a partnership with Inceptia (<https://www.inceptia.org/student-landing/verification-gateway-students/>) to expedite the federal verification process for Montana State University Billings. Verification Gateway (VG) from Inceptia is an online portal to guide students and parents through verification. If a FAFSA application is selected for verification by the U.S Department of Education, the student will receive an email from VGCS@inceptia.org, or postcard from Inceptia, containing the Montana State University Billings unique website link to start the verification process. After these documents have been reviewed and the student has been determined to be eligible, a financial aid package will be offered.

Refund Policy

The institution's refund policy for students who withdraw from college ranges from a 90 percent refund for class days one through five; 75 percent for class days six through 10; 50 percent refund for class days 11 through 15; there are no refunds after the 15th day of classes. Students with financial aid may have to return some or all of the financial aid they received if they withdraw or if they do not begin attending classes. Always contact the Office of Financial Aid, finaid@msubillings.edu or 406-657-2188, if you have questions about how withdrawing will impact financial aid.

Return of Title IV Funds Policy

If a student withdraws from college, officially or unofficially, he or she may be required to **repay** all or part of the financial aid that was received. Any refund will be used to repay the financial aid before any refund will be made to the student. (Refer to Refund Policy, above.) The amount of financial aid that must be returned to the Department of Education is based on a federal formula that takes into consideration the date of the withdrawal; the amount of federal financial aid received for the term; and the amount of institutional charges for the term. Always contact the Office of Financial Aid, finaid@msubillings.edu or 406-657-2188, for questions about how withdrawing will impact financial aid. For a complete review of Return of Title IV requirements, visit the webpage (https://www.msubillings.edu/finaid/pdf/Return_of_Title_IV.pdf).

Financial Aid – Summer Session

Summer financial aid is based on the FAFSA information used to determine eligibility for the previous fall and spring semesters. Those students who are Pell eligible should also complete the upcoming FAFSA to ensure they receive their maximum Pell grant eligibility. To determine aid eligibility for summer, students must complete and submit the Summer Award Acceptance form to the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships. Specific information is available online (<http://www.msubillings.edu/finaid/SummerFinAid.htm>).

Financial Aid - Study Abroad

The Financial Aid Director will review requests for funding "Study Abroad" coursework after receiving the following information and documentation:

1. Document acceptance into the study abroad program;
2. A copy of the course approval form;
3. A list of all necessary direct education expenses such as: tuition & fees, books, class supplies, room and board;
4. A copy of the airline ticket or a letter from a travel agency listing the cost if the student is to incur airfare or travel expenses.

The above information must be submitted to the Financial Aid Office **at least six weeks prior to departure**. Any adjustments to a student's award will be based upon eligibility and available funds. Most grant and loan programs have yearly limits which cannot be exceeded. These limits could affect a student's funding level, even if allowable expenses are documented.

Consumer Information

In accordance with federal regulations set forth by the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, a summary of consumer information must be made available to all current and prospective students of Montana State University Billings. The information that must be disclosed can be obtained at this page (http://www.msubillings.edu/finaid/Consumer_Information.htm).

Questions? Contact Us

Visit the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships on the University Campus (located on the 1st floor of McMullen Hall), call (406) 657-2188, send an email to finaid@msubillings.edu, or visit online (<http://www.msubillings.edu/finaid/>).