

FINANCIAL AID AND SCHOLARSHIPS

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

The Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships at Montana State University Billings provides advice and financial assistance to students. Although families and students are expected to make a maximum effort to meet the costs of education, financial aid is available to fill the gap between family resources and educational expenses.

Financial aid consists of grants, scholarships, loans, and employment opportunities. Individual aid offers are based on the calculated financial need of the student and the availability of funds. The estimated financial need is the difference between the cost of attending MSU Billings and the ability of the student and/or family to contribute to those education costs as determined by the results of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

All students are encouraged to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). This form can be completed on the web at [studentaid.gov](https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa/) (<https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa/>). Early application is essential as some funds are limited and allocated on a first come, first serve basis until the funding has been exhausted. 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 evaluate 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 which includes the cost of tuition, books, supplies, and cost of living. 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. Review the COA on 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.
- Cannot be enrolled in an elementary or secondary school.
- Have a high school diploma, HiSET, or GED.
- Be a citizen or an eligible non-citizen.
- Maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress (see section below).
- Cannot be in default on Perkins Loans, Stafford/Direct 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. The most common types of financial aid are listed below.

Grants

Federal Pell Grant

Federal Pell Grants are allocated to undergraduate students who have not earned their first bachelor's degree and have not reached the Pell Grant Lifetime Eligibility limit. Pell eligibility is determined by a formula developed by the U.S. Congress and is applied consistently to all applicants using the information reported in the FAFSA.

Federal Supplemental Education Opportunity Grant (FSEOG)

This grant is allocated to undergraduate students who have not earned their first bachelor's degree and have financial need. Priority is given to students who receive Pell Grants. Eligible students may receive up to \$500-\$1500 per year depending on the need and the number of terms attended in an academic year.

Institutional Grants

To qualify for one of the institutional grants, a student must be a Montana resident, be eligible for financial aid, and be enrolled or accepted for enrollment as an undergraduate student. Enrollment in at least six credits is required for all institutional grants.

Scholarships

Montana State University Billings has many scholarships available to students. Any prospective or currently enrolled student may apply for a scholarship by completing a General Scholarship Application Form available online (<http://www.msubillings.edu/scholarships/>). Since the requirements and criteria are different for each scholarship, it is advisable for students to use the general application to be considered for all scholarships. **The scholarship application priority date is February 1.**

Employment

Federal, State, and Institutional Work-Study Programs

The federal and state work-study programs at MSU Billings are need-based and funded with federal and state dollars to provide students with part-time employment on and off campus. Institutional and some state work-study is non-need-based and can be requested in writing to the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships. The request will be reviewed and there is no guarantee the request will be approved. Off-campus work-study jobs are limited to community service employment. Hourly rates of pay comply with minimum wage laws and vary with the type of work and the student's experience and responsibilities. Student employees are paid every other week, according to State of Montana payroll schedules. To view a list of available jobs, students who are approved to receive work study funding may log in to their CareerLink account (<http://www.msubillings.edu/careers/>).

Student Employment

The Job Locator and Developer (JLD) assists MSU Billings students in obtaining part-time employment in the community. Area businesses list job opportunities with the Job Locator. The Job Locator Service is free to all MSU Billings students and is not based on financial need. Students who are interested in obtaining employment should refer to the Career Link (<http://www.msubillings.edu/careers/>) for available job listings.

Loans

Loans are a major source of financial aid for students. Student loans must be repaid after the student graduates, withdraws from school, or drops below half-time enrollment. Interest rates, grace periods, and repayment requirements vary

depending on the type of loan. For more information visit this webpage (<http://www.msubillings.edu/finaid/Loans.htm>).

Tuition Waivers

MSU Billings has tuition waivers for veterans, American Indians, faculty and staff, advanced honor students, athletes, graduate students, war orphans, dependents of firemen and policemen killed in the line of duty, and students with certain majors. Eligibility and selection criteria vary. Certain waivers require a separate application form and, in some cases, additional documentation to qualify. The Faculty/Staff and Partial Dependent Waiver forms must be filled out each semester and can be obtained from Human Resources. To be eligible for Dependent waivers students must complete the General Scholarship Application by the February 1 priority date. Inquire at the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships for specific information regarding tuition waivers. For more information visit the Montana University System Prepare and Pay (<https://mus.edu/Prepare/>) page.

Other Programs Available

State Vocational Rehabilitation Service

Students with disabilities may qualify for educational assistance through the Montana Department of Social and Rehabilitation Service. Located in Billings, they can be contacted at (406) 248-4801.

Veterans' Benefits

Students may apply for veterans' educational benefits through the Veterans Administration. Information can be obtained from the MSUB Military and Veterans Success Center, 406-657-2968, located in COE 106, or the student's local office of the Veterans Administration.

Tribal Grants

Assistance is available to many American Indian students through the various tribal higher education offices. The grant limits are based on the student's need and the availability of tribal funds. Further information may be obtained by contacting the student's tribe or the tribal higher education office.

More Financial Aid Information

Academic Year Definition

The MSU Billings Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships defines the academic year as 30 weeks and 24 credits. Therefore, the definition of full-time enrollment is 12 credits per semester for undergraduate students.

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. Under 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. MSUB has also established a partnership with Inceptia (<https://www.inceptia.org/>) to expedite the federal verification process. 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 a 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.

Professional Judgement

The Higher Education Act of 1992 allows financial aid administrators to make professional judgment decisions for special or unusual family or student circumstances. These circumstances must be documented and must be analyzed on a case-by-case basis. The Financial Aid Officer can exercise professional judgment in different ways. Some examples are listed below.

- If the student or student's family (if dependent) has experienced a hardship where the income will be significantly less than the prior-year income that was reported on the FAFSA
- Dependency override (also known as an Appeal for Unusual Circumstance)

Detailed information explaining the appeal for professional judgment process is available online (https://www.msubillings.edu/finaid/Unusual_and_Special_Circumstances.htm).

Tuition and Fee 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; and 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. Students should always notify Financial Aid and the Registrar's Office when they stop attending classes.

Financial Aid Disbursement & Credit Balance Refund Policy

Most types of financial aid (grants, waivers, loans, and scholarships) are applied directly toward the student's university bill to assist in covering those charges. If there are funds after the student bill has been paid, the remaining amount will be sent as a "refund." Students can elect how they would like to receive their refund, either as a Direct Deposit or as a physical check (detailed instructions are available). Financial aid disburses on student accounts and refunds begin to be generated the week before the start of the semester and are generated daily thereafter. If the student elected to receive the refund as a physical check, but the check was not received, please verify that the mailing address on file with the University is correct. Otherwise, contact Student Accounts at (406) 657-2140. Please keep in mind checks can take five to seven business days for delivery, depending on the postal service.

Students who are offered work study must obtain employment and complete additional paperwork at the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships. Students who work are paid bi-weekly based on the timesheet submitted by students and their supervisors.

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 or last date of attendance, 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. A complete review of Return of Title IV requirements can be found on this 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. For specific information please visit this webpage (<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 list of all necessary direct education expenses such as: tuition and fees, books, class supplies, room, and board
3. 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 webpage (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 the webpage (<http://www.msubillings.edu/finaid/>).