STUDENT SUCCESS FUNDS
Return-to-Learn

REACHING FOR GREATER HEIGHTS

WHAT IT TAKES
The Campaign for MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY
RAISING THE BAR IN MONTANA.

As part of the national Complete College America initiative, Montana vowed to increase its graduates by 20 percent. MSU is doing its part to make this goal a reality through a unique assistance program designed to help former college students complete their degrees.

For the 12,000+ students who have left MSU over the past ten years, Return-to-Learn invites them to enroll again and provides the student support needed to fulfill their degree requirements so they can begin to enjoy the benefits of improved career prospects.

BECAUSE LIFE HAPPENS.

By providing personal, detailed assistance to students pursuing re-enrollment, Return-to-Learn fosters the supportive atmosphere non-traditional students need to thrive. Students take a break from school for a variety of reasons. Advisors work with students to help them overcome those challenges that caused them to leave college the first time.

INCREASING THE NUMBER OF COLLEGE GRADUATES IN THE STATE THROUGH SCHOLARSHIPS AND GUIDANCE PRIVATE SUPPORT WILL MAKE IT POSSIBLE.
COMMITMENT FROM THE TOP.

President Cruzado and her team are committed to supporting students with the desire to pursue a college degree and are making student success a top priority by funding programs like Return-to-Learn.

Montana State invites alumni and friends to partner with the university where private philanthropy can make a difference for single parents who left school to care for their families, or for disabled citizens challenged by coping with recovery as well as their education. Financial support for Return-to-Learn is an investment in Montana’s future.

Privately funded support for Return-to-Learn will enable MSU to:

1. Equip more Montanans to meet the challenges of the future
2. Increase access to higher education
3. Increase graduation rates
4. Expand opportunities for job placement

Why Return-to-Learn matters.

27% of Montana’s adult population has some college but no degree

12,000+ students have left MSU without a degree in the last 10 years

3.2M new jobs requiring a bachelor’s degree will be created in the U.S. over the next 10 years

2.5% current unemployment rate for individuals with a bachelor’s degree

WHAT IT TAKES TO STAY ON TRACK.

The Return-to-Learn scholarships are the only MSU scholarships geared toward returning students coming back after a year or more of a break from school. Financial obstacles prevent many former students from finishing their education.

Merit-based and circumstance-based scholarships of up to $2,500 link funding with the student’s proactive use of campus success resources. Rolling deadlines for these scholarships allow students to work on their own timelines, where expired funding has been a stumbling block in the past.

Advising is an integral part of the teaching and learning mission of MSU. The Return-to-Learn program includes academic and success advisors who help to develop skills for studying, test taking, time management and critical thinking. Also, as part of the program, there are career coaches, financial coaches and tutors available.
RAYEL BROWN

Rayel Brown had intended to return to MSU, but the culture shift from the Fort Belknap Reservation to MSU had been a challenge for her during her first semesters on campus.

“I was raised on the reservation so dealing with all the diverse backgrounds on campus made it hard to adjust socially,” she said.

Transferring to the Salish Kootenai College, Rayel earned an associate degree and became interested in immunology, so she wanted to get back to MSU and pursue a bachelor’s degree. She acknowledged that, “I needed to have more experiences out in the world if I was going to be successful at MSU,” and she enlisted in the Montana National Guard.

Rayel didn’t have access to a computer while in training with the National Guard, so she applied to MSU on her cell phone. She also applied for a Return-to-Learn scholarship because she realized that the costs of being in college would be another hurdle and, “I wanted to hit the ground running.”

Without Return-to-Learn, Rayel admits, “I would not be as confident here at MSU again. I have a good support base and it feels good to be acknowledged for the effort I’m making to better myself.”

ROBERT KOLLAR

Robert Kollar left MSU eight years ago when he received a phone call that his young daughter was in danger. He filed for custody and has been single-parenting since then. Although these years have brought him great joy, it has meant leaving his college career unfinished.

Now that Kollar’s daughter is 15 years old, the time seemed opportune to finish his degree in media and theater arts. He also wants his daughter to be successful in college.

“I want to be a role model for my daughter,” Kollar said. “I figured if I’m talking that way I need to be acting that way.”

When Kollar found out he received a Return-to-Learn scholarship, he felt as if things were falling into place and urging him on in pursuit of a degree again.

“I want to improve my knowledge and update my technical abilities,” he said. “I don’t know where it will lead, but I want to finish my degree.”

Kollar’s company is currently producing an independent film, for which he is traveling internationally. With only three semesters left, Kollar feels that despite a busy schedule he’ll figure out a way to get it done.

“It’s going to be tough,” he said. “But I’m excited about school and I’ll make it work.”