

OFFICE OF FINANCIAL AID SERVICES



INFORMATION GUIDE 2010-2011

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This information guide has been prepared to help you understand your financial aid award from Montana State University. It will tell you how to respond to your aid offer, how your financial aid will be disbursed and what to do in unusual situations.

You are responsible for knowing the procedures described in this guide. You may need to refer to this guide in the future if you have questions regarding the Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy, enrollment changes or other issues.

It is important that you respond to your Financial Aid Award Notification promptly (see page 4). If we do not receive a response within 30 days of the notification it will be assumed you do not wish to accept the awards, and they will be subject to cancellation.

Your award offer represents the most equitable award we can make based on the information you submitted on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), the estimated funds the University will have for 2010-2011, the anticipated number of financial aid applicants, and when you applied for financial aid. It is possible that your award package may change if regulations or funding levels change or if your financial aid eligibility profile changes. If you have any questions, please let us know.

DETERMINING ELIGIBILITY

The three components used to determine your eligibility for financial aid are 1) Cost of Attendance or expenses, 2) Expected Family Contribution (EFC), and 3) other financial resources available to you.

COST OF ATTENDANCE: The cost of attendance represents educational expenses used in determining the amount of financial aid that will be awarded to you. These expenses reflect reasonable spending levels for an academic year which includes everything from tuition and fees to miscellaneous expenses. Adjustments to these spending levels may be considered for dependent care, a computer purchase, or other non-discretionary expenses.

The following chart represents MSU's undergraduate cost of attendance for the 2010/2011 academic year (9 months). Undergraduate tuition and fees are based on the standard cost of two full-time semesters (12+ credits per semester).

	RESIDENT	NON-RESIDENT
Undergraduate Tuition/Fees	\$6,170	\$18,290
Books/Supplies	\$1,130	\$1,130
Room/Board	\$7,700	\$7,700
Personal/Transportation	\$3,080	\$3,080
Average Loan Fee	\$40	\$40
TOTAL	\$18,120	\$30,240

Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE) Tuition/Fees = \$8,670

	RESIDENT	NON-RESIDENT
Graduate Tuition/Fees	\$4,900	\$12,700

Graduate tuition and fees are based on the average cost for students enrolled in graduate programs (master's, doctoral, and graduate level certificate programs) for an academic year (2 semesters). Actual tuition and fees will vary depending on the number of credits the graduate student is taking. Books and supplies average \$850 per academic year. All other cost of attendance components are the same as in the undergraduate chart above.

Tuition, fees, books and supplies will vary depending on your curriculum, residency status, and the number of credits carried each semester.

Room and board represents the average amount assessed to students living in the residence halls. It is the cost of a double room with a 7 day meal plan. For all other students, this figure represents an amount reasonably incurred for off-campus housing and food costs.

The personal and transportation costs provide for moderate transportation expenses, clothing, laundry, recreation, medical, and other personal expenses.

The Average Loan Fee represents the average for all student Direct Loan fees.

Since cost of attendance reflects average costs, you may spend more or less than the amounts allowed. For example, you may only spend \$500 on books and supplies but more for miscellaneous expenses. Your actual expenses will depend on your own individual lifestyle, student status, where you live, marital status, personal priorities and obligations, and numerous other choices that you make.

IMPORTANT: To qualify for most aid programs, you must be enrolled at least half-time (six credits) per semester. If attendance is other than nine months or if enrollment is less than 12 credit hours per semester, disbursed financial aid may be pro-rated or cancelled (see the publication “Financial Aid Pro-ration Based on Enrollment Status”). *Please remember, many financial aid award packages cannot meet all your costs while you are attending MSU*, so it is very important for you to manage your financial resources wisely.

EXPECTED FAMILY CONTRIBUTION: As financial aid is designed to assist with your educational costs, the Expected Family Contribution (EFC) is the amount that you and your parents (if applicable) are expected to contribute toward your costs. This amount is determined from information provided on your Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) according to a formula established by Congress.

OTHER FINANCIAL RESOURCES: This represents other known and expected financial resources you will have available to assist you with your educational costs, such as scholarships, tuition waivers, Vocational Rehabilitation benefits, etc.

Your eligibility (financial need) is found by subtracting your Expected Family Contribution and other financial resources from your Cost of Attendance.

HOW AID IS AWARDED

Your award package is based on a combination of funds available and your eligibility. Your award package may not include funds from all aid programs. Some funds carry restrictions and some are limited as to amounts that can be awarded.

The Federal Pell Grant is the first program we put into your package, if you are eligible. The next awards we package are grants (federal, state, and/or institutional) and/or scholarship(s). Some grant and scholarship funds have restrictions which limit awards to Montana residents. MSU grants and scholarships are limited, but are awarded to eligible undergraduate students until funds are no longer available. Work Study funds and loans are awarded last.

To be considered for summer session aid, you must complete a Summer Supplemental Application. The application is available in our office and on the Web after January 1st. The priority filing date for summer session is March 31st.

YOUR AWARD PACKAGE

Your financial aid award package is designed to meet as much of your financial eligibility as possible. All awards are contingent on:

1. **Availability of funds** from federal, state, and institutional sources.
2. **Accuracy of information** provided on your application by you and/or your parents or spouse.
3. **Your receiving an additional** resource that exceeds your eligibility or **our receiving information** that would affect your financial need or Expected Family Contribution.
4. **Your meeting Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy Standards toward your degree** (see page 15).
5. **Your compliance with our requests** to send us additional documentation to support your application.
6. **Your eligibility to receive funds**, i.e., you are a U.S. citizen or eligible non-citizen, you are not in default on a student loan, you have signed all required documentation, and you are enrolled in a degree-seeking program of study for the appropriate number of credit hours.

ACCEPTING OR DECLINING YOUR AWARD

You must respond to the aid offered on your Financial Aid Award Notification. Awards will be canceled if no response is received within 30 days of the notification.

The awards listed on your Financial Aid Award Notification represent an offer based on **a minimum of 12 credits for undergraduate students or a minimum of 6 credits for advanced degree students for each semester of the school year. If attendance is other than nine months or if enrollment is less than these minimum credits per semester, disbursed financial aid may be pro-rated or cancelled (see the publication “Financial Aid Pro-ration Based On Enrollment Status”). A change in your enrollment status may affect your eligibility for certain awards. Please notify Financial Aid Services in writing if you will only attend one semester, including summer session. Audit and reserved credits not applicable to your current degree do not count toward the credit requirements in determining enrollment status.**

If you want to accept a lesser amount than the amount awarded, indicate the amount you wish to accept. This is very important, particularly on the loan amounts.

Before deciding to accept or reject an award, you should consider the following:

1. Think about the amount and type of loan being accepted. **Do not borrow more than you absolutely need.**
2. Think about the current status of your loan debt. You can view your loan debt, if any, by logging into the National Student Loan

Data System (NSLDS) at www.nslsds.ed.gov. You will need your FAFSA pin number.

3. If you did not receive sufficient financial aid necessary to enable you to attend MSU, let us know. If you have unique circumstances, we may be able to address them.
4. If you want to make a change to your aid, please notify us in writing as soon as possible. Adjustment requests for a specific semester must be received by our office two weeks prior to the end of that semester to allow for adequate processing time. Please include your full name and MSU ID on all correspondence.

GRANTS AND WORK STUDY

Financial aid is money in the form of loans, grants and employment available to students to help pay the cost of attending a college, university, or vocational/technical school. Financial aid comes from the federal government (the largest provider of aid), state governments, the schools themselves, and a variety of other public and private sources.

Following is information concerning financial aid programs you may have been awarded. For further information about all federal aid programs, please refer to *Funding Education Beyond High School: The Guide to Federal Student Aid 2010-2011* published by the U.S. Department of Education. This booklet is available at Financial Aid Services or on the Web at www.studentaid.ed.gov. *Unless otherwise indicated, all financial aid is credited directly to your University student account.*

FEDERAL PELL GRANT: A Federal Pell Grant, unlike a loan, does not have to be repaid. Pell Grants are awarded only to undergraduate students with high financial need who have not previously earned a bachelor's or professional degree.

How much you receive will depend on your Expected Family Contribution (EFC), whether you are a full-time or part-time student, and whether you attend school for a full academic year or less. You may not receive Pell Grant funds from more than one school at a time.

FEDERAL SUPPLEMENTAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY GRANT (FSEOG): A Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant is for undergraduates with exceptional financial need. An FSEOG does not have to be repaid.

ACADEMIC COMPETITIVENESS GRANT (ACG):

An Academic Competitiveness Grant will provide up to \$750 for the first year of undergraduate study and up to \$1,300 for the second year of undergraduate study. To be eligible for an ACG, students must be eligible for a Federal Pell Grant and have successfully completed a rigorous high school program of study. Second year recipients must have at least a 3.0 cumulative grade point average (GPA) at the end of their first academic year.

NATIONAL SCIENCE AND MATHEMATICS ACCESS TO RETAIN TALENT GRANT (National SMART Grant):

A National SMART Grant will provide up to \$4,000 for each of the third and fourth years of undergraduate study. To be eligible for a SMART grant, students must be eligible for a Federal Pell Grant and major in physical, life, or computer sciences; math, technology, or engineering; or in a foreign language determined to be critical to national security. Students must maintain a minimum 3.0 cumulative GPA.

BAKER (MTAP) GRANT: This is a need based grant program for low and middle income undergraduate students who are Montana residents. In order to be eligible, students must have a minimum amount of income earned from work during the prior calendar year and be enrolled as a full-time student. A Baker grant does not have to be repaid.

MONTANA HIGHER EDUCATION GRANT (MTHEG): This is a need based grant program which is restricted to undergraduate students who are Montana residents. It does not have to be repaid.

Please note that MTAP and MTHEG have been classified by the US Department of Education as eligible programs under the Leveraging Educational Assistance Partnership Grant Program. These grants are funded by the Federal Government, the State of Montana, and, where applicable, other contributing partners.

WORK STUDY: The Federal and State Work Study programs allow students to obtain employment with authorized on and off-campus Work Study employers. These employers are sympathetic to a college student's unique circumstances and time limitations and provide an effective means for students to earn money to help pay for educational expenses. In order to participate in these programs, you must have been awarded Federal or Montana Work Study on your Financial Aid Award Notification. If you accept your Work Study award and confirm your bill (pay fees) with the Student Accounts office, you will receive a Certificate of Work Study Eligibility and additional materials just prior to the beginning of your award period. You will need the Certificate in order to verify to prospective authorized Work Study employers that you are eligible to participate in this program. The certificate must be completed by you and your employer and submitted to Financial Aid Services by the expiration date. To find Work Study opportunities, visit the Work Study portion of the Financial Aid Web site at: www.montana.edu/wwwfa. This is not a complete list of all Work Study positions currently available. If you are interested in Work Study employment in a particular location or department, contact them directly.

If you decline your Work Study award for fall term but want to reserve it for spring term, you must notify us in writing as soon as possible after your award notification. If you do not request reservation of your Work Study award for spring term, it will be cancelled for the full academic year.

If you were not awarded Work Study as part of your financial aid package, you may have your name added to a Work Study wait list by calling or sending us a written request. If Work Study funds become available, students on the wait list will be considered for an award based on their eligibility. Being placed on the wait list in no way assures that you will receive a Work Study award. However, there are on and off campus employers who hire students. For more information, please visit Career, Internship, and Student Employment in room 177 in the Strand Union Building.

Work Study awards are not credited to your University student account. You are paid directly on the 11th of each month for the actual hours worked during the preceding month. You may not work more than 20 hours per week, and you may not earn more than your Work Study award during the academic semester. You and your employer should plan your hours accordingly. Your employer may choose to pay you as a student employee after your Work Study award is exhausted.

LOANS

FEDERAL PERKINS LOAN/NURSING STUDENT LOAN:

A Federal Perkins Loan or a Nursing Student Loan is a fixed low-interest (5 percent) loan for students with exceptional need. MSU awards Federal Perkins Loans and Nursing Student Loans primarily from funds generated from former students repaying these loans. As a Perkins Loan and/or Nursing Student Loan borrower, you are not charged a loan fee. If you accept a Nursing Student Loan and then withdraw from the Nursing Program, your Nursing Loan will be cancelled and you will begin repayment of the loan immediately.

If you are a first-time Federal Perkins Loan borrower at MSU, you must sign a Perkins Master Promissory Note and complete a Loan Information Questionnaire and Statement of Responsibilities. These documents will be mailed to you the first time you accept a Perkins Loan. For students that accept a Nursing Student Loan, a Promissory Note and other loan documents will be mailed to you each year you accept a Nursing Student Loan.

You will have a nine month “grace period” after you graduate, withdraw, leave school, or drop below half-time enrollment (less than six credits), before repayment of your Federal Perkins Loan and/or Nursing Student Loan begins. At the end of your grace period, interest begins to accrue and you will have up to 10 years to repay the loan. There is never any penalty for prepaying on your loans. The total cost of borrowing a Perkins or Nursing Loan based on the maximum annual loan amount of \$2,000 with the fixed interest rate of 5 percent over a ten year repayment period is \$2,545.

ATTENTION FEDERAL DIRECT SUBSIDIZED, UNSUBSIDIZED, and PLUS LOAN BORROWERS: MSU has changed to the Federal Direct Loan Program as of Summer 2010 so ALL borrowers must complete a new Direct Loan Master Promissory Note with the Department of Education. Please visit our Web site: www.montana.edu/wwwfa for more information.

FEDERAL DIRECT STUDENT LOAN: Federal Direct Loans are either subsidized or unsubsidized. With a subsidized loan, the federal government pays interest on the loan (“subsidizes”) until you begin repayment and during authorized periods of deferment.

With an unsubsidized loan, you will be charged interest from the time the loan is disbursed until it is paid in full. If you allow the interest to accumulate, it will be capitalized, that is, the interest will be added to the principal amount of your loan and will increase the amount you have to repay. If you choose to pay the interest as it accumulates, you will repay less in the long term. You may receive both a Direct Subsidized Loan and a Direct Unsubsidized Loan for the same enrollment period. The type and amount of your Direct loan is determined by your financial need and class level.

The interest rate for undergraduate subsidized loans is fixed at 4.5 percent. The interest rate for graduate subsidized loans is fixed at 6.8 percent. The interest rate for all unsubsidized loans is fixed at 6.8 percent. You may also be charged a required loan fee not to exceed 0.5 percent. The fee will be deducted from each loan disbursement before it is credited to your University student account.

Repayment on Direct Loans begins six months after you graduate, withdraw, leave school, or drop below half-time enrollment. This is called a “grace period.” The Direct Loan Program offers several repayment plans that are discussed in more detail in materials you will receive.

ALL borrowers at MSU must sign a Federal Direct Master Promissory Note (MPN) and complete Loan Entrance Counseling. Your Direct loan requirements can be completed electronically at the Office of Financial Aid Services Web site at: www.montana.edu/wwwfa.

FEDERAL DIRECT PARENT PLUS LOAN: Federal Direct Parent PLUS Loans are awarded to parents of dependent undergraduate students, with the parent being subject to a credit check by the Department of Education. All PLUS loan applicants must meet all general eligibility requirements for the Federal Student Aid programs. You can find more information about these requirements in *Funding Education Beyond High School: The Guide to Federal Student Aid* at www.studentaid.ed.gov.

The yearly borrowing limit on the PLUS Loan is equal to a student’s cost of attendance minus any other financial aid received. For example, if your cost of attendance is \$12,000 and you receive

\$4,000 in other financial aid, your parent could borrow up to—but no more than \$8,000.

Repayment of a Direct PLUS Loan begins 60 days after the full amount your parent borrowed for a school year has been disbursed. This means that, in general, your parent must begin repayment while the student is still in school. However, your parent may request that repayment be delayed while the student is enrolled at least half-time. If your parent would like to postpone repayment of the PLUS Loan, they must contact the Direct Loan Servicing Center at 1-800-848-0983 or www.dl.ed.gov.

The interest rate is fixed at 7.9 percent. A parent PLUS borrower will be charged a required loan fee not to exceed 2.5 percent. This fee will be deducted from each loan disbursement before it is credited to the student's University account. If the amount of the PLUS Loan exceeds university charges, the credit balance will be mailed to the parent, unless the parent authorizes the University to mail it to the student.

If your parent is interested in receiving additional information about the Federal Direct Parent PLUS Loan, you can accept the award offer from the Financial Aid Award Notification or submit a letter in writing to the Office of Financial Aid Services. A PLUS Loan Request Form will be mailed to your parent for completion. All PLUS Loan borrowers at MSU will also need to complete a PLUS Loan Master Promissory Note (MPN). The PLUS Loan MPN can be completed electronically at the following Web site: www.montana.edu/wwwfa.

If your parent is denied a Federal Direct PLUS Loan by the Department of Education, please notify our office in writing if you wish to be considered for additional loan assistance through the Federal Direct Unsubsidized Loan Program.

FEDERAL DIRECT PLUS LOAN FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS: Federal Direct Graduate PLUS loans are awarded to graduate students who are enrolled in at least six credits in a degree-seeking program, with the student being subject to a credit check by the Department of Education. Before the Graduate PLUS Loan can be awarded, students must first apply for their maximum loan eligibility in Subsidized and Unsubsidized Direct Loans. The yearly borrowing limit on the Graduate PLUS Loan is equal to a student's cost of attendance minus any other financial aid received. For example, if your cost of attendance is \$12,000 and you are receiving \$4,000 in other financial aid, you could borrow up to, but no more than, \$8,000. Repayment of the Graduate PLUS Loan begins 60 days after the final disbursement; however, you may be eligible for a deferment as long as you are enrolled at least half time.

The interest rate is fixed at 7.9 percent. A borrower will be charged a required loan fee not to exceed 2.5 percent. This fee will be deducted from each loan disbursement before it is credited to the student's University account.

All Federal Direct Graduate PLUS Loan borrowers at MSU will need to complete a Graduate PLUS Loan Master Promissory Note (MPN), Graduate PLUS Loan Entrance Counseling, and the Graduate PLUS Authorization Form. These requirements can be completed by following the appropriate link at our Web site: www.montana.edu/wwwfa.

SCHOLARSHIPS

Scholarships are awarded on the basis of academic achievement, financial need, or a combination of the two. Many scholarships have additional requirements as well.

Institutional scholarships are provided to the University by donors who specify the award criteria. The selection process is managed by the appropriate college or department as well as through the Financial Aid Office. Some scholarships are awarded to continuing students and others are specifically designed for incoming freshman or transfer students. Students that receive a notice of a scholarship award from MSU should read their letter carefully for possible follow-up requirements such as a Reply Form or Donor Thank You Letter. If those requirements apply to the scholarship and they remain incomplete, the scholarship funds will not pay into the student's university account.

Private scholarships are directly controlled by the donor, not the University; the application process, selection criteria, and recipients are determined by the donor. The donor notifies you of the award, but usually sends the money to the University for distribution.

HOW SCHOLARSHIPS ARE PAID: Most scholarships, both institutional and private, are applied to your University student account each semester. Some may be sent directly to you, but this is the exception. Normally, the University must confirm that you have been accepted and have enrolled full time in courses before payment will be made. If you know that you will be enrolled less than full time (less than 12 credit hours as an undergraduate student), you will need to have your donor or department contact Financial Aid Services to approve payment of your scholarship(s).

If your scholarship arrives after you have already paid your bill for the semester, you will be mailed a refund check by the Student Accounts Office after the scholarship is processed. Your donor may also provide instructions in a cover letter on how the scholarship funds are to be disbursed to you. *If no specific instructions are provided, the Financial Aid Office automatically divides private scholarships over \$500 equally between fall and spring semesters.* Private scholarships of \$499 or less will be applied in full to the current semester bill.

PRIVATE SCHOLARSHIP CHECKS: If you have or will receive a private scholarship, the donor should send your scholarship check, payable to Montana State University, and a cover letter to the Office of Financial Aid Services. All correspondence should include your name, your MSU Identification Number (ID), and directions for

disbursement. *Please inform your donor that it is preferable for MSU to receive scholarship checks for the fall semester in June and in November for the spring semester.* Funds are not disbursed until the beginning of the semester, but early receipt of the check ensures that you will have the funds to pay your bill on time.

If your scholarship check has not been received in the Financial Aid Office by the fee payment deadline, you must make other arrangements to pay your bill to avoid cancellation of classes or accrual of late charges.

SCHOLARSHIP INFORMATION SOURCES: Private scholarship information is available at no charge to all students attending MSU through computerized search services. These services can be accessed through the MSU Financial Aid Home Page at: www.montana.edu/wwwfa.

These search services are an excellent means of searching a national database containing more than 400,000 listings of scholarships, fellowships and grants from fraternal organizations, large corporations, religious groups, clubs, and philanthropic groups, to name a few. As indicated, this is a free service.

DISBURSEMENT OF FUNDS

If financial assistance is available at the time you are billed for University charges, your aid for the semester will be listed as estimated amounts on your bill and deducted from the total due. This will include billable charges (tuition, fees and room and board if you live on campus), plus allowable prior year charges or any other charges assessed by the University such as library or parking fines.

If you do not wish your financial aid awards to be applied toward allowable prior year charges or other charges assessed by the University, please contact the Office of Financial Aid Services at any time prior to payment being made to you for the applicable term.

Be sure to check your bill carefully. Some types of financial aid are listed on your bill and others, such as Work Study, do not appear. Outside donor scholarships sent to the University may be listed for only one-half of your scholarship unless the donor instructs us differently. Be aware that some donors do not release scholarship funds until after the beginning of the semester and therefore, you may need to pay your bill before your scholarship is received by the University.

Private loan checks and other Alaska loan checks made payable to the student and the University need to be endorsed by the student at the Office of Financial Aid Services. These checks will then be applied to your University account.

At no time does Financial Aid Services disburse refund checks. Information regarding your financial aid is submitted electronically to the Student Accounts Office for processing. *All questions regarding your bill, the amount of any refund you may receive, and when*

refund or other checks will be released should be discussed with the Student Accounts Office. You must confirm your bill (pay your fees) each semester with the Student Accounts Office. If your aid is sufficient to cover your bill in full, you can confirm your bill from the MyInfo link on the MSU home page at: www.montana.edu. If your aid is not sufficient to cover your bill in full, your bill will **not** be confirmed. You will receive detailed instructions with your bill. If you have questions about your bill or paying your fees, please contact Student Accounts at 406-994-1991.

If your financial aid exceeds your University charges, you will be paid (refunded) the difference. Disbursement of financial aid funds begins at the start of each semester and continues until the end of that semester. *Please be aware the Student Accounts Office will not release a refund check unless all required financial aid documents and promissory notes have been responded to as required and your bill has been paid or confirmed by the Student Accounts Office.*

If a loan has paid to your student account that you do not wish to receive, you have the right under federal regulations to cancel all or a portion of your loan(s). You will receive a notice with instructions after each loan disbursement.

Please remember, if your financial aid does not cover all of the University charges for the semester, those charges must be paid by the due date specified on your bill. *Failure to pay by the due date may result in late payment penalties and/or cancellation of your registration for the semester.* If you do not have sufficient funds or financial aid to pay your bill by the due date you may wish to use a Deferred Fee Payment Plan (see below). Even if you utilize the Deferred Fee Payment Plan, you will need to also confirm your bill in order for your aid to apply toward the initial installment of your bill.

DEFERRED FEE PAYMENT PLAN: If you will have difficulty in meeting full payment of University charges by the due date, you may apply for the Deferred Fee Payment Plan. This plan permits qualified applicants to pay a minimum of one-quarter of the applicable University charges at the beginning of the semester with the balance being deferred until later in the semester. A non-refundable processing fee is assessed for each approved application. Deferred fee payment installment loan applications or additional information may be obtained from the Student Accounts Office in Montana Hall or on the Student Accounts Office Web site: www.montana.edu/wwwbu/studentaccts.

SHORT-TERM LOAN: This is a loan which permits a student, who may be experiencing temporary difficulties, to borrow small sums of money for a short period of time. No collateral is required for a short-term loan although the student must identify a reliable source of repayment and pay a \$30 loan application fee. In addition, a student must have a cumulative grade-point average of 2.0 or better at MSU, be enrolled for at least six credits as a degree-seeking student, and have a satisfactory repayment record with respect to any previous loan(s) received.

The University reserves the right to reject or decline any application, to determine the amount and a date of repayment for any loan approved, and to require a guarantor. Applications and other information regarding the short-term loan program may be obtained from Financial Aid Services. Allow a minimum of seven (7) working days to process a short-term loan application which must be submitted at least one month prior to the end of the term.

BOOK LOAN: This loan is designed to assist students with money to buy books at the MSU Bookstore before refund checks are distributed. Financial Aid Services has to verify that each student requesting a book loan has adequate funds after University charges are paid to cover the costs of the loan. Funds borrowed are deposited to the student's CatCard no earlier than 10 days prior to the beginning of the term. When the student's financial aid is disbursed, it is applied to the book loan, as well as a non-refundable loan processing fee of \$30. This loan may be requested from Financial Aid Services.

YOUR RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

You have the right to privacy. All records and data submitted with your application for financial aid are treated as confidential information. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), a federal law that protects the confidentiality of a student's educational record, and Montana State statutes, specify that the University may not release information from a student's record to anyone outside the University without the express written consent of the student. These confidential records include financial aid, scholarship, and billing/account information. If you wish to authorize University personnel to release confidential information to another person such as a parent, you will need to complete the Authorization to Release Financial Information form. The form is available in Financial Aid Services or on the Web at www.montana.edu/wwwfa.

You have the right to a complete explanation of the award process. If you do not understand your financial aid award, or feel your application has not been evaluated fairly, please contact us.

You have the right to appeal. You may request a review of any decision concerning your financial aid eligibility. If necessary, you may be directed to submit a written appeal and supporting documentation.

It is your responsibility to provide additional documentation, tax returns, W-2's, and any additional information requested by Financial Aid Services.

It is your responsibility to read, understand and be accountable for all forms or agreements you sign. We recommend you keep copies for your records.

It is your responsibility to report all scholarships, grants, fellowships, tuition waivers, or any other educational resources not indicated on your Financial Aid Award Notification.

CHANGES IN YOUR ELIGIBILITY

Your awards may be reduced or canceled, or you may be required to repay awards that you have already received if you:

- withdraw or drop credits (see “Adding and Dropping Credits” on page 15 and “Withdrawing from the University” on page 17).
- do not meet the stated minimum standards of satisfactory academic progress (see page 15).
- exceed your financial aid eligibility when other financial assistance is received such as scholarships, grants, fellowships, tuition waivers or other educational benefits.
- exceed the aggregate eligibility limits for the loan programs or are delinquent or in default on other student loans.
- become an in-state student after originally being considered a non-resident student for financial aid purposes.
- submit incorrect information on the FAFSA or other financial aid forms or documents.
- have been selected by our Quality Assurance or Institutional Verification Program and submit documentation that results in reduced eligibility, or you fail to submit requested documentation to our office by the prescribed dates.
- do not use financial aid received during the award year solely for expenses related to your education such as tuition and fees, books, supplies, and reasonable living costs.

HOW TO AVOID PROBLEMS

Come to the University with some money of your own. Even if your aid is prepared on time, funds may not be available until after classes begin. You will need money for housing, books, and other immediate expenses. If you are able to save money during the summer before school starts, these savings will be useful in meeting your beginning-of-the-semester expenses and protect you from hardships if your aid is delayed.

Pay your fees and other charges by the due date if your aid is delayed. Fees are due prior to the beginning of each semester. If not paid when due, you are subject to late fees and/or cancellation of registration. ***Contact the Student Accounts Office regarding a Deferred Fee Payment Plan if you cannot pay your entire bill upfront.***

Do not drop any of your classes or withdraw from MSU without checking first with Financial Aid Services. If you drop below the required minimum credit load or fail to complete the appropriate number of credit hours, your financial aid may be reduced and/or canceled and repayment may be required.

Always communicate in a thorough and timely manner by responding immediately to all correspondence from our office. Always include your MSU Identification Number (ID) on written correspondence or telephone messages. **Keep photocopies of all forms and documents you submit to all agencies and offices.**

Keep your permanent, local and e-mail addresses current. You can update your addresses from your MyInfo account at www.montana.edu or by submitting an Address Change Form to the Registrar's Office at 101 Montana Hall. The form is also available from their Web site: www.montana.edu/registrar.

ADDING AND DROPPING CREDITS

When a Financial Aid Award Notification is prepared for you, Financial Aid Services assumes you will be enrolled for 12 or more credits as an undergraduate or 6 or more credits as a graduate student. It is understood, however, that not all students enroll in a full-time course of study. The Registrar's Office officially verifies the number of credits for which all students are enrolled at MSU. Financial Aid Services uses this information to determine your enrollment status based on the 15th class day of University instruction.

CHANGE IN ENROLLMENT STATUS ON OR BEFORE THE 15th CLASS DAY: Disbursement of your aid is contingent upon the number of credits for which you are enrolled at the time your aid is disbursed. *If your enrollment status changes on or before the 15th class day of University instruction due to your dropping credits after financial aid funds have been disbursed, you may have received funds that you were not entitled to receive. You will receive a bill from the Student Accounts Office for any overpayment made to you.*

WITHDRAWAL FROM CLASSES AFTER THE 15TH CLASS DAY: If you withdraw from some, *but not all*, of your classes after the 15th day of University instruction, earning a "W" (withdraw) in the class(es), and if your aid has already disbursed, your current financial aid may not be affected. However, grades of "W" are not considered passing for purposes of the Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy and may affect your future financial aid eligibility (see below).

SATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PROGRESS POLICY

To be eligible for federal and state aid programs and most scholarships and tuition waivers, a student must meet Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy standards *regardless of whether the student received financial aid previously*. The standards represent minimum requirements and may not coincide with academic program requirements. In addition to meeting the standards, students must fulfill all other financial aid requirements. **Violation of any one of these standards will result in loss of financial aid eligibility.**

STUDENT STANDARDS

Scholastic Standard. Students must be in compliance with Montana State University's scholastic standards. *Students on scholastic suspension are not eligible for financial aid.*

Percentage (Pass Rate) Standard. Students must pass *67 percent (rounded up) of the cumulative credits attempted at MSU* in their degree level (i.e. undergraduate or graduate). Passed credits do not include transfer credits, courses taken for audit, courses for which no grade was received, or grades of I (incomplete), F (failure), W (withdraw), and N (continuing). Passing credit is only received once in the enrollment period a course is retaken and passed if a passing grade was previously received for the same course. Students not meeting the standard will lose eligibility due to a **percentage violation**.

Maximum Credit Hour Standard. Students are considered for aid up to a specified number of *cumulative attempted credits*. Transfer credits are included in determining if a student has exceeded the applicable maximum credit hour limit. Students not meeting the standard by exceeding the applicable limit will lose eligibility due to a **maximum credit hour violation**.

- **Undergraduate Maximum Credit Hour Limits.** Pre-baccalaureates (not yet awarded a bachelors degree): 180 cumulative undergraduate credits attempted. Post baccalaureates (already awarded a bachelors degree): 240 cumulative undergraduate credits attempted. All minors, dual majors, dual/concurrent degrees and prior degrees must be completed within the applicable limit to avoid violation.
- **Graduate Maximum Credit Hour Limits.** Non-degree certification programs: 60 cumulative graduate credits attempted. Masters degree: 60 cumulative graduate credits attempted. Doctoral degree: 120 cumulative graduate credits attempted. Masters degree credits are included in the doctoral student limit.

MEASUREMENT: Student records are reviewed for **percentage violations** at the end of spring semester for students who attended fall and/or spring and at the end of summer session for those who attended summer. **Maximum credit hour violations** are reviewed at the end of each enrollment period. Students will be notified if a violation occurs. However, it is the **student's responsibility to know** a violation has occurred whether or not notification is received.

REGAINING ELIGIBILITY: If ineligible for financial aid due to a **percentage violation**, a student may regain eligibility by enrolling at MSU without financial aid and passing sufficient credits to meet the percentage standard. A student must submit **written notification** to Financial Aid Services when this has been accomplished before aid eligibility will be reinstated.

APPEALS: There is an appeal process if a student who is ineligible for financial aid due to a **percentage and/or maximum credit hour violation** feels there is an error in institutional records, or there were mitigating circumstances that prevented the student from meeting Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy standards. An appeal form and

the entire policy, including appeal instructions, are available on the Web at: www.montana.edu/wwwfa.

APPEAL DEADLINES AND PROCESSING: Appeals for financial aid eligibility reinstatement must be received in the Office of Financial Aid Services no later than *November 15 for fall semester*, no later than *March 31 for spring semester* and no later than *June 30 for summer session*. These deadlines apply regardless of the date the student became aware of the loss of eligibility. Appeals received will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis as soon as possible, but may take up to two weeks for an answer depending on the appeal volume at the time submitted.

In all cases, the outcome of any appeal depends on the nature of the circumstances, the quality of documentation provided, and how well the student has demonstrated whether good progress is being made toward earning a degree.

APPELLATE BOARD

An Appellate Board has been established to review actions taken by the Satisfactory Progress Appeals Committee and Financial Aid Services regarding violations of the Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy or for other reasons. The Appellate Board considers requests for review if it can be shown the action taken was in violation of University policy, procedures and regulations, or was arbitrary and capricious.

Requests for review by the Appellate Board must be submitted in writing to the Dean of Students in the Office of Student Affairs no later than 10 days after the denial by Financial Aid Services. Contact Financial Aid Services for additional information.

WITHDRAWING FROM THE UNIVERSITY

If you have confirmed your bill (paid your fees with the Student Accounts Office) and you decide to stop attending classes at MSU, you must officially withdraw from the University by contacting the Dean of Students Office room 174 Strand Union (undergraduate students), or the Division of Graduate Education (graduate students). If you withdraw from the University and are assigned no grade prior to the 15th class day or a grade of 'W' after the 15th class day, then an official withdrawal has taken place.

For financial aid purposes, the withdrawal date will be assessed by your first date of contact to the respective offices listed above. The institution may use any date they deem acceptable in considering potential refunds for University charges. These two dates are not interchangeable and the Financial Aid Services withdrawal date is not negotiable. If you never attend any class, make this known upon completing your University withdrawal.

If you earned all non-passing grades ("F, I, N, W, NR") at the end of the semester, it is determined that you unofficially withdrew and the amount of Title IV aid to be returned for the payment period

will be calculated based on the latest date recorded as “last date of attendance” by your professor(s). If your “last date of attendance” cannot be determined, the amount of Title IV aid to be returned for the payment period will be calculated as if you withdrew at the 50 percent point of the semester.

The date of official or unofficial withdrawal, the type and amount of financial aid received and the amount of your original charges are factors used to determine the aid repayment amount. For more complete details on the calculation performed please contact our office.

If you received funds for which you were not eligible, you will receive a bill from the Student Accounts Office and a Financial Aid Revision Notice from Financial Aid Services. If you have any student loans, your loan service center will be notified of the change in your enrollment status. In keeping with the terms of your loan promissory note, you are expected to notify your loan service center regarding any changes in address or enrollment status.

If you are one of the few students who are eligible for a post-withdrawal disbursement, you will be sent a letter of notification of your eligibility which *must* be returned within 14 days from the date of the notice, or the offer will be rescinded.

If you plan to return to MSU in a subsequent term during the award year, please notify Financial Aid Services.

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

If you or your parent(s) have a substantial change in family income or assets due to long-term unemployment, disaster, disability, divorce, death, or the loss of other compensation or benefits since applying for financial aid, you and/or your parent(s) may be eligible for special consideration in determining your financial aid eligibility. *If you or your parents have experienced such circumstances, please contact Financial Aid Services.*

Special consideration in determining financial aid eligibility may also be given to students with dependent care, disability, study abroad travel expenses, or extraordinary educational expenses. A one-time computer purchase may also be considered. Students may request an increase in their cost of attendance if such expenses are necessary in order for the student to attend MSU and are not provided for by other assisting agencies or cannot be paid for from other resources available to the student. For additional information contact Financial Aid Services.

IMPORTANT REMINDERS

- 1. If your residency or student status classification changes, your aid eligibility may be affected. It may also be affected if you receive any new or any increase in vocational rehabilitation or other benefits, including scholarships, tuition waivers, or fellowships. If the assistance from any of these sources does not appear on your Financial Aid Award Notification or if the sources do appear but the amount is incorrect, it is your responsibility to report them when you respond to your Award Notification or to contact this office in writing as soon as you know about them. This office will follow up on any changes made and, if necessary, recalculate your eligibility. If you want to know how additional resources will affect your financial aid, you may contact Financial Aid Services.*
- 2. Financial aid and account information is accessible electronically on the Web by logging into the secure area through the MyInfo link on the MSU home page at www.montana.edu. You may be able to find answers to many of your questions here.*
- 3. Check out the Financial Aid Services homepage at www.montana.edu/wwwfa. The answers to most financial aid questions can be found here, throughout this document and the many other links on our homepage.*

VERIFICATION

Your application may be selected for review as part of the Federal Quality Assurance (QA) and Institutional Verification Programs, which help to determine the accuracy of application data. If you are selected, you will be requested to provide additional documentation such as copies of your federal tax returns. Under federal regulations, your participation is mandatory, not voluntary, and we appreciate your cooperation. Failure to provide requested documentation can result in cancellation of aid awarded or repayment of aid disbursed.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Information regarding academic programs, facilities, withdrawal and refund policies is available in the current MSU Course Bulletin. Data describing student retention can be obtained from the Registrar's Office. You can obtain additional information regarding financial aid programs and services by reviewing publications and fact sheets available at the Office of Financial Aid Services or on our Web site.

We have experienced and well-trained staff available on a walk-in basis to assist you. Office hours are from 8:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m. and phone lines are open 8 a.m.–5 p.m. weekdays. Please don't hesitate to visit our office or phone us with your questions.



OFFICE OF FINANCIAL AID SERVICES
183 STRAND UNION BLDG.
P.O. BOX 174160
BOZEMAN, MT 59717-4160

TELEPHONE: 406-994-2845

FAX: 406-994-6962

WEB SITE: www.montana.edu/wwwfa

Policies and procedures governing financial aid programs are subject to change at any time without prior notification or publication due to changes in University, State, and/or Federal guidelines and regulations. Montana State University is an equal opportunity/affirmative action institution that does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, creed, religion, or veteran status.