

# Financial Aid

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## Financial Aid

Phone Number: 406.265.3787

Student financial assistance at Montana State University Northern is available in the form of loans, scholarships, tuition waivers, grants, and work opportunities. A typical Financial Aid package is a combination of several of these sources.

Most financial assistance is based on financial need and academic ability, although some scholarships are given on the basis of academic achievement only. All forms required to apply for Financial Aid may be obtained through the Financial Aid Office.

To apply for aid, students must complete a FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid). This form is found at [studentaid.gov](https://studentaid.gov) (<https://studentaid.gov>). It is used in determining the total amount of aid which a student may be eligible to receive. Aid eligibility is determined through an analysis of the student's family financial strength.

## Determining Eligibility

The three components used to determine your eligibility for financial aid are:

1. Cost of Education or allowable expenses
2. Expected Family Contribution
3. Other Financial Resources available to you.

## Cost of Education

This is the estimated average amount for expenses at Northern according to your residency classification, hours enrolled, and program of study. This budget uses average costs and includes everything from tuition and fees to miscellaneous expenses. Expense budgets may also include adjustments for childcare, and costs related to a disability or other non-discretionary expenses.

Since expense budgets reflect average costs, you may spend more or less than the amounts allowed. However, you may pay more for your personal expenses than the amount budgeted. The amount you spend, except for tuition and fees, is up to you and depends on your own individual lifestyle, priorities, and obligations.

The estimated expense budget for the 2021-2022 (nine months) academic year includes the following (fees will vary for graduate students):

	RESIDENT	NON-RESIDENT	WUE
Tuition/Fees	\$6180.00	\$19268.00	\$8604.00
Books/Supplies	\$1400.00	\$1400.00	\$1400.00
Room/Board	\$7700.00	\$7700.00	\$7700.00
Misc./Travel	\$3200.00	\$3200.00	\$3200.00
Loan Fee	\$64.00	\$64.00	\$64.00
TOTAL	\$18,544*	\$31,632.00*	\$20,968.00*

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**All amounts subject to change without notice.**

Tuition and Fees: Average charges for basic instructional costs and mandatory fees. Actual fees paid may vary based on the number of credits carried each semester. Room and Board: An average amount for housing and food charges for students living on or off campus. Books and Supplies: A standard allowance for required books and supplies. Transportation and Personal Expenses: A modest allowance for non-local transportation, (such as a trip from campus to home), entertainment, medical, laundry, toiletries, clothing, etc. If attendance is less than or greater than nine months, or if enrollment is less than 12 credit hours per semester, budget components will be prorated accordingly. Please remember, financial aid often cannot meet all of your costs while attending college, so it is very important for you to manage your financial resources wisely.

## Expected Family Contribution

Since financial aid is designed to assist with your educational expenses, Expected Family Contribution 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 component represents other known and expected financial resources you will have available to assist you with your educational costs, such as scholarships, Vocational Rehabilitation Benefits, etc.

Your eligibility (financial need) is calculated by subtracting your Expected Family Contribution and Other Financial Resources from your allowable Costs of Education.

## **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. Financial aid packages are based on the level of eligibility from highest to lowest and files are worked generally in the order received by the Financial Aid office.

The Federal Pell Grant is the first program awarded, if you are eligible. The next programs awarded are grants (federal, state, institutional) and scholarships. Some awards stipulate further restrictions such as residency. MSU Northern funds are limited and awarded until funds are committed. Work-study funds are awarded after grants. PLUS Loans are the last category of aid to be awarded.

## **Your Financial Aid Offer**

Your financial aid offer is designed to meet as much of your financial eligibility as possible. All offers are contingent on the following:

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. Adjustments to your offer when our office receives information that affects your eligibility. Any aid you receive, in addition to that listed on your offer, which exceeds your unmet eligibility will result in an adjustment.
4. Satisfactory academic progress toward your degree.
5. Compliance with our requests to send additional documentation to support your application.
6. Eligibility to receive funds. i.e., you are a U.S. citizen or eligible non-citizen, you have signed all required documentation, and you are enrolled in a degree-seeking program of study for the appropriate number of credit hours based on your funding status.

## **Accepting or Declining Your Financial Aid Offer**

Unless otherwise indicated, the amounts listed on your Financial Aid offer represent funds based on your anticipated enrollment level. You must accept or decline each part of your aid package. It is important that you make your decision, sign the offer, and submit/return the document by the deadline date. If you want to accept a lesser amount, indicate the amount you wish to request. This is very important, particularly on the loan amounts. Think about the amount and type of loan being accepted. If you have more than one type of loan, you will likely be required to repay those loans simultaneously. Do not borrow more than you absolutely need.

If you have unique circumstances which may affect your costs of attending MSU-Northern, please contact the Financial Aid Office. We may be able to reevaluate your eligibility based on special conditions.

First time students may indicate your acceptance or rejection of the aid offered by returning one copy of your Financial Aid Offer Letter to:

Montana State University Northern  
Financial Aid Office  
P. O. Box 7751  
Havre, MT 59501

Or electronically on our web site at <http://www.msun.edu> (<http://www.msun.edu/>)

Continuing students will not receive a copy of their award letter, and can accept, reject, or adjust their awards electronically on our web site at <http://www.msun.edu> (<http://www.msun.edu/>).

## **Financial Aid Programs**

Financial aid is money in the form of loans, grants and employment available to students to help pay the cost of attending the institution of their choice. Financial aid comes from the Federal Government, which is the largest provider of aid, as well as state governments, the schools themselves, and a large variety of other public and private sources.

### **Federal Pell Grant**

A Federal Pell Grant, unlike a loan, does not have to be repaid. Pell Grants are awarded only to undergraduate students who have not earned a bachelor's or professional degree. The maximum Pell Grant for the 2022-2023 award year is scheduled to be \$6,895. How much you receive will depend on your cost of attendance, 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. Pell Grant funds will be credited to your student account once you confirm your attendance with the Business Office.

## Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG)

A Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG) is for undergraduates with exceptional financial need, with priority being given to students who receive Federal Pell Grants. A FSEOG does not have to be paid back. FSEOG funds will be credited to your expenses in the registration process in the Business Office.

## Student Employment and Work-Study

The Career Center, located in Cowan Hall, assists students attending MSU Northern to locate employment. Both work-study and other part-time employment are listed with the Career Center. On and off campus employment opportunity assistance is available. Referral systems are in place for you to choose jobs that interest you and assistance is available to help with interviews.

- You must receive work-study as part of your financial aid package in order to apply for a work-study job. It is not necessary that you accept work-study if you are successful in finding other part-time employment. If you accept work-study aid, please contact the Career Center for job fair, hiring policies and other information you may need to secure employment.

If you did not receive a work-study award as part of your financial aid package, you may have your name added to the work-study waiting list. If work-study funds become available, students on the waiting list will be considered for an award based on their eligibility. Being placed on the list in no way assures that you will receive a work-study award.

Work-study awards are not credited to your expenses in the Business Office. You are paid on scheduled pay days for the actual hours worked during the preceding two weeks. When you have earned the amount of your work-study award, your employer may decide to continue your employment as a regular student employee. If you still have a balance owing you may be required to make payment with your work study funds.

## Federal Direct Loans

Direct Loans are either subsidized or unsubsidized. With a subsidized loan, the Federal Government pays interest on the loan until you begin repayment and during authorized periods of deferment. If you receive an unsubsidized loan, you will be charged interest from the time the loan is disbursed until it is repaid in full. If you allow the interest to accumulate, it will be capitalized (added to the principal which means the loan "grows") and the amount you repay can become very expensive. If you choose to pay the interest as it accumulates, you will repay less over the life of the loan. You can receive both a subsidized and an unsubsidized loan for the same enrollment period.

The 2022-2023 interest rate is fixed at 4.99% (subsidized and unsubsidized) for under graduate students and 6.54% (unsubsidized) for graduate students.

The borrower must also pay a loan fee of 1.057% of the amount borrowed for undergrad students, and 4.228% for graduate students, which is deducted from each disbursement. The loan fee is paid to the Department of Education.

Repayment begins after you graduate, leave school, or drop below half-time enrollment. You have six months before payments begin. This is called a "grace period". Contact the U.S. Department of Education for more information about repayment options. Federal Direct Loans will be credited to your student account once you confirm your attendance with the Business Office.

## Federal Direct Plus Loans (Parent Loan)

Federal PLUS Loans enable parents with good credit histories to borrow to pay the education expenses of their children. To be eligible, the child must be a dependent undergraduate student enrolled at least half time. The yearly borrowing limit on the PLUS loan is equal to your cost of education minus any other financial aid you receive.

The interest rate is fixed at 7.54%. The interest is charged on the loan from the date that the first disbursement is made until the loan is paid in full.

The borrower must also pay a loan fee of 4.228% of the amount borrowed, which is deducted from each disbursement. The loan fee is paid to the Department of Education.

Repayment generally begins within 60 days after the second loan disbursement. There is no grace period. This means that interest begins to accumulate at the time of the first disbursement and repayment of both interest and principle begins while the student is in school.

Contact the Financial Aid Office for information on how to process this type of loan.

## Scholarships

The Financial Aid Office awards scholarships. Committees make selections and application information is available at the Financial Aid Office.

Scholarships are awarded generally in the spring of each year for disbursement in the following year. These awards are made 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 institution by donors who specify the award criteria. The selection process is managed by a committee and awards are disbursed through

the Financial Aid Office. The Financial Aid Office serves continuing, transfer and incoming potential scholarship students. Private scholarships are directly controlled by the donor, not the institution; the application process, selection criteria, and recipients are determined by the donor. The donor notifies you of the award, but usually sends the funds to the school for distribution.

## How Scholarships Are Paid

Most scholarships are credited to your expenses each semester. Some may be sent directly to you, but this is the exception. Normally, the institution must confirm that you have enrolled before payment will be made. If your scholarship arrives after you have paid your bill for the semester, funds will be delivered to you after you sign the check and it is applied to your account. Generally, scholarships of more than \$500 are divided equally between fall and spring semesters. Scholarships totaling less or equal to \$500 will be disbursed in full and applied to your current enrollment semester. If your scholarship is not available at the time of payment deadlines, you must make other arrangements to pay your bill to avoid cancellation of classes or late charges.

## Disbursement of Funds

Provided you meet all qualifications to receive financial aid funds and you have accepted your charges, any scholarship, grant, or loan awarded to you will be automatically credited to your expenses (tuition, fees, room and board if you live on campus) and any other charges assessed by the institution.

If financial aid credited to your expenses exceeds allowable charges due for the term, a check or direct deposit will be prepared for the difference and will be mailed to your current address on file in BANNER or deposited to your bank account upon completion of processing. The refund will usually be available approximately 14 days after the first day of classes of each term.

Check your billing statement carefully. Some types of financial aid appear on your fee bill as credits and others (such as work-study) are paid at other intervals. Compare your receipts, which show your aid, against your award letter to reconcile funds awarded to you. NOTE: If for any reason you register for classes late or enroll for insufficient credits, your aid will be delayed and possibly adjusted. Loan funds will not be credited to your charges until all required documents have been processed.

Other aid, such as BIA grants and some scholarships arrive in the form of checks. These funds will be credited to your student account once you confirm your attendance with the Business Office. Please remember, fees and other charges must be paid when due or a late fee may be applied and/or your registration may be canceled. If a check does not arrive in time for you to pay your fees and other charges, you are responsible for payment of your bill on the due date. If you have specific questions regarding charges or distribution of refunds please contact the Business Office at 406.265.3733.

## 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.
- 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 the Financial Aid Office.
- You have the right to be notified of cancellation or withdrawal of aid and to be informed of why this action is being taken.
- You have the right to appeal. You may request a review of any decision concerning your financial aid eligibility. Please contact the Financial Aid Office and make an appointment. If necessary you may be directed to submit a written appeal and supporting documentation.
- You have the responsibility to report funds or benefits from any source (such as outside scholarships) that you receive or are promised (before and after you are awarded financial aid).
- The Financial Aid Office is required BY LAW to make adjustments to prevent or correct over awards. We take this responsibility seriously. You will save yourself frustration, inconvenience, and possible financial penalty by reporting any changes in your financial status promptly.
- You have the responsibility to report any change in your student status immediately. If you move, change your name, drop credits, withdraw from school, or do anything else that may affect your financial situation, please report that information to the Financial Aid Office and your student loan lender/servicer.
- You have the responsibility to keep copies of all correspondence regarding your financial aid, whether it is from the Financial Aid Office, governmental agencies, or outside lenders.
- You have the responsibility to use financial aid funds for educationally related expenses only, such as tuition and fees, books, supplies, and reasonable living costs.
- You have the responsibility to repay loans on time. Acceptance of any loan carries the serious obligation to repay. Failure to meet this obligation affects the availability of loans to future students. Before you accept any loans for financing your education, you should carefully consider the total amount and repayment requirements for which you will be responsible when you terminate your educational objectives.
- You have the responsibility to understand how the Financial Aid Office determines if you are making satisfactory academic progress and what happens if you do not maintain satisfactory progress.

## How to Avoid Problems

- Come to the institution with some money of your own. Even if your aid is prepared on time, funds may not be available until classes begin and processing is complete. 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 protecting you from hardships if your aid is delayed.
- Register for the appropriate number of credits. You must register for the appropriate number of credits, which correspond to the funding level indicated on your Financial Aid Award letter.
- Be sure to complete a loan/debt management counseling session and complete your Master Promissory Note if you are a first-time borrower at MSU Northern. This may be completed online at <https://studentaid.gov> (<https://studentaid.gov/>). Your funds will be delayed until you complete this requirement.
- Pay your own fees and other charges by the due date if your aid is late. Fees are due at the beginning of each semester. If not paid when due, you are subject to a late fee and/or cancellation of registration. The Financial Aid Office may be able to offer assistance depending on the nature of the processing problem but cannot prevent cancellation for non-payment of fees. If you anticipate problems, see either the Financial Aid Office or the Business Office for assistance.

If you are not sure how dropping or adding classes will affect your aid status, do not drop any of your classes or withdraw from MSU-Northern without checking first with the Financial Aid Office. If you drop below the required minimum credit load or fail to complete the appropriate number of credits, your aid may be canceled and repayment of the aid may be required.

## Dropping or Adding Credits

When an award letter is prepared for you, the Financial Aid Office has reviewed what you reported on the FAFSA (application) and the Student Data Form and funded you at the level you indicated. At the time of disbursement, your credit load and Satisfactory Progress status is reviewed. Coordination with the Registrar's Office, Business Office and Financial Aid Office will dictate whether or not aid can be released or adjusted. Not all award amounts are affected by changes in enrollment. If your award is affected, you will be notified.

Disbursement of your aid is based upon the number of credits for which you are enrolled at the time your aid is disbursed. Your award letter will indicate this information. If you add credits after your financial aid has been disbursed, you may be entitled to additional funds. You should check with the Financial Aid Office for a review of your funding level.

If you drop credits after all your financial aid funds have been disbursed, including a retroactive drop of credits, you may have received funds that you were not entitled to receive. You will receive a bill for any overpayments that may occur.

## Satisfactory Progress Requirements

To remain eligible for financial aid at MSU Northern, you must make satisfactory academic progress toward your degree objective. Satisfactory Progress is a condition for continued eligibility and is measured by the following factors:

1. Students who receive financial aid assistance must complete the appropriate number of credit hours based on their aid funding level (credits funded). Failure to do so will result in one of two financial aid statuses, WARNING or TERMINATION. See the "Satisfactory Academic Progress" policy at <http://www.msun.edu/admin/policies/600/601-1.aspx>.
2. A student's eligibility is terminated at the point when maximum time frame parameters have been met. Generally, limitations are: 98 attempted credits for an Associate degree, 186 attempted credits for a bachelor's degree, or 60 attempted credits for an undecided degree seeking student. Graduate student eligibility expires at 68 attempted credits. Transfer credits will affect these time frames.
3. Students must meet a Grade Point Average (GPA) and a percentage of credits attempted (usually 67%) requirement to continue their eligibility. Minimum accumulative GPA is 2.00 for undergraduates and 3.00 for graduates. Satisfactory completion means a student has received a minimum grade of 'D' or 'P' (pass). Grades other than A, B, C, D, or Pass do not meet satisfactory academic progress requirements.
4. Students whose status is "Termination" will not be considered for aid while in the "Termination" status. A student's file will be reviewed and an award letter produced when a student is re-instated.
5. This policy is applicable to all students receiving institutionally administered aid. Any federal, state, and institutional aid (including scholarships, fee waivers, work-study and loans) are included in this policy. MSU-N Staff waivers are the only exception. The eligibility of students may be reviewed at any time during the semester.
6. Students declared ineligible for financial aid under this policy will have the opportunity to appeal. The appeal procedure must be initiated by the student by completing an appeal form and returning the form with appropriate documentation to the Financial Aid Office (Cowan Hall, Room 213).

A copy of the "Satisfactory Progress" policy is posted at our web site

<http://www.msun.edu/admin/policies/600/601-1.aspx>. You are responsible for knowing and understanding this policy thoroughly. The information in this policy provides more detailed instructions on how the institution monitors progress and on how to exercise the appeal process.

## Withdrawing from MSU Northern

If you stop attending classes, you should officially withdraw to prevent assignment of grades of "F". For more information on withdrawal procedures, contact the Registrar's Office or Student Services, both located in Cowan Hall.

If you withdraw from all courses either officially or unofficially, your aid will be terminated and a withdrawal calculation will be performed by the Financial Aid Office to determine whether you received funding for which you were not eligible. A copy of this refund/ return of Title IV funds is available in the Financial Aid Office located in Cowan Hall. If you received funds for which you were not eligible, you will receive a bill from the institution for repayment of those funds. **Zero credit earned in any semester will result in immediate Financial Aid TERMINATION.**

If you have any student loans, your lender or servicer will be notified of your enrollment status change and you may enter a "grace period" or repayment status. In keeping with the terms of your loans, you are required to inform your lenders of changes in your enrollment status.

If you plan to return to MSU-Northern and apply for assistance, please refer to the Satisfactory Progress policy to determine your eligibility status for future applications for aid.

## Special Circumstances

If you or your parent(s) have had a substantial change in family income or assets due to unemployment, disaster, disability, divorce, 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 addition, if you have non-discretionary expenses, which may affect your ability to meet educational expenses, you may ask for reconsideration to increase your eligibility. All requests must be documented and reasons for the exception must be provided.

If you or your parent(s) have special circumstances, please contact the Financial Aid Office.

## Reporting Changes in Circumstances

If your residency or student classification status changes, your aid eligibility may be affected. If you receive any new or additional aid from any source, your eligibility may be affected. Report these changes in writing to the Financial Aid Office as soon as you know of them. If these changes do not appear on your Financial Aid Offer, it is your responsibility to report them.

The office will follow up on changes made and, if necessary, recalculate your eligibility. If you are no longer eligible for any part of the aid you have been offered, the Office will work with you to resolve the over award. If, however, it is necessary that you repay a portion of your financial aid, you must repay it before you are eligible to receive further aid.

## Verification of Information

Some applicants are selected at the federal level for verification of information contained on their application (FAFSA). This means that the Financial Aid Office needs additional information from you in order to determine your eligibility. You will be asked to data retrieve your tax information from the IRS or provide a tax return(s) transcript from the IRS of the student (and parent or spouse) when applicable. Failure to provide this requested documentation would stop further processing.

## Additional Information

Our goal is to provide information for you, the student, to enable you to meet your educational objectives and long-term goals. We have a qualified staff of professionals to further assist you with questions beyond what is provided in this guide. If you have questions, please call us at 406.265.3787 or come in to the office located at Cowan Hall, Room 213 in Havre. Office hours are 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. weekdays. Although personnel usually are available on a walk-in basis, appointments are recommended.

Policies and procedures governing financial aid programs are subject to change at any time without prior notice or publication due to changes of policy by federal and state governments. MSU-Northern is an equal opportunity/affirmative action institution that does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation or preference, marital status, age, physical or mental disability, creed or political belief, religion, or veteran status.