

Student Financial Aid

Note: This information is subject to change, without notice, in order to comply with federal, state or institutional requirements or policy.

GENERAL INFORMATION

The Financial Aid Center administers the student financial aid programs that provide monetary assistance to students who, without such aid, would be unable to attend MUW. Student aid is awarded as a supplement to, not in lieu of, reasonable contributions from parental income, other parental resources, and the student's own resources and earnings. The maximum award will not exceed the sum actually needed to supplement these family resources. The University reserves the right to limit awards to prevent award duplication and to include all scholarships, assistantships, veteran's benefits, and other resources to prevent over-awarding the student's need.

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is the primary application for aid from federal, state and institutional sources. Because funds are limited in our scholarship, Work Study, and Perkins loan program, early application is recommended. Students submitting their FAFSA before March 1, each year will receive priority consideration for such funds as their eligibility allows. FAFSA forms are available in the Financial Aid Center or online at www.fafsa.ed.gov. Online application is much easier and faster but a federal Personal Identification Number (PIN) is needed for the student and at least one parent. PINs may be obtained from www.pin.ed.gov. PINs will be assigned and sent to your email address within three days.

PAYMENT OF FUNDS TO STUDENT ACCOUNTS

Financial aid funds from all sources will be applied to each student's account balance for tuition, fees, and other institutional charges after the student has registered and attendance has been verified. Book Vouchers may be obtained from the Comptroller's Office to allow books to be charged to the student account as long as aid funds will cover all fees and projected book charges. Funds will be disbursed no earlier than 10 days after the beginning of classes. Funds remaining after all charges are paid will be refunded to the student by the Comptroller's Office.

Students earn aid funds through attendance; therefore, students who fail to attend classes within the first three class meetings may not receive the awards that were scheduled. Awards are subject to cancellation and possible repayment if those funds were previously used to pay institutional charges. Students who withdraw from classes later in the semester before reaching the 60 percent point in the semester may have a pro rata portion of their aid funds returned to federal fund accounts or lenders as required by federal regulations.

SCHOLARSHIPS AND AWARDS

To be considered for MUW scholarships, students must submit admission and scholarship applications, both of which can be obtained from the Office of Admissions. Scholarships are not posted until a student has been accepted to the University, but may be awarded at the time of application. Completing and submitting the request does not guarantee that an award will be issued. To ensure their requests for financial assistance are given full consideration, students should apply by April 1.

Most MUW scholarships are awarded for a period of one academic year (nine months) and are renewable for a maximum of eight semesters for incoming freshmen or four semesters for junior transfer students.

Unless the renewal criteria for the specific awards state differently, all scholarship recipients are required to enroll in at least 12 credit hours per semester or 24 credit hours for the fall and spring semester combined and to maintain a minimum MUW cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 3.0. If these criteria are not met the scholarships will be suspended.

STATE OF MISSISSIPPI TUITION GRANTS

The Mississippi Resident Tuition Assistance Grant (MTAG)

The Mississippi Eminent Scholars Grant (MESG)

The HELP Scholarship

The Leveraging Educational Assistance Partnership Program (LEAP)

The Mississippi Resident Tuition Assistance Grant (MTAG) is awarded to all applicants who meet the following eligibility requirements:

- The first time freshman must have a cumulative high school GPA of 2.5 (calculated on a 4.0 scale) and a minimum ACT composite score of 15.
- The successful applicant must have been a Mississippi resident for one year prior to enrollment in college.
- The successful applicant must have been admitted as a full-time student to the university.

- The successful applicant may not be receiving the full Federal Pell Grant as determined by the completion of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).
- The petitioner must have completed an application and processed a Student Aid Report (SAR), or signed a certification statement in lieu of the SAR, provided and signed all supporting documents, and submitted these materials to the Mississippi Office of Student Financial Aid by the deadline of September 15.

Students can apply online (www.IHL.state.ms.us).

Note: Freshmen MTAG applicants, who completed the GED or who completed home schooling, should contact the Mississippi Office of Student Financial Aid (1-800-327-2980) for additional eligibility and documentation requirements. First-time MTAG applicants who are currently attending college must meet the same eligibility requirements as entering freshmen with the following exceptions: the student does not need to submit an ACT score, but he/she must maintain a cumulative grade point average of 2.5 on all college course work.

Continuing MTAG applicants must

- have maintained continuous enrollment,
- have a minimum college grade point average of 2.5,
- maintain Mississippi residency status,
- maintain full-time enrollment at an eligible Mississippi institution,
- complete and process all above delineated application materials by September 15 each year.

Applications and completed eligibility requirements may be acquired by contacting the Office of State Student Financial Aid (1-800-327-2980 or (601) 432-6663) that administers the program.

The Mississippi Eminent Scholars Grant (MESG) is awarded to all applicants who meet the eligibility requirements listed below. The student must

- be a first-time student, defined as a high school senior who applies for the award during his/her last year of secondary school,
- have a cumulative high school GPA of 3.5 (calculated on a 4.0 scale),
- earn a minimum ACT composite score of 29 (SAT 1280) or be recognized as a finalist or semifinalist by either the National Merit Scholarship Program or National Achievement Scholarship Program,
- maintain Mississippi residency for one year prior to enrollment in college,

- complete and submit an application, along with all supporting documents, to the Mississippi Office of Student Financial Aid by September 15 each year.

Applications and complete eligibility requirements may be acquired by contacting the Office of State Student Financial Aid (1-800-327-2980 or (601) 432-6663) who administers the program. Students can apply online (www.IHL.state.ms.us).

The Higher Education Legislative Plan Scholarship (HELP) assists needy students with their college tuition at Mississippi institutions. The successful applicants for this grant/scholarship must be residents of Mississippi who are enrolled full-time at a state college or university. Applicants must also meet the following basic requirements: a 2.5 GPA on high school course work and a minimum ACT composite score of 20, as well as other academic criteria, such as a FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) on file and a family average gross income of less than \$36,500.00.

Applications and complete eligibility requirements may be attained by contacting the Office of State Student Financial Aid (1-800-327-2980 or (601) 432-6663) who administers the program. Students can apply via the internet (www.IHL.state.ms.us).

Leverage Educational Assistance Partnership Program (LEAP) is designed to help Mississippi residents pay tuition at Mississippi universities. LEAP grants vary according to student need and the availability of funds. To be eligible, the applicant must

- be a U.S. citizen (or eligible non-citizen) and a Mississippi resident,
- be enrolled as a full-time student,
- have a high school diploma or its recognized equivalent,
- apply for federal aid,
- document a substantial financial need.

FEDERAL FINANCIAL AID PROGRAMS

Loans

Student loan programs provide long-term, low-interest loans for students. Students must enroll at least half-time (6 undergraduate hours and 4.5 graduate hours) each term in order to qualify for student loans. All loans must be repaid, with repayment beginning six months after graduating or leaving MUW.

The **Federal Subsidized Stafford Loan** is based on financial need as well as annual and aggregate loan limits. Funds from this loan are disbursed each term according to the student's award notification and promissory note requirements. Interest on this "subsidized" loan does not accrue during eligible periods of enrollment and stated grace periods.

The **Federal Unsubsidized Stafford Loan** is based on the cost of education as well as annual and aggregate loan limits. Funds from this loan are disbursed each term according to the student's award notification and promissory note requirements. Interest on this loan begins to accrue upon disbursement; however, the payment of interest is deferred until six months after graduation or leaving MUW.

Annual Loan Limit Amounts (Effective July 1, 2007)

\$3,500.00 for First Year

\$4,500.00 for Second Year (30 or more hours)

\$5,500.00 for Third Year (60 or more hours)

\$5,500.00 for Fourth Year (90 or more hours)

\$8,500.00 for Graduate students enrolled in Graduate Programs

Note: Students whose parents are unable to receive a PLUS loan may apply for a supplemental Unsubsidized Loan of \$4,000.00 for first year and second year or \$5,000.00 for third and fourth year. Independent students may also be eligible for these additional unsubsidized amounts each year. Graduate students may also receive an additional \$10,000.00 per year in supplemental Unsubsidized Loan funds.

The **Federal Perkins Loan** is based on exceptional need and availability of funds. The loan has an interest rate of 5 percent. Interest begins to accrue and repayment begins nine months after graduation or when a student is no longer enrolled at least half time.

The **Federal Parent Loan for Undergraduate Students (PLUS)** allows the parents or legal guardians of a dependent student to borrow funds to meet the cost of education not met by other financial aid assistance awarded to the student. The repayment period on these loans begins 60 days after the loan is fully disbursed. (Usually, the first payment is due in March for a loan that is awarded for fall and spring semesters.)

Grants

A grant is gift aid that does not have to be repaid. Only undergraduate students pursuing their first undergraduate degree are eligible for most federal and state grants. **The Federal Pell Grant** is an entitlement program that is based on financial need. The amount of the Pell Grant is determined by the results from the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Pell Grants must be prorated for less than full-time enrollment; however, students can still be eligible for Pell Grants even when less-than full-time.

Academic Competitiveness Grant – Pell Grant recipients who graduated from high school with a “rigorous program” or took at least two Advanced Placement courses and earned a score of three (3) or more may qualify for the Academic Competitiveness Grant during the freshman and sophomore years.

SMART Grant – Pell Grant recipients who major in Mathematics, Science, Engineering or Pre-medical/dentistry may qualify for Smart Grants during their junior and senior years.

The **Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (SEOG)** is a grant program based on exceptional need and availability of funds. Generally, students must be eligible for a Federal Pell Grant, apply early, and meet other eligibility requirements in order to be considered for these funds. Students must enroll at least half-time (six hours) each term or eligibility for this grant will be lost and funds advanced must be repaid.

Student Employment

The **Federal College Work-Study Program** provides students with part-time employment. Eligibility for this program is dependent on financial need and availability of funds. Students earn at least minimum wage and are paid on a bi-weekly basis for actual hours worked. Students are assigned work based on positions that are available and the need for student assistance. Students must agree to work the hours required by these positions. Work schedules and positions are determined each semester and are scheduled around the student's class schedule whenever possible.

Attendance and Repayment Policy

Attendance monitoring is required by the U.S. Department of Education to support any disbursements made to eligible students receiving federal or state financial aid funds. Failure to begin attendance in any course for which you have registered will require a pro rata reduction in Pell Grant awards and possible cancellation of student loans.

Faculty will report “no shows” after the first two weeks of class each term and will subsequently post an F grade for any student who does not withdraw prior to the drop date. Students are encouraged to make sure faculty know they are attending early in the term to avoid a “no show” reduction in awards.

Students also should be aware that a total withdrawal from MUW will require a review of awards and the possible reduction or repayment of funds unearned by attendance.

Withdrawal from the University – Official and Unofficial

Students who choose to withdraw from the University prior to the end of the term must follow the “Withdrawal Process” established by the University. Failure to complete the semester may have an effect on the financial aid funds disbursed to a student's account and paid to cover tuition, fees, bookstore charges, campus housing costs, or paid to the student as a refund. Students who drop before the 60% point in the semester will have a “pro rata reduction” in the amount of financial aid disbursed. The federal regulations expect students to “earn” the use of funds for attending the “entire” semester. The percentage of the semester that was not attended becomes the percent of funds that may need to be returned. This

reduction will leave an unpaid balance owed to the University on the student's account BUT student loans will be reduced with their lender and other aid funds will be returned to the program accounts for possible use in the summer semester.

Failure to complete the semester and failure to "officially" withdraw is considered an "unofficial withdrawal". Failure to complete the courses in the semester will result in a grade of F. Faculty are requested to report the last day of class attendance (LDA) or participation in a class project or activity to allow the Financial Aid Office to calculate the percentage of the course the student completed. When no LDA is provided, the 50% point or mid-term date is used to determine the amount of aid to be returned to the federal or state programs. The longer students attend, the lower the amount of funds to be returned and the amount owed MUW will also be less.

SATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PROGRESS – REQUIREMENTS FOR FEDERAL FINANCIAL AID RECIPIENTS

All students at MUW who receive federal financial aid must make satisfactory academic progress toward completion of their degrees within a reasonable period of time. MUW has approved the following standards defining satisfactory progress, in accordance with regulations issued by the U.S. Department of Education. Satisfactory Academic Progress status will be determined at least once each year, generally at the end of the spring term. Usually, students may take 24 hours before these standards eliminate financial aid eligibility.

Undergraduate Students

An undergraduate student is considered to be making satisfactory progress if he or she:

1. Is admitted and enrolled as a degree student;
2. Meets the required qualitative measure for financial aid recipients;
3. Maintains measurable progress toward the completion of the degree;
4. Completes degree requirements within a reasonable length of time.

Required Qualitative Measure

In order to meet the required qualitative measure, the student must maintain a minimum overall MUW GPA (only courses taken at MUW are used for this standard). The GPA requirement increases as students progress toward graduation as shown in this scale:

Cumulative Semester Hours Attempted	MUW Must Pass		MUW Cumulative GPA
0-29	67%	and at least a	1.00
30-59	67%	and at least a	1.50
60-89	67%	and at least a	1.75
90-128	67%	and at least a	2.00

Measurable progress requirement: In order to maintain measurable progress toward the completion of their degrees, students must successfully complete 67 percent of all MUW credit hours attempted. (Hours attempted include repeated courses, dropped courses, withdrawals, and incomplete courses.) This measure generally becomes effective when a student has attempted 24 hours at MUW.

Example A: If you have attempted 32 credit hours and successfully complete 26 of those hours, dropped 3 hours and failed 3 hours, your completion rate will be 26 hours earned divided by 32 hours attempted = 81.2 percent completion rate. You meet the measurable progress component of this requirement.

Example B: If you have attempted 32 credit hours and successfully completed 20 of those hours, and either dropped, failed, repeated, have an Incomplete in, or withdrew from the other 12 hours, your completion rate would be 20 divided by 32 = 62.5 percent completion rate. You do not meet the measurable progress component of this requirement and you are not eligible for financial aid assistance.

Reasonable length of time requirement: At MUW a reasonable length of time for the completion of a degree program is generally defined as no more than 150 percent of the normal time required to complete a degree program. Course work that transfers into a degree program will adjust the time frame accordingly.

Example A: If your degree requires that you complete 124 credit hours, your reasonable length of time will be 124 hours x 150 percent = 186 hours. You will be within your reasonable length of time during your first 186 hours of attempted course work.

Example B: If your degree requires that you complete 124 credit hours and you have transferred in 54 hours, your reasonable length of time will be 124 hours – 54 transfer hours = 70 x 150 percent = 105. You will be within your reasonable length of time during your first 105 hours of course work attempted at MUW.

A student who is working toward a degree level that he or she has already completed or exceeded (i.e., second bachelor's degree) will have his or her reasonable length of time established at no more

than 100 percent of the normal length of the program minus any course work that transfers into the program.

Second B.S. Example: If your new B.S. degree requires 124 credit hours and MUW allows 65 hours from your first degree to count toward your second degree, your reasonable length of time will be 124 credit hours – 65 from your first degree = 59. You will be within your reasonable length of time during your first 59 hours of course work attempted on your second degree.

Graduate Students

Graduate students are considered to be making satisfactory progress if they comply with the academic regulations described in the Graduate Studies section of the Bulletin and complete their programs within the 150% maximum time-frame as described above.

Reinstatement of Financial Aid – Eligibility and Appeals Process

If a student is ineligible for financial aid because the student has not maintained satisfactory progress toward completion of his/her degree, the student may reapply for financial aid when he/she has cleared the deficiency and is again progressing satisfactorily according to the requirements outlined above. After earning at least 12 hours at the student's own expense or through an alternative or non-federal loan, the student may submit an appeal to restore financial aid eligibility.

When mitigating circumstances are involved, the student may appeal the suspension of eligibility. To do so, the student may draft a letter of appeal or complete an Appeal Form and submit it to the Director of Financial Aid. The letter must include:

- a. The reason(s) why satisfactory progress is not being made;
- b. Any documentation that supports the rationale for the appeal.

The letter will be reviewed and a decision will be made within two weeks. Appeals may be approved without provision, or they may be approved provisionally – establishing a one semester probationary period in which the student must earn a given number of credit hours and/or specified GPA.

Appeals may also be denied. It is the student's responsibility to initiate any appeal for financial aid eligibility. Appeals for academic reinstatement granted by the Scholastic Appeals Committee or other departments do not constitute reinstatement of financial aid eligibility.

Students who are granted a probationary approval may need to submit an appeal at the end of each semester for several semesters before the standards are fully met. As long as progress is being made, subsequent appeals should be approved to allow students to regain full eligibility.