

MONTANA BOARD OF REGENTS OF HIGHER EDUCATION
Policy and Procedures Manual

SUBJECT: FINANCIAL AFFAIRS

Policy 940.8 – Montana Resident Undergraduate Student Financial Aid

Effective: November 22, 2019; Issued: November 25, 2019

I. Board Policy

A. Statement of policy.

This policy implements the provisions of the Montana resident student financial aid program in accordance with Title 20, chapter 26, parts 1 and 2, MCA, with the purpose of establishing a new financial aid framework for Montana resident student financial aid. With the collaboration of the Board of Regents and the Montana University System (MUS) postsecondary institutions, the 2019 Montana Legislature enacted a three-pronged approach to resident student financial aid with the creation of three distinct categories of financial aid programs for undergraduate students. All resident undergraduate student financial aid is combined under one central board policy, identifying the general financial aid framework, delegation of authority, and duties of the commissioner. Specific eligibility criteria, requirements and procedures for each type of financial aid available under this program will be maintained by the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education (OCHE) and posted to the MUS website.

II. Procedures

A. Financial Aid Framework.

A financial aid framework based on a three-pronged approach to resident student financial aid is established, creating three distinct categories of financial aid programs for undergraduate students.

1. An Incentive Program funded by the state to encourage Montana resident students to pursue postsecondary credentials in science, technology, engineering, math (STEM), and health care fields that satisfy current and anticipated economic and workforce development needs in the state.
2. A Merit Program aimed at recruiting and retaining the highest-achieving Montana resident students to units of the Montana University System, funded through tuition waivers, discounts, and other financial aid pursuant to policies adopted by the Board of Regents.
3. An Access-to-Higher-Education Program to provide scholarships and other financial aid to Montana resident students who demonstrate financial need, including scholarships funded by the foundations that have been established for the benefit of units of the Montana University System, and state match for federal need-based aid.

B. Delegation of authority and duties of the Commissioner.

The Montana resident student financial aid program is administered by the Board of Regents through the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education. The Commissioner of Higher Education shall:

1. adopt policies to administer the financial aid program, that includes student eligibility criteria and financial need criteria for need based aid;
2. determine the amount of individual financial aid awards;
3. establish procedures for fiscal control, fund accounting, and program reporting; and
4. apply for, receive, and administer applicable federal and private funds under the program.

Financial aid awards are contingent upon state funding and are not guaranteed beyond the legislative appropriations for the program.

- C. Interpretation. The Commissioner of Higher Education shall administer the program in accordance with Title 20, chapter 26, parts 1 and 2, MCA and legislative appropriation levels. The Commissioner may resolve program issues and make reasonable interpretations regarding the program and legislative intent.
- D. A list of incentive, merit, and access-to-higher education scholarships and other financial aid programs available under this policy will be maintained on the MUS website and will include specific eligibility criteria, requirements, and procedures for each type of financial aid.

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History:

ITEM 185-102-R1119, as approved by the Board of Regents November 22, 2019.