



Montana Board of Education

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the Montana Constitution and the Montana Board of Education affirm that access to educational opportunity is essential to the well-being of Montana's students, families, and communities; and

WHEREAS, Montana's high schools play a vital role in helping students explore and prepare for the full range of postsecondary and career options available in Montana, including pathways through colleges, universities, apprenticeships, and workforce training programs; and

WHEREAS, completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is a key step in accessing financial aid, including grants, scholarships, work-study programs, the upcoming Workforce Pell, and federal student loans, that can make higher education and workforce training more affordable for Montana families; and

WHEREAS, in 2024, Montana's FAFSA completion rate was 44 percent, compared to the national average of 54 percent, leaving an estimated \$12 million in financial aid unclaimed by Montana students; and

WHEREAS, the Montana University System's proposed Direct Admissions initiative will help simplify the college exploration process by proactively informing high school students of the in-state postsecondary options for which they already qualify, without requiring any application fee or obligation to enroll; and

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Montana Board of Education encourages all Montana public high schools to:

1. Improve students' and families' understanding of, and completion of, the FAFSA by incorporating FAFSA awareness into financial literacy curriculum, hosting FAFSA completion events; and
2. Participate in the Montana University System's Direct Admissions initiative to help students and families better understand their postsecondary opportunities in Montana; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Montana Board of Education encourages the Montana Office of Public Instruction and the Montana Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education to assist interested school districts in these efforts through technical assistance, data-sharing protocols, and outreach to families and communities; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that the Montana Board of Education shall charge a stakeholder working group, including representatives of the Montana University System, the Montana Office of Public Instruction, school administrators, counselors, families, and community partners, to develop coordinated approaches that strengthen access to postsecondary opportunities and support local implementation efforts.

RESOLVED BY THE MONTANA BOARD OF EDUCATION ON NOVEMBER 21, 2025.

Todd Buchanan
Chairperson
Board of Regents

Dr. Tim Tharp
Chairperson
Board of Public Education