

## Understanding Financial Aid

Understanding your aid offer will help you financially prepare for the academic year. This document offers information about managing education expenses, the loan process, other resources, and your rights and responsibilities. Financial aid is based on your attendance (credits enrolled) at the University of Southern Maine. The Student Financial Services office reserves the right to revise offers of financial aid at any time during the year based on availability of funds and/or changes in regulation and/or procedures mandated by University, state, or federal authorities. Financial aid offers are conditional upon receipt of funds from all sources.

The financial aid offer is subject to applicable standards and criteria; further detail regarding this is available online: [www.maine.edu/students/financial-aid/condition-awards](http://www.maine.edu/students/financial-aid/condition-awards).

More student consumer information online: [usm.maine.edu/student-financial-services](http://usm.maine.edu/student-financial-services)

### CHANGES TO FINANCIAL AID OFFERS

A financial aid offer may be adjusted under certain circumstances. If your financial aid offer changes, you will be notified via email to your maine.edu address when the revised offer is ready to view.

You are **required** to notify the Student Financial Services office of:

- Your enrollment plan for the year (how many credits you expect to take each semester)
- Changes in housing plans
- The receipt of additional funding expected by the student from sources other than the Student Financial Services office

Other conditions that may change your offer include:

- Receipt of other financial assistance not already listed (e.g. scholarships, waivers)
- Changes in the number of enrolled credit hours
- Changes in family circumstances
- Changes in information on the FAFSA
- Changes to degree program or major
- Changes in Federal and/or State Grant eligibility

Students may reach out to the Student Financial Services office to appeal for additional financial aid due to unusual (dependency) or special (financial) circumstances. After all requested documentation has been received, appeals will be reviewed within two weeks and a decision will be communicated in a timely manner. Examples of unusual or special circumstances that may affect eligibility include:

- Homelessness or risk of homelessness
- Unsafe relationship or lack of contact with parent
- Loss of employment / income
- Death of a parent or spouse
- Extensive medical expenses paid out of pocket

## CONDITIONS OF YOUR FINANCIAL AID

To remain eligible for financial aid, you must:

- Enroll at least half-time (6 credits for Undergraduate and UMLaw students, 3 credits for Graduate students) for most types of financial aid
- Remain active in your degree program
- Not be in default on a federal loan or owe money back on a federal grant
- Meet [Satisfactory Academic Progress \(SAP\)](#) requirements

## VIEW AND ACCEPT YOUR FINANCIAL AID OFFER

Log into MyUSM portal at [mycampus.maine.edu/](http://mycampus.maine.edu/) then navigate to **MaineStreet, Student Self-Service**. Click on **“Accept/Decline Awards”** in the Financials section to view and accept your financial aid offer. You can save it as a PDF or print for your records. You can also access the Accept/Decline Awards link from the View Financial Aid Summary.

Any aid offered with the abbreviation “EST” (Estimated) in its name is not a final offer and additional steps may be required before this funding can be applied to your student account.

## COST ESTIMATES

The offer of financial aid is based on an estimated average Cost of Attendance (COA). Our standard COA includes tuition and fees, housing and food, allowances for books, supplies, travel/transportation\*, loan fees, and miscellaneous expenses. On a case by case basis we may also include allowances for the rental or purchase of a personal computer, costs related to a disability, dependent care costs, and reasonable costs for eligible study-abroad programs for qualifying students. *(\*Law students have a \$500 per semester estimated parking fee included in their COA for travel/transportation for fall and spring semesters. The fee will be removed if a student opts out of a parking space, and this may result in a financial aid adjustment.)*

Your costs may differ from our estimate depending on your specific circumstances. The following offices can help you calculate your predicted expenses. Remember to plan for the purchase of textbooks and any other supplies required by your courses.

<b>Student Financial Services:</b>	Tuition and Fees	<a href="http://usm.maine.edu/student-financial-services">usm.maine.edu/student-financial-services</a>
<b>Residential Life:</b>	Housing and Food	<a href="http://usm.maine.edu/reslife">usm.maine.edu/reslife</a>
<b>University Store:</b>	Books and Supplies	<a href="http://usm.maine.edu/university-store">usm.maine.edu/university-store</a>

## RELEASE OF FINANCIAL AID

Financial aid can be applied to your student account once **all required documents are received and reviewed by Student Financial Services, but no sooner than 10 days before the start of your first class each semester**. You are responsible for any balance due after financial aid is applied to your student account.

The number of credits you are registered for must be equal to the number of credits on which your financial aid is based. **Update your credit hours with Student Financial Services to prevent delays. \*Graduate students taking 12 or more credits of enrollment each semester may notify their financial aid counselor if they wish to have their higher cost of attendance considered.**

**Federal Work-Study (FWS)** recipients must complete all new hire paperwork (Direct Deposit, W-4 and I-9) within three (3) days of their start date. FWS Grad Aide positions are offered through the Office of Graduate Studies. FWS funds are not applied directly to the student account. If a student does not wish to pursue student employment offered in their financial aid package they can decline the offer through MaineStreet, Self-Service or by contacting Student Financial Services directly. FWS Employment opportunities can be found on the Job and Internship Board offered by Campus Student Employment.

## **SUMMER AND WINTER ENROLLMENT**

**Summer** is the first semester in the new academic year. To qualify for financial aid in the summer semester you must meet the same conditions as required for the fall or spring semesters. Students can self-report their enrollment plan either through MaineStreet, Student Self-Service or by contacting Student Financial Services.

**Winter Session** provides an opportunity to take courses during the winter break and is considered a part of the spring semester for financial aid and billing purposes. Enrolling in a Winter Session course may change your financial aid eligibility for the spring semester, but does not always result in additional funds. Please contact Student Financial Services with questions regarding eligibility.

## **MAINTAINING ELIGIBILITY**

- Types of Aid (Examples: Loans, Grants, Scholarships, Work-Study)  
<https://usm.maine.edu/student-financial-services/types-of-aid/>
- Impact of Withdrawal and Return of Title IV (Federal) Funds Policy  
<https://usm.maine.edu/student-financial-services/the-impact-of-withdrawing/>
- Impact of Repeated Coursework Policy  
<https://usm.maine.edu/student-financial-services/the-impact-of-repeated-coursework/>
- Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy (SAP)
  - Federal regulations and University policy require that financial aid recipients make regular progress toward degree completion within a specific period of time. To evaluate compliance, USM maintains a Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy:  
<https://usm.maine.edu/student-financial-services/satisfactory-academic-progress-for-continued-aid-eligibility/>

## **FEDERAL LOANS**

USM promotes responsible borrowing and encourages students to borrow only what they need to assist with the cost of their education. Each year you accept a new Federal Direct Loan, it is recommended you complete an Annual Student Loan acknowledgement: [studentaid.gov/asla/](http://studentaid.gov/asla/). The Acknowledgement is not required, but is intended to provide students with information and resources that can be used to make informed borrowing decisions.

**Federal Nursing Student Loan:** In order to meet the requirements for an accepted loan, students must complete a Nursing Student Loan Promissory Note (NPN) each academic year. Nursing students will receive an email notification from Heartland ECSI, the University's contracted loan servicer, with details on how to sign the NPN. If the NPN is not completed the loan may be delayed or canceled. Related questions should be directed to the Shared Processing Center at 800-308-6148.

**Subsidized Direct Loan:** Payment of principal is deferred, and no interest accrues while the student is enrolled at least half-time.

**Unsubsidized Direct Loan:** Payment of principal is deferred, but interest accrues and can be paid by the student while in school.

**First-time Federal Direct Loan Borrowers:** must complete Loan Entrance Counseling and a Master Promissory Note (MPN). Graduate/professional students can be eligible for Direct Unsubsidized Loans, Direct PLUS Loans, or both. All students need to complete an MPN for each loan type they intend to receive. Entrance Counseling provides information about the responsibilities and obligations you are assuming to help you better understand borrowing and repayment. The MPN is a legal document in which you promise to repay your loan(s) and any accrued interest and fees to the U.S. Department of Education. It also explains the terms and conditions of your loan(s). Fulfill these requirements at [studentaid.gov](http://studentaid.gov).

An origination fee will be assessed on each Direct Loan disbursement. This is a mandatory fee charged by the US Department of Education to offset processing costs. This fee is adjusted annually on October 1 by the US Department of Education in accordance with federal budget sequestration formulas. For more information visit: [usm.maine.edu/student-financial-services/federal-direct-loan-limits-aggregate-limits/](http://usm.maine.edu/student-financial-services/federal-direct-loan-limits-aggregate-limits/)

The offer of Direct Loans is based on grade level at the time of your initial financial aid offer. Students who advance within the academic year to a higher grade level may be eligible for additional Direct Loan funding.

**ANNUAL DIRECT LOAN LIMITS (Combined Subsidized and Unsubsidized)**

Grade Level	Dependent	Independent
First Year (0-23 credits)	\$5,500 (max. \$3,500 Subsidized)	\$9,500 (max. \$3,500 Subsidized)
Sophomore (24-53 credits)	\$6,500 (max. \$4,500 Subsidized)	\$10,500 (max. \$4,500 Subsidized)
Junior (54-83 credits)	\$7,500 (max. \$5,500 Subsidized)	\$12,500 (max. \$5,500 Subsidized)
Senior (84+ credits)	\$7,500 (max. \$5,500 Subsidized)	\$12,500 (max. \$5,500 Subsidized)
Graduate & Law		\$20,500 (Unsubsidized Only)

**LIFETIME DIRECT LOAN LIMITS (Combined Subsidized and Unsubsidized)**

Grade Level	Dependent	Independent
Undergraduate Lifetime/Aggregate Limit	\$31,000 (max. \$23,000 Subsidized)	\$57,500 (max. \$23,000 Subsidized)
Graduate and UMLaw Lifetime/Aggregate Limit		\$138,500

## **FEDERAL DIRECT PLUS LOANS**

Graduate and UMLaw students along with parents of dependent undergraduate students may choose to borrow a credit-based Federal Direct PLUS Loan to assist with educational expenses. The Student Financial Services website provides more information. <https://usm.maine.edu/student-financial-services/federal-direct-plus-loans/>.

**All PLUS loan applicants** who have adverse credit but qualify for a PLUS loan by successful appeal on extenuating circumstances or obtaining an endorser must complete PLUS Credit Counseling on the Department of Education website at [studentaid.gov](http://studentaid.gov). First-time Direct PLUS borrowers must complete specific Loan Entrance Counseling and a Master Promissory Note (MPN).

**Graduate and Law students only:** Offered Graduate PLUS Loans can be accepted through MaineStreet Student Self-Service, Accept/Decline Awards. A credit check is conducted on all Direct PLUS Loan applicants. By accepting your Graduate PLUS loan you authorize the Department of Education and its agents to conduct a credit check and use the information from that report to determine your eligibility for a PLUS Loan. If you have an active credit freeze with the national credit bureaus, you must lift or remove the freeze with each credit agency until the loan request has been processed.

## **ALTERNATIVE LOANS**

In addition to the Federal Direct Loan Program, students and their families may consider credit based [private alternative education loans](#). We strongly recommend students pursue all Federal Direct Loan eligibility before applying for an alternative loan.

## **FAFSA - FREE APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL STUDENT AID**

The University of Southern Maine encourages all students to reapply for federal financial aid each year by completing the [FAFSA](#) application: <https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa>. A priority deadline date is established by the Student Financial Services office annually.