

Student Financial Aid

At some point in the college planning process, the consideration of cost enters into the decision to pursue a college education. A college education is one of the most important investments a student will make. To provide students with an affordable education, the University of Southern Maine Office of Student Financial Aid offers a variety of programs to assist students and families in paying their educational expenses. During the most recent academic year, nearly \$67 million in financial aid was available to USM students.

The Office of Student Financial Aid administers, coordinates, and recommends programs of financial aid to enable students who lack adequate financial resources to attend USM. Offices are located in Gorham in Corthell Hall, in Payson Smith Hall in Portland, and at Lewiston-Auburn College. For more detailed information about the application process, the funds available and the priority filing dates and deadlines, refer to the Student Financial Aid section of this catalog, call (207) 780-5800, or visit us on the Web at www.usm.maine.edu/fin.

Eligibility for Aid

To receive financial assistance, a student must be admitted into a degree program at the University and, in most instances, must be enrolled for at least six credit hours for a semester. Aid can be granted only to U.S. citizens and eligible non-citizens.

The deciding factor in the establishment of a student's eligibility for financial aid is that of documented financial "need." That is, when an applicant has been determined to have insufficient family resources to meet the costs of attending the University of Southern Maine, she or he is eligible for assistance. Since the federal government provides most of the funds the University allocates to its students, family resources are assessed in accordance with a formula required by the U.S. Department of Education.

It is important to remember that financial aid is intended to supplement a student's resources. A basic principle of financial aid programs is that the student and his/her family are expected to contribute, when able, from income and assets to meet college costs.

No student should fail to apply for admission because she or he cannot afford a college education. The Office of Student Financial Aid administers a strong and versatile program. When a student's financial resources are insufficient to meet educational expenses, grants, loans, or employment can usually be made available. If funds are not available from the University, the Office of Student Financial Aid helps students explore other potential sources of aid.

Satisfactory Academic Progress for Continued Financial Aid Eligibility Every school participating in the federal student financial aid programs must monitor its not receive federal funding. Federal regulations mandate that the school's satisfactory progress policy must include both a qualitative measure (such as the use of cumulative grade point average) and a quantitative measure (such as a maximum time frame for completion) of the student's progress. While the qualitative measure is determined and monitored by the academic standards of the institution, the quantitative measure administered by the Financial Aid office is used to determine the number of credit hours completed when compared to those attempted. To quantify academic progress, the school is required to set a maximum time frame in which a student is expected to finish a program. For an undergraduate program, the maximum time frame may not exceed 150% of the published length of the program as measured in academic semesters.

To ensure that the student is making sufficient progress throughout the course of study, the school must divide the program into equal evaluation periods called increments. Once the school defines the length of each increment, the school must compare the number of hours the student attempted with the number of hours the student successfully completed. This calculation enables the school to determine whether the student is progressing at a rate that will allow him or her to finish the program within the maximum time frame. As is the case in USM's progress policy, a school is permitted to apply a more lenient completion standard in the student's first aca-

ademic year and then gradually increases the completion standard for each subsequent academic semester. USM's satisfactory progress policy explains how withdrawals, grades of incomplete, courses that are repeated, noncredit remedial coursework, and other attempted coursework which is not completed affect the satisfactory progress determination. Procedures have been established that enable a student to appeal a determination that finds him or her not to be making satisfactory progress. The quantitative and qualitative standards used to judge satisfactory progress must be cumulative and include all periods of the student's enrollment. Even periods in which the student did not receive financial aid funds must be counted. If the student does not meet the school's standards for satisfactory academic progress, he or she is not allowed to receive further funds from federal student aid programs. For specific details regarding satisfactory academic progress for financial aid, please refer to the USM financial aid Web site at www.usm.maine.edu/fin.

Application Procedures

To apply for financial assistance from the University of Southern Maine, you should file your Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or your Renewal FAFSA on the Web at www.fafsa.ed.gov.

Students are encouraged to apply for assistance as early as possible. To ensure a fair distribution of funds, a priority filing date is established. To meet USM's deadline, applicants must ensure that their FAFSA data is received at the institution by March 1. Students should submit the FAFSA to the federal student aid programs by February 15 to meet the USM March 1 deadline.

Applications are accepted after the priority filing dates, although the type and amount of aid offered may be reduced subject to funding limitations. Applicants who file after the priority filing date will probably receive delayed notification and may not have the funds in time to pay semester bills.

You must be registered with the Selective Service if you are a male, at least 18 years old, and born after December 31, 1959. If you believe you are not required to be registered, please call the Selective Service Office for information regarding exemption.

A student must not owe a refund on a federal grant or be in default on a federal educational loan. Students who are in default or owe a repayment are not eligible for federal financial aid.

Additional financial records required to verify information reported on the FAFSA may be requested under separate cover.

How Financial Aid is Allocated

The University begins reviewing student aid applications in early spring. Once a student is accepted by the Office of Undergraduate Admission, the FAFSA is received, and the University is told how much federal aid it will have for students, a notice of eligibility is sent.

The amount a student receives is determined by subtracting the student's resources from a budget computed by the Office of Student Financial Aid. This budget is based on typical living and educational costs for a student in a given situation. It may be adjusted if unusual non-discretionary expenses exist.

Students are offered aid in a package which may consist of grant and/or loan and/or work-study. Undergraduate students with prior bachelor's degrees are not eligible to receive grants.

Even after a student is allocated aid, the amount may be adjusted if the student's financial situation changes. Students and parents must promptly report any of the following to the Student Financial Aid office: a change in income; a change in marital status; a change in the number of dependents; a change in residence; a change in the number of credit hours attempted; and the receipt of financial aid from sources other than the University. If a student receives outside scholarship funds, the amount of aid from the University may have to be reduced.

Types of Aid Available

Federal Pell Grants This is a federally funded program to help needy students. In 2009-2010 grants will vary between \$304 and \$5350 per academic year.

Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants This is a federally funded program to help needy students. Grants range from \$100 to \$4,000.

University and Miscellaneous Scholarships These are funded by the University and private donors. Awards have ranged from \$100 to \$4,000 and are given on the basis of financial need.

Federal Work Study Employment This is a program funded by the University and the federal government. Eligible students may earn between \$1,500 and \$3,500 per year. A student's financial need governs the amount that can be earned.

Federal Perkins Loans Funded by the federal government, the University, and former borrowers repaying loans, this program lends money to needy students. No repayment is required until after the student ceases his/her education or drops to below half-time enrollment. Once repayment begins, the student is charged 5% simple interest on the amount borrowed. While the monthly repayment amount varies with the amount borrowed, a minimum of \$40 must be repaid each month. Loans vary between \$400 and \$2,500 annually.

Federal Nursing Student Loans Funded by the federal government, the University, and loans repaid by former borrowers, money is lent to needy nursing students. Repayment terms are similar to those of the Perkins Loan. Loans range from \$400 to \$4,000.

Federal Subsidized Stafford Loan This program, sponsored by the federal and state governments, allows students to secure low-cost loans. Eligibility for subsidized Stafford Loans is based on demonstrated financial need and grade level.

Federal Unsubsidized Stafford Loans This program provides access to borrowing for both students who do and do not qualify for need-based assistance. The student is responsible for the interest as it accrues.

Federal Parent Loans These programs, sponsored by the federal and state governments, allow parents to secure relatively low-cost loans. Parent Loan (Plus) application request forms are available from the Student Financial Aid Office or can be printed from www.usm.maine.edu/fin, under the section entitled PLUS Loans.

Alternative Loans These alternative, credit-based loan programs provide long-term financing options for qualified families. Additional information about these programs are available at the following Web site: www.usm.maine.edu/fin or in the Student Financial Aid Office.

North American Indian Programs Tuition, mandatory fees, and on-campus room and/or board will be waived for qualified and eligible North American Indians residing in Maine. Eligibility is extended to 1) the person whose name is included on the current census of either the Passamaquoddy or Penobscot Tribes; and 2) the person who has resided in Maine for at least one year and whose name, or the name of at least one of their grandparents, was included on the census of a North American Tribe OR held a band number of the Maliseet or Micmac Tribes with direct blood lineage. For additional information, contact the Wabanaki Center at (207) 581-1417. You may also visit their Web site at www.naps.umaine.edu/eligibility.html.

For more information about financial aid programs, contact the Office of Student Financial Aid, University of Southern Maine, Corthell Hall, College Avenue, Gorham, Maine 04038 or telephone (207) 780-5800. You may also visit our Web site at www.usm.maine.edu/fin.

Offers of financial aid are conditional upon receipt of funds from all funding sources. The Office of Student Financial Aid 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.