

## FINANCIAL AID

### THE FINANCIAL AID PROCESS

Several federal, state, and college financial aid programs are available to MWCC students. Grants and scholarships are free financial assistance programs available for low income individuals. Low interest student loans may be borrowed by most students.

Students should apply for financial aid as soon as college attendance is contemplated. The deadline for the MASSGrant program is May 1. The priority deadline for campus aid packages, including Pell Grant and loans, is May 1 for September enrollment and November 1 for January enrollment. Applications completed after those dates will be reviewed, but students may not receive the same level of aid and the determination of eligibility may not occur prior to the tuition and fee billing due date.

To be considered for financial assistance:

- Students must be accepted to the college in an eligible degree or certificate program (non-matriculated students are not eligible for financial aid).
- Have a high school diploma, General Education Development (GED) certificate, or have completed a high school education in a home school setting that is recognized as a home school under state law.
- Be a U.S. citizen or permanent resident alien.
- Meet satisfactory progress and other applicable regulations.

Most financial aid programs require half time enrollment. Limited Pell grant funding is available for students enrolled less than half time. Students must have a high school diploma or High School Equivalency. Students enrolled during high school are not eligible for financial aid.

The first step in applying for all forms of financial aid is to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). This form is available online at <https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa> (<https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa/>) and must be completed each academic year. The 25/26 FAFSA opens on October 1, 2024 and closes on June 30, 2026.

The financial aid process can be lengthy (three to six weeks) for all paperwork to be finalized. After completing the FAFSA, students and the college will receive a Student Aid Report (SAR) from the federal processing center.

Students may be required to complete the "verification" process to ensure the validity of the information presented on the application. Verification of income and other data may be required. Students will be notified, via their student email, if additional documentation is necessary.

Following the completion of all required paperwork, students will be given an award notification via their student email account. Any credit balance remaining after the tuition and fee charges have been satisfied will be available for use to purchase books and supplies in the college bookstore during the book voucher period. Once attendance in classes is verified, financial aid funds will be disbursed, and any excess credit balance will be refunded to the student via the Bank Mobile Disbursement process toward the end of the semester.

Financial aid is awarded on the basis of financial need. Need is the difference between the estimated cost of attendance and the calculated amount the student and family can reasonably be expected to provide. The student and family contribution is affected by income, assets, number of family members, and number of family members in college and determined by the federal government using the FAFSA.

Some low-income students receive enough grant funding to cover the entire tuition and fees bill, including book expenses. Other students may receive partial grant funding and choose to borrow a student loan to cover remaining tuition, fees and book charges. At times, students will not qualify for any grant assistance but can borrow a student loan to pay for part or all of their tuition, fee, and book expenses. There are situations where the maximum student loan and other aid awards may not cover direct educational expenses.

Mount Wachusett Community College is committed to ensuring that students are able to have access to quality education while accruing as little student debt as possible. A variety of financial literacy programs are available to students to assist them with personal financial planning and the management of student loan debt. The average student debt that an MWCC student might anticipate is \$14,280 at the conclusion of the associate's degree. Approximately 26% of MWCC graduates borrow money through student loans to complete their MWCC degree.

Students who do not qualify for enough financial aid, or apply too late to determine eligibility before classes begin, will be required to satisfy the tuition and fee bill. The Student Accounts Office has an interest-free payment plan available that allows the entire or partial tuition and fee bill to be paid in monthly installments.

**Special Conditions**

Should a student or parent's family situation or income change after the FAFSA has been processed, a "special condition" may exist that would warrant recalculation of financial aid eligibility. A special condition or special circumstance is a reason that would make the standard calculation inappropriate for a particular situation, but most typically results from job loss, divorce, or death of a family member. Students who experience these changes in family circumstances are encouraged to meet with a Financial Aid Counselor to request reconsideration of eligibility.

**Assistance is Always Available**

The financial aid process may be complex, and many times students are not familiar with the procedures and understanding of where to obtain the necessary data. The Student Financial Services Office can assist students with the process at any time. Students should not hesitate to call or visit the office if they have any questions about the procedures, forms, or processing guidelines.

**For More Financial Aid Information**

For complete information about the federal and state student financial assistance programs available to MWCC students, stop by or call the Student Financial Services, 978-630-9169. By applying for financial aid early, students will have more information earlier to determine the actual amount they will have available to pay for the necessary expenses.

**GRANTS****Federal Pell Grant**

Awards range from \$750 to \$7395 per year and are awarded to low income students. The amount of the award is determined by enrollment status (full or part-time) and family contribution.

**Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (SEOG)**

Pell grant recipients have preference. The awards range from \$100 to \$1,200 per year.

**MASSGrant**

Provides need-based financial assistance to undergraduate students who reside in Massachusetts. Students must be enrolled full-time, at least twelve credits per semester, and meet the SAI requirements to be eligible to receive this grant. Eligible students will receive notification from the Massachusetts Office of Student Financial Assistance. Application deadline is May 1 prior to the academic year. This grant is limited to four semesters while enrolled at a community college.

**MASSGrant Plus**

Students must meet Massachusetts residency requirements and could be enrolled full-time or part time. Application deadline is November 1 of the academic year.

**College Assistance Grant**

This is a college funded grant program available to needy students who do not receive adequate assistance from other available financial aid programs. Students must file the FAFSA and meet general financial aid eligibility criteria. Funding is limited.

**MWCC Grant**

Funds are awarded from the Massachusetts Cash Grant program to Massachusetts residents who maintain half-time enrollment status, and demonstrate need. The award amount cannot exceed the total cost of tuition and fees.

**Tuition Waiver**

Awards cannot exceed state-supported tuition charges (Tuition-Day Charge). Recipients must be Massachusetts residents for one year and demonstrate need.

**Second Chance Pell**

In spring of 2016, MWCC was selected to participate in the Pell for Students Who Are Incarcerated Experimental Site (Second Chance Pell) program through the U.S. Department of Education. This program provides a limited waiver of the statutory ban on individuals incarcerated in state penal institutions from receiving Federal Pell Grants to pay for post-secondary education and/or training. Starting in January of 2017, the college began offering one certificate program at each of the proposed correctional facilities: North Central Correctional Institute Gardner and Massachusetts Correctional Institute Shirley. The Second Chance Pell programs allows inmates to take courses through traditional instruction and earn the certificate in 18 months. As students, the inmates will be supported through advising, counseling and tutoring.

## LOANS AND EMPLOYMENT

### Emergency Student Loan Fund

These funds, made available by the Student Government Association, are available to students during the college academic year on a short-term basis for college-related expenses. Contact the Student Services office for more information about this program.

### Federal Direct Loan Program

The William D. Ford Direct Student Loan is for students who do not qualify for (or receive a limited amount of) grant and scholarship aid. This is a low, variable-interest rate loan that does not have to be repaid until after enrollment ceases or the student is below half time enrollment. Subsidized loan funds are interest-free during college enrollment; however, the interest subsidy is available for a total of 3 years for students enrolled in a two-year associate degree program. The loan range is \$200 to \$10,500 per year. Students must demonstrate financial need for a subsidized Direct Loan. There is also an unsubsidized Direct Loan for students who do not demonstrate financial need.

### Federal Parent PLUS Loan (dependent students)

A parent of a dependent student may borrow up to the maximum cost of education minus the student's total financial aid award.

### Alternative Loan Programs

Upon request, the Financial Aid Office can provide information about alternative loan programs that offer assistance to students who do not otherwise qualify for federal loans.

### Federal Work Study (FWS)

Eligible students may obtain part-time employment on or off-campus during the academic year and summer. The average award is \$2,500 per academic year. The hourly wage is set at the current state minimum wage, and earnings are paid every two weeks. Off-campus employment must be with a public or private nonprofit agency and arranged with the Financial Aid Office. Community service and literacy tutoring jobs are encouraged and available through the FWS program.

## MWCC FOUNDATION INC. SCHOLARSHIPS

Scholarships are forms of aid that help students pay for their education. Like grants, they do not have to be repaid and are for direct costs: tuition, fees and books. Students must be in good academic standing with the college. More than 50 awards are available for students who are interested in particular fields of study, who are members of underrepresented groups, who live in certain areas, or who demonstrate financial need.

### Deadlines

The 2025 scholarship process will open on January 16th. The diversity scholarship closes on May 31st. All other scholarships close on June 15th.

### How to Apply

Scholarship applications are available online through the AwardSpring icon in the iConnect portal beginning on January 16, 2025. All scholarships require an essay, as explained on the scholarship application.

For more information on scholarship criteria, call MWCC's financial aid office 978-630-9169, email [financialaid@mwcc.mass.edu](mailto:financialaid@mwcc.mass.edu), or visit [mwcc.edu/financial](http://mwcc.edu/financial).