



Background

The Montana University System (MUS) American Indian Tuition Waiver helps eligible Montana American Indian students attend college by waiving undergraduate tuition costs at participating campuses. Beginning **July 1, 2026**, the eligibility rules will change to **better reflect tribal sovereignty and descendency** instead of a “one-fourth Indian blood” requirement.

Students who already receive the waiver before Fall 2026 will keep it for their current degree, as long as they remain in good academic standing. The waiver applies only to tuition (not fees or self-supporting courses) and requires students to demonstrate financial need through the FAFSA each year.

FAQs

Q: What is the American Indian Tuition Waiver?

A: It's a program that waives undergraduate tuition for eligible Montana American Indian students who attend a Montana University System campus.

Q: What are the new American Indian Tuition Waiver eligibility requirements (effective July 1, 2026)?

A: You must:

- Be a Montana resident (as defined by Board of Regents Policy 940.1).
- Be an enrolled member or tribally certified descendant of a federally recognized tribe located in Montana.
- Show financial need after completing the FAFSA. You must complete the FAFSA each year you request this waiver.

Q: How is financial need determined?

A: Financial need is defined as having at least one dollar of remaining need after subtracting Student Aid Index, all Title IV grant aid and institutional aid from the cost of attendance. This requirement did not change.

Q: Do you need to be a Montana resident to receive the waiver?

A: Yes, **both the new and old eligibility requirements require Montana residency**. More information on Montana residency requirements is available at this link:

https://www.mus.edu/Prepare/College/Montana_Residency_Requirements.html

Q: Which tribes are recognized for this waiver?

A: The waiver applies to Federally recognized tribes located within the boundaries of the State of Montana:

Assiniboiné	Crow	Little Shell Chippewa	Cree	Kootenai	Gros Ventre
Northern Cheyenne	Sioux	Chippewa	Salish	Blackfeet	Pend d' Orielle

Q: How is “descendant” status defined?

A: Each tribe decides its own rules for determining descendency.

Q: Why were the eligibility rules changed?

A: The policy was changed to address concerns that the blood quantum requirement could run afoul of new federal directives prohibiting race-based admissions, as well as to mirror legislation that was introduced in the 2023 and 2025 legislative sessions by members of the Montana American Indian Caucus. The change is intended to comply with federal directives and to **honor tribal sovereignty by recognizing each tribe's right to define its own membership and descendency.**

Q: When do these changes take effect?

A: The new eligibility requirements take effect on July 1, 2026.

Q: What if I already receive the waiver before Fall 2026?

A: **You'll keep your waiver** through your current undergraduate degree if you stay in good academic standing.

Q: Are there other requirements to receive the waiver?

A: Yes. Students **must still meet** the following criteria:

- Demonstrate financial need by completing and submitting the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).
- Be a Montana resident for at least 12 months prior to the first semester for which they are requesting the waiver.
- Maintain satisfactory academic progress (SAP) as defined by the campus they attend.

Q: Who awards the waivers?

A: The **financial aid office at each campus** is the official department that authorizes financial assistance, including tuition waivers and scholarships, to any student. To be certain of an award of waiver, students must be notified by the financial aid office. Campuses may exercise discretion as to expanding awards.

Q: Does the waiver cover all college costs?

A: No. It only covers **undergraduate tuition**. You must still pay campus fees, program fees, and any self-supporting or continuing education course costs.

Q: How do I apply?

A: Further information and the waiver application form are available at this link:

<https://www.mus.edu/AIMA/brochure.html>. Submit your application and further documentation to your campus financial aid office.

Q: Who should students contact with specific questions?

A: For specific questions, students should contact the **financial aid office** at the campus they plan to attend.