

Montana Guaranteed Student Loan Program

GSL ONLINE

Montana's premiere student loan publication

www.mgslp.state.mt.us (800) 537-7508

UPCOMING EVENTS AND HOLIDAYS:

- *MT Indian Education Association Conference:*
Apr. 1 - 4, Missoula, MT
- *MASFAA Conference:*
Apr. 14 - 16, Billings, MT
- *Memorial Day:*
May 31

Our Office Will Be Closed on Memorial Day

The Montana Guaranteed Student Loan Program provides financial access to students pursuing postsecondary educational goals.

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THE DIRECTOR'S DEN - REAUTHORIZATION

On the Reauthorization front, the battle between the D's and R's continues to heat up. During an election year, candidates frequently champion Higher Education because it's received so well. This year, because of the severe budget situation, the dance has changed somewhat. Reductions that minimize the deficit are as important as supporting an increase to Pell or other worthy programs. A common theme from the start of this Reauthorization cycle has been that keeping the status quo will be good. Improved funding or changes to programs with significant costs will be unlikely. In light of the budget situation, retaining the status quo may not even be possible.

In Washington, the pendulum has swung back and there is now less confidence that Reauthorization will take place this year. Between now and roughly Memorial Day, we'll continue to see positioning and compromise on the various bills impacting schools and student loans. As of this writing, it appears that those bills with penalties for schools or states that increase tuition or reduce state aid have lost momentum. As we move closer to the Presidential Elections, we should know more about the specifics of Reauthorization and whether it will even happen in 2004. Stay tuned for more info....

Bruce Marks, Director

DINNER & A DEFERMENT COOKS UP TO BE A SUCCESS!

MGSLP Default Prevention has successfully launched a new student loan awareness campaign titled "Dinner & A Deferment" with sessions held in Butte and Helena. Our initial target audience was the population in the Butte area having trouble repaying their student loans. We held the pizza dinner and student loan information session on the MT Tech campus February 26 and had a nice turn out. From that first event we learned that borrowers in school and in repayment were just as interested in coming down to visit with us as our target group. Because of the lessons we learned in our first

session, we changed our marketing strategy a little bit and also invited current students and borrowers in good standing to our Helena event held March 24. Additionally, we decided that there should be an extra incentive for borrowers who are willing to make a special effort to get information that will help ensure successful student loan repayment. Dinner & A Deferment now has a \$500 loan repayment or scholarship door prize (one winner per event). With the changes we made the attendance at our second event nearly doubled. Next stop, Miles City on March 31.

MASFAA CONFERENCE IN BILLINGS, APRIL 14 - 16

The Montana Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (MASFAA) annual spring conference will take place in Billings this year on April 14-16 at the Sheraton Hotel in downtown Billings. The afternoon of the 14th will feature the MGSLP update, which will include presentations on FASTPLUS™ (online PLUS MPN), the new school portal, default prevention, Commonline/Common Record convergence and Meteor. You can view the agenda and obtain registration materials online from the MASFAA website at www.masfaaonline.org/HOME/html/conference.htm

NEW AND IMPROVED MUS HONOR SCHOLARSHIP

In July of 2003, the revisions to the scholarship offered by the Montana University System (MUS) Board of Regents took effect with the launching of the **Montana University System Honor Scholarship**.

For seniors graduating from an accredited Montana high school with a GPA of 3.5 or higher, it is an opportunity to apply for an eight-semester fee waiver at any of the MUS campuses and the three community colleges. To remain eligible for the scholarship, students must maintain a 3.4 cumulative GPA in college. MGSLP administers the scholarship on behalf of the Board of Regents. In fall of 2003, all 183 high schools received the initial application packet.

In spring of 2004, approximately 270 scholarships will be awarded representing an annual investment of over \$675,000 in Montana's best and brightest students.

MGSLP TAKES PART IN THE 2004 FORT BELKNAP CAREER FAIR

MGSLP's Tina Wagner, Outreach Coordinator, and Mary Taylor, Assistant to the Director, represented the agency at the 2004 Fort Belknap Career Fair in February. Hosted by Fort Belknap College, the career fair is held every year to share information with juniors and seniors from the local community, including Hays/Lodge Pole, Dodson and Harlem High School. MGSLP provided information on choosing a career, planning for college costs, and applying for financial aid.



Lindsay Doney (left), a senior at Hays/Lodge Pole High School, stops by to talk with Tina Wagner (right) about her plans to attend Salish Kootenai College next fall.

Over 21 organizations took part in the career fair, including college campuses, state agencies, local organizations, and various others. Students had the opportunity to visit with the organizations, ask questions and obtain information on career opportunities. Approximately 75 students participated in the fair, plus local college students and community members.

FOCUS ON FINANCIAL AID FOLKS



Melina Hawkins, Financial Aid Director
MSU - Billings

As is fitting for a financial aid director, Melina Hawkins will take her caffeine in any form.

The caffeine may help her along, but the challenge of helping students attend or stay in college, along with the great group of women she works with, are some of the reasons she still enjoys coming to work each day. Beginning in financial aid as a work-study student, Melina has worked for MSU-Billings since 1977. In a "ground breaking" moment in 1986, when all of the student affairs directors were men, she was promoted to director.

Melina keeps busy with yard work, as a grandmother to six grandchildren and as an avid MSU-Billings basketball fan. Although she would rather be vacationing in Scotland right now, in all likelihood she is at this very moment watching the spring migration of half a million sandhill cranes in Nebraska.

If you're looking for Melina and she isn't in the office, she is probably riding around town in her dark green tank, a 1998 Cadillac Deville Concours, that is. "It's a huge, heavy, luxurious road car and 'yes,' I do deserve it! Actually, I found it in a nursing home parking lot, which is a great place to get a good deal on a car."

Favorite Quote: "Make it a rule of life never to regret and never to look back. Regret is an appalling waste of energy; you can't build on it, it's only good for wallowing in." -Katherine Mansfield 1888-1923, Author