

Yellowjacket Access Scholarship

A Retention Initiative



Invest in access, invest in success

In 2019, the 66th Montana Legislature approved \$2 million in state need-based student aid that, when matched one-to-one by private donations from the campus foundations, provided \$4 million in financial aid for students across the Montana University System (MUS).

The MSU Billings Foundation was charged with raising \$220,000 to earn our \$220,000 match over two years. We did it, thanks to donor support.

But the real victory is what we learned about student retention.

By strategically targeting students whose persistence is most influenced by financial need, we increased retention of new and continuing students – and graduated more than a quarter of the continuing students.

We aim to replicate that success with the Yellowjacket Access Scholarship. In fiscal year 2021-2022, we want to raise \$200,000. We seek donor support in two ways: donors willing to provide a 1:1 match, and donors to help us meet that match. Donors can leverage their gift to do twice the good for MSU Billings students.



41

New students benefited from the Access Scholarship in AY 2019-2020

63%

Of those new students were retained to Fall 2020, as compared to 57% retention of new students who did not receive the Access Scholarship

164

Continuing students received the Access Scholarship in AY 2019-2020

28%

Of those continuing students graduated

62%

Of those continuing students were retained to Fall 2020

Help us meet our goal

To raise \$200,000 in fiscal year 2021-2022.

- ◆ We seek donors to match our fundraising 1:1, doubling our impact.

Criteria that meets students where they are

The Office of Financial Aid & Scholarships is the office that most often encounters students at risk of dropping out because they cannot secure the financial support they need to persist. This office will award \$1,000 (\$500 per semester) to students who meet the following criteria:

- Any continuing student enrolled in any MSU Billings program;
- Earning Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP);
- Must be enrolled full-time (12+ credits) OR enrolled part-time (6+ credits) if the student is an adult learner in a 2-year program;
- With preference to Montana residents and students who demonstrate financial need.

Prospective scholarship recipients' financial aid packages are reviewed to make sure Pell grants, waivers, work study, or other scholarships are not adversely affected by the Yellowjacket Access Scholarship, which will become part of the student's overall financial aid package.

Once approved by the Office of Financial Aid & Scholarships, the Yellowjacket Access Scholarship is applied first to any outstanding balance. If there is no balance, the student receives the grant as a reimbursement which can be used for any educationally related expenses including housing, meal plans, books, or other needs.

“ So often, I hear from students that meeting their financial concerns is among their highest priorities. We hear you. That is why we created the Yellowjacket Access Scholarship to provide additional aid and give reassurance and a sense of confidence to know that we are with you all the way. We succeed when students succeed.

*Tom Valles
Director of Financial Aid & Scholarships*

