Residency Requirements for Fee Purposes

In-state admission and fee status is granted to those persons who have demonstrated over a period of time that their permanent residence is Montana, a state which they have supported through the payment of appropriate taxes. In general, a person must meet all seven requirements listed below to qualify for in-state status:

1. A person must be physically present in Montana for twelve or more consecutive months without an absence in excess of a total of thirty days. One must demonstrate by appropriate actions during the twelve-month period the intent to make Montana one’s permanent home. The required twelve-month period does not begin until specific actions are taken to change legal ties to Montana. The 12 month period does not run during which a person enjoys a status, receives a benefit, or exercises a right or privilege based upon residency outside of Montana, or which is counter-indicative with the intent to become a Montana resident.

2. The twelve-month period does not begin until one or more acts, that clearly indicate the intent to become a resident, are taken. Mere presence in Montana alone will not serve to start this period. The legal action date must occur in the preceding year, on or before the fifteenth day of class of the term for which reclassification is requested. Sufficient actions to begin the period are:
   a. Montana vehicle registration
   b. Montana driver’s license
   c. Montana voter registration
   d. Purchase of a principal residence where a Montana title is obtained
   e. Filing of a resident Montana income tax return
   f. If none of the above is applicable, an affidavit of intent may be filed with the Registrar’s Office.

3. An individual must be at least fifty-one percent financially self-sufficient during the entire twelve-month period, and that person must not be claimed as an exemption under federal income tax regulations by someone filing an out-of-state federal tax return, commencing with the tax year in which the twelve-month period begins.

4. A person must file a Montana income tax return

5. If a person drives a motor vehicle in Montana or has a driver’s license from another state, he or she must obtain a Montana operator’s license within the required legal time limit.

6. If a person owns a motor vehicle in Montana, he or she must license the vehicle in Montana within the required legal time limit.

7. An individual must register to vote in Montana if she or he expects to exercise the right to vote.

An individual who is enrolled for more than half-time status during any semester that falls within the twelve-month period is presumed to be present in the state primarily for educational purposes, and such periods may not generally be applied toward the physical presence requirement of the policy. At Montana State University, six credits is considered half-time enrollment. Students may take a total of 7 credits in a semester while maintaining the presumption that their move to Montana was not for educational purposes.

There are additional regulations concerning married persons and others with special circumstances. Persons interested in gaining residency should request the pamphlet “Montana University System Student Guide to Montana’s Residency Policy.” For more information, new students should contact the Office of Admissions. Currently enrolled students and former students can obtain petition forms and more information from the Registrar’s Office.