FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS REGARDING FINANCIAL AID
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Below you will find answers to many frequently asked questions regarding financial aid at Mercer University’s School of Law. We hope that you will find this summary informative and useful. If, however, you have any other questions, please contact us.

**Tuition and Living Expenses**

What is the cost of tuition?

Tuition is set annually in late April following approval by Mercer’s Board of Trustees. For 2016-2017, tuition and fees equal $37,962.

How much is expected for living expense needs and how is the allowance determined?

For 2016-2017, the living expense allowance is $21,338. The living expense allowance for financial aid purposes is set based on the average living expenses of our students for the 9 month academic year, as determined by surveys and a review of area expenses such as rental rates. A review of expensed living expenses will be conducted each April.

The living allowance includes rent, utilities, transportation, food, health insurance, books, personal expenses and loan fees. It does not (and cannot) include car payments, credit card payments or other expenses unrelated to obtaining an education.

Why are car payments and credit card payments not included in the living expense allowance?

The federal government only allows expenses related to obtaining an education to be included in the living allowance for financial aid purposes. It considers car payments and credit card payments to be consumer debt and not related to obtaining an education.

What if my personal budget exceeds the living expense allowance?

As noted above, the living expense allowance is based on an average amount our students spend generally on living expenses. We encourage students to minimize living expenses. Students, however, who have extenuating circumstances and may require additional aid (for example, childcare expenses), may request a living expense budget increase by submitting the relevant form and documentation to the Financial Aid Office.

**Types of Financial Aid**

What types of financial aid are available for law school?

At Mercer, three broad types of financial aid are available:

(1) scholarships; (2) student loans; and (3) Federal Work Study jobs.

Each category is explained in more detail in later sections.
How much financial aid can I receive?

Generally, your total financial aid award may not exceed tuition plus the living expense budget. This total amount is your “cost of attendance.” For example, the cost of attendance for 2016-2017 equals $59,300, calculated by adding $37,962 (tuition and fees) and $21,338 (living expenses).

Is financial aid merit-based or need-based?

All scholarships are merit-based and are awarded on the strength of your admissions application or performance in law school. Alternatively, you may also borrow federal loans up to the cost of attendance by completing and submitting the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) and the Mercer Application for Financial Aid. Federal Work Study eligibility is based on need as determined by your FAFSA.

Does Mercer offer grants to students?

No. Scholarships and work study are the only types of aid offered by Mercer that do not require repayment.

Eligibility for Financial Aid

Am I eligible for scholarships?

Mercer Law School offers merit scholarships each year to applicants whose academic records, LSAT scores, and personal achievements demonstrate the potential for outstanding performance in the study of law. The Law School also makes some scholarship awards for the final two years of law school to students who excel academically in their first year and who received little or no award when they entered. Submitting the admissions application early is crucial as the priority deadline for scholarship consideration is January 1. Every accepted student is automatically considered for a merit scholarship with the exception of the George W. Woodruff Scholarship. The George W. Woodruff Scholarship requires a separate application that may be found on our website. Once a scholarship is awarded to a student, the student must remain in good academic standing to continue receiving the scholarship. Good academic standing is defined as maintaining a 78 cumulative average or above at the end of each academic year.

Am I eligible to borrow federal student loans?

To be eligible for federal student aid, including student loans, you must:

- Be a U.S. citizen, a permanent resident, or other eligible non-citizen
- Not be in default on a federal student loan or owe an overpayment on a federal grant or loan
- Be enrolled at least half-time
- Make satisfactory academic progress once enrolled

Other requirements may apply, but most applicants who meet the above requirements will be eligible for federal student loans.

Does my parents’ financial situation affect my eligibility for aid?

No. Graduate students are automatically considered independent for financial aid purposes. Some law schools may request parental financial information to determine need for institutional funds, but Mercer does not consider parental information.

If I am an international student and ineligible for federal student loans, are there other financial aid options for me?

International students will be considered for scholarships (see the information below). Certain private or commercial lenders also offer loan programs for international students. Please contact the Financial Aid Office to obtain more information.

Scholarships

How do I apply for or obtain a scholarship from Mercer?

With one exception, all accepted applicants are automatically considered for Mercer scholarships based on the strength of their admissions application. (The priority deadline is January 1 for scholarship consideration).

The Woodruff Scholarship, which is a full tuition scholarship plus a $5,000 stipend, requires a separate application. Applications for the Woodruff Scholarship, along with the completed admissions application, must be received no later than January 15th.

Are scholarship opportunities from sources outside of Mercer available?

Yes. Numerous organizations offer scholarship opportunities for students in law school, in particular for second and third year students. See the Scholarship section of our website at www.law.mercer.edu for a list of such opportunities. Outside scholarships for incoming first-year students are posted online at www2.law.mercer.edu/portal. We also encourage students to research outside scholarship opportunities.

If I receive a scholarship from an outside private organization, do I need to inform the Financial Aid Office?

Yes. All scholarships are included as part of your aid package.
If I am interested in scholarships only, do I need to apply for financial aid?

No. You are only required to complete the financial aid application process outlined below if you are interested in Federal Work Study or borrowing student loans.
Applying for Financial Aid (Student Loans/Federal Work Study)

How do I apply for financial aid?

To apply for financial aid at Mercer, you must

- complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA); and
- complete the Mercer Application for Financial Aid.

What is the financial aid application deadline?

April 1st is our priority application deadline. You may submit an application after April 1, but priority in processing is granted to students who submitted a complete application by this date. If you are accepted for admission after April 1, you will be given an alternate priority deadline.

How do I complete the FAFSA?

Electronic filing is the easiest, fastest and most accurate way to submit the FAFSA. You may complete the FAFSA online at [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov). (Be sure you are at the correct website. Similar websites charge a fee to submit the FAFSA. Completing and submitting the FAFSA is free.)

After you complete and submit the FAFSA, you will receive a Student Aid Report. Be sure to review this report for accuracy, make any necessary corrections and resubmit those corrections for processing. If you do not receive your Student Aid Report within two weeks, check online at the FAFSA site above or call 1-800-433-3243.

Should I include my parents’ information in completing the FAFSA?

No. As a graduate student, you are automatically considered independent for the purposes of obtaining federal student aid. At Mercer, we do not request parental information to award institutional aid.

What is Mercer’s School Code for completing the FAFSA?

001580
How do I complete the Mercer Application for Financial Aid?

Once accepted, the Financial Aid Office will send you information on accessing the Mercer Application for Financial Aid through the portal on our website. Current students may complete the application online at [www2.law.mercer.edu/portal](http://www2.law.mercer.edu/portal).

When will I learn how much financial aid I have been awarded?

Generally, financial aid award letters begin going out in May. Your financial aid file must be complete before any financial aid will be awarded. Keep in mind that most students will be eligible for $20,500 in Stafford Loans, and any additional amounts you wish to borrow up to the cost of attendance will be awarded in either a Graduate PLUS or alternative loan depending on the loans you selected on your financial aid application. Actual receipt of the Graduate PLUS or alternative loan will depend on creditworthiness. (See an explanation of the various loans below).

What is verification?

Certain financial aid applications are randomly selected for a process called verification. If you are selected for this process, the Student Aid Report you receive after submitting the FAFSA will indicate that your application was selected. You may be required to submit additional information to our office. We will also notify you if you are selected for verification and must submit additional documentation.

Do I reapply for financial aid every year?

Yes.

**Student Loans**

What types of student loans are available?

Two broad types of student loans are available: (1) federal and (2) commercial or private loans, which we call “alternative” loans. Federal loans primarily consist of Stafford Loans and Graduate PLUS Loans. The table on the next page summarizes the main differences between the loans:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Loan</th>
<th>Interest Rate</th>
<th>Origination Fee Beginning Oct. 1, 2016</th>
<th>Annual Limit</th>
<th>Lifetime Limit</th>
<th>Contingent on Credit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direct Stafford Unsubsidized</td>
<td>5.31%</td>
<td>1.068%</td>
<td>$20,500</td>
<td>$138,500</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Are there other differences between a Graduate PLUS loan and an alternative loan?

Yes. A Direct Graduate PLUS Loan is eligible for federal consolidation and the public service loan forgiveness program, while alternative commercial loans are not.

How will credit issues affect my approval for a Graduate PLUS Loan or alternative loan?

You will not qualify for a Graduate PLUS Loan if you have an “adverse credit history.” Adverse credit history means that you are 90 days or more delinquent on any debt or, if within the past 5 years, you have been the subject of a default determination, bankruptcy, discharge, foreclosure, repossession, tax lien, wage garnishment or write-off of a federal student aid debt.

However, from a credit standpoint, the Graduate PLUS Loan may be a good option if you have a limited credit history. The credit criteria for alternative loan approval will vary based on the lender.

We recommend that you review your credit report for inaccuracies before applying for aid (or address any problems that can be corrected). You can obtain a free credit report from each major credit bureau once per year at www.annualcreditreport.com.

If I do not qualify for a Graduate PLUS or alternative loan, is a cosigner a possibility?

Yes. The Graduate PLUS Loan does allow for an “endorser” if you have an adverse credit history. The endorser would of course need to meet the same credit criteria. Additionally, many private lenders do allow for cosigners.

Do I apply separately through a lender for the Stafford and/or Graduate PLUS loans?
No. Both Stafford and Graduate PLUS loans are processed directly between the university and the Department of Education. You will be required to complete master promissory notes for each type of loan and entrance counseling at www.studentloans.gov.

Repayment of Loans

When do I begin repayment on the loans I borrowed?

The date repayment begins varies based on the type of loan you borrow. Listed below are the grace periods following graduation or withdrawal from school. At the end of the grace period, repayment begins.

- Stafford Loans: 6 months
- Graduate PLUS Loans: 6 month post enrollment deferment
- Alternative Loans: Varies based on the lender

How long do I have to repay my loans after I leave school?

It depends on the repayment plan you choose following graduation. The standard repayment plan is 10 years. Many students opt for longer repayment plans of 25-30 years. The federal government also offers income sensitive repayment plan options. It is important to remember, however, that the longer you take to repay the loans, the more you repay.

How can I determine my monthly payments after I graduate?

See www.finaid.org or studentloans.gov for a loan repayment calculator.

What if I am interested in working in public service after graduation—how will I repay my loans?

First, regardless of whether you are planning to enter public service or private practice following graduation, it is important to minimize the amount you borrow.

For those who enter public service and have student loans, programs are available to assist with repayment. If a person completes 10 years of public service, which includes a wide array of employers, the remaining balance on all eligible Federal Direct Loans will be forgiven. (The Direct Stafford Loans and Direct Graduate PLUS Loans provided through Mercer are eligible federal student loans). If you are interested in pursuing this opportunity, it is important that you discuss all eligibility criteria with the Financial Aid Office as certain repayment plans, loans and employment will be required. Many states or employers also offer loan forgiveness programs.

Federal Work Study

What is Federal Work Study?
Certain on-campus jobs within the Law School or at certain public service organizations, such as the U.S. Attorney’s Office, may be designated as “work study” jobs. Federal Work Study essentially allows you to earn a portion of your financial aid, rather than borrow it. Work study is based on financial need, and the amount you earn, plus any other aid you receive, cannot exceed your total cost of attendance.

**How can I determine if I am eligible for Federal Work Study?**

If you are interested in a work study job, please talk with the Financial Aid Office and we can review your individual eligibility. If you have borrowed the maximum amount of loans, you may need to reduce your loans before work study can be approved.

**How do I apply for a Federal Work Study job?**

You are responsible for finding and applying directly for the work study job. Many work study students work in the library, as research assistants or as office assistants at the Law School.

**If I do not qualify for a Federal Work Study job, can I still work in an on-campus job?**

Yes. Certain departments on campus hire regular wage (or non work study) student workers. If you are working in a regular wage position, your earnings are not included in your financial aid award. Many students also take part-time jobs off campus during the second and/or third year to earn extra money and gain experience.
**Other Sources of Financial Aid**

I will be receiving VA Benefits. Will this affect my financial aid?

Generally no. Most VA benefit programs, including the Post 9/11 GI Bill, do not affect your financial aid eligibility.

**How do I know if I am eligible for VA education benefits or the Post 9/11 GI Bill?**

We recommend that you visit the Department of Veterans Affairs website at [www.gibill.va.gov](http://www.gibill.va.gov) for more information on education benefits provided by the VA and to determine your eligibility for such benefits. For 2015-2016, Mercer Law is participating in the Yellow Ribbon program by contributing $2,000 per participant for up to five eligible veterans.

**May I use Vocational Rehabilitation Benefits to attend law school?**

Vocational Rehabilitation benefits may be used by students with physical disabilities that wish to further their education. If you think you may qualify for these benefits, you should check with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation in your home state to determine eligibility and the amount of financial aid available.

**Useful Websites**

Mercer Law School  
[www.law.mercer.edu](http://www.law.mercer.edu)

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)  
[www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov)

Student Loans.Gov  
[www.studentloans.gov](http://www.studentloans.gov)

FINAID: The Smart Student’s Guide to Financial Aid  
Good resource for general information and loan repayment calculators.  
[www.finaid.org](http://www.finaid.org)

**Department of Veterans Affairs**-for information on VA education benefits  
[www.gibill.va.gov](http://www.gibill.va.gov)

FastWeb: Scholarship Search and Expert Tips and Financial Aid  
[www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com)

Free credit report (from each of the 3 major credit bureaus).  
[www.annualcreditreport.com](http://www.annualcreditreport.com)

FICO Score: Order your credit score.  
[www.myfico.com](http://www.myfico.com)
Contact Information

If you have other questions regarding financial aid, please contact:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Phone</th>
<th>Email</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leah Morton Aiken</td>
<td>Director of Admissions &amp; Financial Aid</td>
<td>(478) 301-5902</td>
<td><a href="mailto:aiken_lm@law.mercer.edu">aiken_lm@law.mercer.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terry Trussell</td>
<td>Office Specialist for Admissions &amp; Financial Aid</td>
<td>(478) 301-2147</td>
<td><a href="mailto:trussell_td@law.mercer.edu">trussell_td@law.mercer.edu</a></td>
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