



THE UNIVERSITY *of*  
**MISSISSIPPI**  
MASTER OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE

# Graduate Student Handbook Master of Criminal Justice (MCJ)

Department of Criminal Justice & Legal Studies

School of Applied Sciences

University of Mississippi

**Graduate Program Director:** Dr. Kimberly Kaiser, Associate Professor

**Department Chair:** Dr. Wesley Jennings, Professor

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# 1. MISSION, VISION, AND OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAM

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## VISION STATEMENT

The Department of Criminal Justice & Legal Studies aspires to be at the forefront of applied research and education to provide an unmatched educational experience for our graduate students.

## MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Department of Criminal Justice & Legal Studies is to promote evidence-based policy and practice and to prepare future leaders in the fields of criminal justice, homeland security, emergency management, and criminal justice leadership.

We work to accomplish this mission through the following educational objectives:

**Objective 1:** Graduates will be able to demonstrate comprehension of research and empirical evidence related to the fields of criminal justice policy, homeland security, emergency management, or criminal justice leadership.

**Objectives 2:** Graduates will be able to demonstrate the ability to apply knowledge gained in the program to new problems and areas relevant to the fields of criminal justice policy, homeland security, emergency management, or criminal justice leadership.

**Objective 3:** Graduates will be able to use their skills and knowledge to develop and/or advance their profession in the fields of criminal justice policy, homeland security, emergency management, or criminal justice leadership or be successful in achieving advanced degrees.

**Objective 4:** Graduates will become forerunners in positions to promote and advocate for effective, evidence-based policies and practices. They will become recognized experts addressing some of the challenging criminal justice policy, homeland security, emergency management, or criminal justice leadership issues of our times.

**Objective 5:** Graduates will become leaders in their chosen profession and in related activities.

## 2. WELCOME FROM THE CHAIR

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Welcome interested and admitted students to the Master of Criminal Justice (MCJ) program in the Department of Criminal Justice & Legal Studies at the University of Mississippi! As you know and will soon experience, our graduate degree program options (i.e., in-person, 4+1 accelerated program) and Criminal Justice Policy & Practice emphasis area represent one of the more flexible and customizable MCJ programs. Our program has been informed by extensive background and market-based research and is designed for the purpose of providing an unmatched educational experience that will directly translate to jobs, career advancement, further career specialization, and/or to best position students for competitive placement and success in advanced graduate degree programs including doctoral programs. We look forward to working with you all!

Warm Regards,

Dr. Wesley Jennings, Chair & Professor

## 3. HANDBOOK INTRODUCTION

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This handbook summarizes general requirements for the MCJ program to serve as a guide for students. This handbook is intended to familiarize graduate students with the applicable policies, procedures, and requirements relating to the MCJ program and required by the Graduate School regulations.

The primary responsibility for adherence to policies, regulations, deadlines, and degree requirements rests with the student. Questions should be directed to the Graduate Program Director. Information in this handbook is intended to supplement the Graduate School policies and information, which can be obtained from the Graduate School Website at <https://gradschool.olemiss.edu/>

#### 4. GRADUATE FACULTY

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Dr. Wesley Jennings (Department Chair) .....	<a href="mailto:wgj@olemiss.edu">wgj@olemiss.edu</a>
Dr. Kimberly Kaiser (Graduate Program Director) .....	<a href="mailto:kakaise1@olemiss.edu">kakaise1@olemiss.edu</a>
Dr. Francis Boateng .....	<a href="mailto:fboateng@olemiss.edu">fboateng@olemiss.edu</a>
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Dr. D'Andre Walker.....	<a href="mailto:dlwalke1@olemiss.edu">dlwalke1@olemiss.edu</a>

#### 5. MCJ IN-PERSON PROGRAM OVERVIEW

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The MCJ offers an in-person program with an emphasis in Criminal Justice Policy & Practice. This program is designed as a 30-credit, two-year program to provide students essential skills in research, writing, and critical thinking. The program offers two admission options, including a 4+1 accelerated option, and many opportunities to work closely with faculty. The program curriculum allows flexibility to tailor your education to your own research and policy interests.

## 6. ADMISSION CRITERIA

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The following admission requirements apply to the In-Person MCJ program.

### APPLICATION DEADLINES

**Priority Deadline:** Students seeking to be considered for funding opportunities, such as Graduate Assistantships must apply by April 1<sup>st</sup> (these funding opportunities are only available to students applying for the Criminal Justice Policy & Practice, in-person, program) for fall admission and by October 1<sup>st</sup> for Spring admission.

**Standard Deadline:** For all other applicants, the department accepts rolling admissions as long as the application is completed and submitted within one month prior to the start of the semester the student intends to enroll.

### APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

- 1) All students must complete and submit the Graduate School's on-line admission application found at <https://apply.olemiss.edu/graduate/>
- 2) Evidence of an awarded Baccalaureate Degree from an accredited college or university.
- 3) Quality of the applicant's academic record, as evidenced by cumulative grade point average. At least a 3.0 or equivalent grade point average on the last 60 hours of undergraduate coursework is required.
- 4) **Three (3) letters of professional recommendation**, preferably from professors familiar with your academic qualifications or others familiar with your work ethic and ability to be successful in graduate school.
- 5) **Statement of Interest.** A 400- to 500-word statement of interest that describes your interest in pursuing the Master of Criminal Justice degree and your chosen emphasis. Please discuss the strengths you will bring that will help you to be successful in the program and how earning this degree might help you to achieve your career and life goals. If there are any deficiencies in your application (GPA below 3.0, failed courses, etc.), please address those within your statement.
- 6) **Writing Sample.** Submit a sample of your recent written work that best showcases your skills as a writer and critical thinker. Writing samples should be in English and no more than 10 double-spaced pages in length. There are no specific formatting requirements. This could be a term paper, professional report, policy brief, or any other document that demonstrates writing and analytic skills.
- 7) **Resume or Curriculum Vitae**
- 8) International students must demonstrate compliance with the University of Mississippi's English Language Proficiency Score Requirements and Exemptions policy.

Please note that the Department of Criminal Justice & Legal Studies does NOT require the submission of GRE scores for the Master of Criminal Justice program.

### MASTER OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE ACCELERATED DEGREE PROGRAM (MCJ 4+1)

The Department of Criminal Justice & Legal Studies offers an accelerated bachelor's/master's program for students currently admitted to the Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice (BSCJ). This allows student to graduate with a B.S. in criminal justice and a Master of Criminal Justice (MCJ) within five years.

As part of this program, students may take up to 12 credits (i.e., four courses) in the MCJ in-person program during their final year of their bachelor program.

Students interested in pursuing the 4+1 accelerated degree program, must have completed 90 credit hours of undergraduate coursework and have a minimum GPA of 3.0 or above to be eligible. Students would apply for admission to the MCJ program during their junior year of undergraduate or when they have completed 90 credit hours of undergraduate coursework. Students must meet the qualifications for admission into the MCJ program.

#### **Eligibility Requirements:**

- Must have completed 90 credit hours of undergraduate coursework completed
- Must have a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or above
- Completion of Criminal Justice Communications (CJ 322) or Advanced Composition (Writ 250) (or equivalent writing course) with a minimum grade of B.

#### **Application Procedure**

- Interested students should first meet with the Graduate Program Director, Dr. Kimberly Kaiser, and their undergraduate advisor (either Ms. Susan Tyler or Ms. Pam Norwood), to learn more about the program and how to apply. Typically, students will apply for the 4+1 program during their final semester of their junior year.
- Undergraduate students participating in the 4+1 program will follow the typical application process for the MCJ program during the Fall or Spring of their senior year.



## 7. PROGRAM CURRICULUM & REQUIREMENTS

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The MCJ Criminal Justice Policy & Practice program option is a 30-credit degree program providing students with the foundations needed to master applied methodological and theoretical knowledge to engage in policy analysis and decision-making.

- 1) Students must complete all four (4) core courses with a grade of B- or above.
- 2) Complete at least three (3) Criminal Justice Policy & Practice emphasis courses.
- 3) Complete one (1) additional research- or statistics-based elective.
- 4) Complete three (3) to six (6) credits of CJ 690: Applied Criminal Justice Graduate Project or six (6) credits of CJ 697: Thesis.

### CORE CLASSES:

All students are required to take the following courses.

- 1) CJ 600: Criminal Justice Administration
- 2) CJ 601: Criminal Justice Statistics
- 3) CJ 602: Criminal Justice Research Methods
- 4) CJ 624: Theories of Criminal Behavior

### CRIMINAL JUSTICE POLICY & PRACTICE EMPHASIS CLASSES:

Students choose three (3) of the following courses for the Criminal Justice Policy & Practice emphasis. Each course is 3 credit hours.

- 1) CJ 620: Criminal Justice in American Society: Policy & Practice
- 2) CJ 621: Seminar in Law Enforcement
- 3) CJ 622: Seminar in Courts and Sentencing
- 4) CJ 623: Seminar in Corrections
- 5) CJ 641: Transnational Crime
- 6) CJ 642: Cyber Crime & Cybersecurity
- 7) CJ 643: Legal Issues in Criminal Justice\*
- 8) CJ 646: Special Topics in Criminal Justice\*
- 9) CJ 649: Independent Study\*
- 10) CJ 661: Criminal Justice Policy & Program Evaluation
- 11) CJ 664: GIS and Crime Mapping Analysis

### RESEARCH AND/OR STATISTICS ELECTIVES:

Students must complete one (1) research or statistics elective course. The following list of courses meet this requirement.\* Each course is 3 credit hours. Students may take a research or statistics course outside of these options (including courses outside the department) with Graduate Program Director approval.

- 1) CJ 661: Criminal Justice Policy & Program Evaluation
- 2) CJ 662: Emergency Management and Homeland Security Policy Evaluation
- 3) CJ 663: Special topics in Criminal Justice Statistics & Research\*
- 4) CJ 664: GIS and Crime Mapping Analysis

\* May be taken 2 times with a different topic.

\*\*Some courses may be taken for either the CJP&P or to fulfill the research/statistics elective.

#### DEGREE CULMINATION OPTIONS:

Student must complete one of the following options to complete their degree. All students must obtain approval from the Graduate Program Director prior to enrolling in degree culmination credits.

- 1) CJ 690: Applied Criminal Justice Graduate Project; 3-6 credits. The applied criminal justice graduate project is a degree culmination alternative to the traditional thesis. Students must develop and complete a research-informed original project under the supervision of a graduate faculty adviser.
- 2) CJ 697: Thesis – Traditional thesis option; 6 credits

## 8. DEGREE COMPLETION REQUIREMENTS

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A student who expects to complete all degree requirements by the end of a particular semester must submit a degree application form to the Graduate Program Director which will then be forwarded to the Graduate School. The deadline for submitting this application form is approximately one month after the beginning of Fall or Spring semester. The actual deadlines are posted on the Graduate School website at <https://gradschool.olemiss.edu/current-students/the-end-game-preparing-to-graduate/>. If a student is not able to complete the degree requirements at the end of the semester they applied to graduate, the student must resubmit their application in a future semester.

Students must be enrolled in a minimum of 3 credit hours during the semester they intend to graduate for Fall or Spring semesters and a minimum of one credit hour for students planning to graduate during the summer.

## 9. ACADEMIC REGULATIONS

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### GRADUATE CATALOG

Graduate students in the Department of Criminal Justice & Legal Studies are advised to become familiar with the policies published by the Graduate School each year. These can be found in the Graduate Catalog, at <http://catalog.olemiss.edu/graduate-school>.

## TRANSFER OF GRADUATE CREDITS FROM ANOTHER INSTITUTION

With department approval, students may request transfer of up to six (6) credit hours from other accredited colleges and universities for the MCJ degree. Transfer courses must be taken at the graduate level with a passing grade of B or higher; the student must have had graduate status at the time the courses were taken. There is a six-year time limit on the applicability of transferred credit, as there is on all credits applicable toward the MCJ degree.

Grades from other institutions may not substitute for unsatisfactory grades earned at the university; nor may the grade of A or B earned at another institution be used to offset a lower grade earned at the university. All transfer of credit is subject to the following conditions: (1) The residence or degree credit requirement is not reduced; (2) The other graduate school must offer a graduate degree in the field in which the work has been completed; and (3) The credit must be recommended by the student's department in the university as specifically applicable to the student's degree program. **Students may not transfer credits from another college or university for the four (4) required core courses.**

## MINIMUM/MAXIMUM ENROLLMENT AND DEFINITION OF FULL-TIME

A minimum enrollment of 3 hours is required of every graduate student in each regular semester and 1 hour during the summer session, including registration for thesis or dissertation. The maximum enrollment for a graduate student during a regular session is 15 semester hours, including thesis and dissertation. In the summer session, the student may register for no more than 6 semester hours each term.

A graduate student registered for 9 or more graduate-level credit hours during the Fall or Spring semesters at the university is considered to be a full-time student. In a summer term, a graduate student registered for 4 or more semester hours is considered a full-time student though, to satisfy residence requirements, the student must enroll for a total of 9 hours during the summer session terms.

Students holding a Graduate Assistantship appointment must be enrolled in a minimum of 9 credit hours and a maximum of 12 credit hours per semester (only 9 of which can be coursework, the balance being enrolling in thesis or applied criminal justice graduate project credits).

## GRADES

Graduate students may receive quality grades of A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D, or F on graduate coursework, but grades of C-, D, and F are not acceptable for graduate credit. Grades of C+, C, C-, D, and F in the core classes (CJ 600, CJ 601, CJ 602, CJ 624) are not acceptable for graduate credit in the MCJ program.

In calculating grade-point average, the quality points associated with the above scale are as follows: A = 4.0, A- = 3.7, B+ = 3.3, B = 3.0, B- = 2.7, C+ = 2.3, C = 2.0, C- = 1.7, D = 1.0 and F = 0. In certain specifically designated courses, the mark of Z is given to indicate that a student has received graduate credit but has been assigned no quality grade in the course; however, in courses approved for the Z mark, instructors may assign the quality grade of F. The only other marks that may be assigned in courses approved for the Z mark are I or W.

Graduate students must maintain at least a B average (GPA = 3.0 or above) on all graduate coursework undertaken. Unless specifically approved to be otherwise, no grades or marks are given for courses designated as thesis, doctoral essay, or dissertation. In any situation in which a graduate student wishes to appeal a grade, he or she should contact the Dean of the Graduate School for a copy of the Graduate School Appeal Procedure, which shall apply in this case.

### GOOD STANDING AND ACADEMIC PROBATION

To be in good standing, graduate students are expected to maintain a B average. Students must have a 3.0 GPA on coursework that is presented to satisfy requirements for a degree. Students whose grade-point average falls below 3.0 in any regular semester will be placed on probation and expected to improve their grades to an acceptable level before the end of their next period of enrollment. If the grade-point average of a graduate student for a semester or term has been unsatisfactory, the Dean of the Graduate School may refuse permission for the student to register for further work or change the student's classification.

### PROGRAM DISMISSAL POLICY

This policy describes the conditions and procedures, including appeals procedures, for the dismissal or change in admission status of a degree-seeking graduate student. A sanction of dismissal or expulsion, among other possible sanctions, may also result from academic discipline, non-academic discipline, or research misconduct proceedings. The policy below applies to students who are not meeting academic expectations and/or professional expectations within the degree program.

Additional information on policies for dismissal or change in status of graduate students can be found in the [M Book here](#).

A student may be dismissed from the program for any of the following reasons:

1. **Academic Performance.** A student whose grade point average is less than 3.0 for any regular semester will be placed on probation, and a dean's registration hold will be applied to the student's record. Such a student will not be allowed to register unless the academic department/program makes an affirmative

recommendation to the Graduate Dean, who will then temporarily lift the hold. Without a written, favorable recommendation from the chair or graduate program coordinator of a department/program, a student on probation will be converted to an inactive status and must re-apply and be re-admitted to the graduate program in order to continue in the same or other program.

These course requirements may have been specified for an individual student or may involve required grades in “core” courses. Ordinarily, these course expectations should be made known to the student before enrollment. In some circumstances, however, an appropriate faculty group, which may be the student’s advisory committee or the graduate education committee of a department/program, may require additional course work based upon the student’s performance in the program or failure to timely progress towards a degree.

If in the judgment of the appropriate faculty group a student fails to satisfy specific course or program requirements in a timely manner, the faculty group may recommend dismissal from a graduate program or change of status. This recommendation shall be forwarded by the graduate program coordinator or department chair to the Graduate Dean and to the affected student with an indication whether the chair or program coordinator concurs with the faculty recommendation. The Graduate Dean will act on the faculty recommendation and inform the student and the graduate program coordinator or department chair of the action taken. The decision of the Graduate Dean with respect to the faculty recommendation is not subject to appeal. Ordinarily, dismissal or change of status for failure to meet specific course requirements would take effect between semesters or enrollment periods. If a student is dismissed from a graduate program, he or she will be considered a non-degree II student and may re-apply to a graduate program.

2. **Issues of Academic Misconduct and Dishonesty.** Faculty members will handle cases of academic dishonesty involving graduate students by recommending an appropriate sanction after discussion with the student. Possible sanctions include failure on the work in question, retake of an examination, extra work, grade reduction or failure in the course, disciplinary probation, or suspension or expulsion from the university. An appeals process is available to the student. A more complete statement concerning definitions, offenses, penalties, and grievance procedures [may be found at here](#). Additionally, faculty will notify the Graduate Program Director or Department Chair of instances of academic misconduct. If a student engages in egregious forms of academic misconduct or

repeated instances of academic misconduct, the department may recommend dismissal of the student.

3. **Issues of Professionalism or Unethical Conduct.** All issues relating to a student's alleged violations of the University's student code of conduct ([M Book](#)) will be processed following the university's disciplinary procedures. Graduate students are also expected to behave in a collegial manner and to adhere to the professional and ethical standards of the discipline. These include the [American Society of Criminology Code of Ethics](#) and the [Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences Code of Ethics](#).

Students are expected to develop collaborative and collegial relationships with and to work with graduate faculty, students, and other professionals in research, academic, or professional settings. If in the judgment of the appropriate faculty group a student fails to meet the above expectations, or otherwise fails to act in ways that are consistent with the norms and standards of the profession or discipline, an appropriate faculty group may recommend dismissal or change in the admission status of that graduate student. This recommendation shall be forwarded by the graduate program coordinator or department chair to the Graduate Dean and to the affected student, with an indication whether the chair or program coordinator concurs with the faculty recommendation. The Graduate Dean will act on the faculty recommendation and inform the student and the graduate program coordinator or department chair of the action taken.

Ordinarily, if a student is dismissed from a graduate program for the above reasons, he or she will be considered a non-degree II student and may re-apply to a graduate program. The judgment of the Graduate Dean may be to prohibit the individual from re-applying to some programs. Failure to adhere to these principles of professional conduct is considered a lack of professionalism. Repeated or egregious failure to adhere to these standards may the recommendation of dismissal from the program.

4. **Failure to comply with program requirements.** Graduate students who fail to comply with the program requirements may be recommended for dismissal.

## PROGRAM DISMISSAL PROCEDURES

When possible, a student will be notified by the Graduate Program Director or Department Chair that they are at risk of being dismissed from the program to provide the student an opportunity to implement corrective action. In this communication, the student will be informed on what actions are needed for them to remain in the program and the timeline upon which the student's status will be reassessed. In instances of

egregious violations, dismissal may be recommended without providing prior notification.

If a student chooses to appeal the dismissal decision, the student must follow the appeals procedures outlined in the M Book.

## GRADUATE ORGANIZATIONS

There is a University of Mississippi Graduate Student Council, and the website for this organization can be found online at <http://gsc.olemiss.edu/>.

Graduate students enrolled in a graduate program in criminal justice or related field who have completed at least four graduate courses and have a minimum GPA of 3.4 on a 4.0 scale may apply to be a member of The University of Mississippi's chapter of Alpha Phi Sigma, Mu Rho. Alpha Phi Sigma is the National Criminal Justice Honor Society. To start the application process, interested students should contact the Alpha Phi Sigma advisor, Dr. Linda Keena at [ldkeena@olemiss.edu](mailto:ldkeena@olemiss.edu).

## 10. GRADUATE STUDENT SUPPORT

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The Department of Criminal Justice & Legal Studies and the Graduate School offer several options to help support our graduate students. Financial assistance is dependent on availability of funds and student's satisfactory progress toward fulfillment of departmental requirements for degree sought.

### FINANCIAL AID AND SCHOLARSHIPS

The Graduate School offers recruiting fellowships and scholarships, including for academic and inclusivity excellence) and summer graduate research assistantships. You can find more information on these programs at <https://gradschool.olemiss.edu/prospective-students/financial-aid-information/>

### TRAVEL ASSISTANCE

The Department of Criminal Justice & Legal Studies has limited funds available to support graduate students listed as first author on a research presentation and/or recognized through an award for original research/scholarship.

Students must first apply to the [Graduate School Travel Award](#) program before being eligible to receive departmental funds. The Department of Criminal Justice & Legal Studies will match the Graduate School funds up to \$300. Students are only eligible to receive one Graduate School Travel Award.

## ASSISTANTSHIP POSITIONS

The Department of Criminal Justice & Legal Studies offers a limited number of Graduate Assistantship positions. Students are awarded assistantships on a competitive basis and the continuation of an assistantship are based on an annual review of student performance. Students awarded teaching and research assistantships are required to be present during normal working hours at a minimum (weekdays from 8:00am to 5:00 pm) for at least half of their appointed hours each week.

Students with a 20-hour per week assistantship may not hold a job outside of the department. Students with a 10-hour per week assistantship may work up to 10 hours outside of the department. Students taking employment outside of the department that interferes with their ability to perform in their capacity as a student or graduate assistantship will forfeit their assistantship appointment.

To receive a graduate assistantship, student must be enrolled as a full-time student and must maintain a minimum 3.0 grade-point average. Graduate assistants will receive a partial or full tuition scholarship for the fall and spring semester and an additional stipend, depending on whether they hold a quarter- or half-time appointment.

### **Conditions for Termination:**

The appointment of a graduate assistant may be terminated by the University, upon the recommendation of the departmental head, for the following reasons:

- incompetent job performance or neglect of duty;
- misconduct that is job-related;
- moral turpitude;
- physical or mental ailment or condition which significantly impairs or limits job performance and cannot reasonably be accommodated;
- financial exigency or discontinuance of the work for which the appointment is made;
- mutual agreement;
- failure to maintain a graduate grade point average of 3.0 and/or failure to maintain the minimum enrollment obligation.

### **Financial Aid and Scholarships**

While there are no scholarships specific to our program, there are funding opportunities available both through UM and through outside funding organizations that you might use to help fund your program.

### **Military and Veterans Awards**

The University of Mississippi offers a variety of scholarships and benefits to U.S. military personnel and veterans. You can find detailed information about these awards on the [Veteran and Military Services page](#).



### **UM Graduate School Awards**

The UM Graduate School also provides a number of scholarship opportunities as well as connections to outside funding opportunities. While assistantships are not currently available for online students, students in our program would be eligible for other listed awards. The Graduate School's scholarship information can be found on the [Graduate School financial information page](#).

### **UM Staff Tuition Benefit**

Staff members at the University of Mississippi can utilize the further education benefit to enroll in up to two courses per semester. You can find detailed information about this benefit on the [Human Resources Tuition Benefit page](#).

### **Employer Tuition Assistance**

Many other employers also provide tuition for employees seeking to further their education and gain professional development in their field. Usually your supervisor or human resources department benefits coordinator can provide details specific to your workplace. If after speaking with staff at your workplace you need additional information to qualify for their assistance, you can [contact Coordinator of Advising, Recruitment, and Retention Andy King](#) and he will assist you in gathering that information.

### **Federal Grants and Loans**

Many of our students will also apply for federal need-based grants and loans to cover a portion or all of their program costs. Most of these funding opportunities will require that the student completes a FAFSA prior to the start of the semester. Details on federal aid programs and assistance in completing the FAFSA is provided by the UM [Financial Aid Office](#).

Additional Resources:

[Graduate School Website](#)

[University Graduate Student Forms](#)

[Graduation Preparation Information](#)

[Tuition Cost Estimates](#)