Wake Forest University School of Medicine

Financial Aid Updates: Recent Federal Legislation

Summary of Impacts for Graduate and Professional Students Receiving Federal Student Loans

Beginning July 1, 2026, graduate and professional students will experience several important changes to federal student loans. Students enrolled who receive a federal Direct Loan disbursement **prior to July 1, 2026,** will maintain legacy provisions through graduation, without disruption to enrollment.

Students Enrolled Before July 1, 2026:

Graduate PLUS Loans

- Students who receive a federal Direct Loan disbursement for their current program before July 1, 2026 may continue borrowing Graduate PLUS Loans for:
  - Up to three additional academic years, or
  - The remainder of their current program, whichever is shorter, provided they remain continuously enrolled.
- The Graduate PLUS Loan may cover costs up to full cost of attendance, minus other aid.
- There is no aggregate borrowing limit for this loan.

Unsubsidized Loans

- Students who receive an Unsubsidized Loan disbursement before July 1, 2026 may continue borrowing under existing loan limits up to three additional academic years or until completing their program.
- Current federal limits:
  - Graduate Programs: *(PA, Nursing and Graduate Students)*
    - Annual: $20,500
    - Aggregate (including undergraduate borrowing): $138,500
  - Professional Programs: *(MD Students)*
    - Annual:
      - $40,500 (9-month program)

        - $42,722 (10-month program)
        - $44,944 (11-month program)
        - $47,167 (12-month program)
    - Aggregate: $224,000.

Students Entering After July 1, 2026

Key changes for new borrowers:

- The Graduate PLUS loan will be eliminated for *new* graduate/professional borrowers.
- Annual and aggregate Unsubsidized Loan limits differ by program type.

New Borrower Loan Limits

Graduate Programs (PA, Nursing, Biomedical):

- Annual: $20,500
- Aggregate: $100,000 *(does not include undergraduate borrowing).*

Professional programs (MD*):*

- Annual: $50,000
- Aggregate: $200,000 *(does not include undergraduate borrowing).*

Important: Students returning from a leave of absence who are **not actively enrolled on June 30, 2026** will be treated as new borrowers under the new rules.

Enrollment Proration

Loan eligibility will be prorated based on enrollment level. Part-time students will qualify for a proportionally reduced loan amount, regardless of legacy status.

Distinction of Professional and Graduate Degrees

The Department of Education defines Professional and Graduate degrees as follows:
A *Professional Degree* is awarded to students enrolled in a program (with an eligible CIP code).

At Wake Forest University School of Medicine, **Medicine (MD)** is the *only* program classified as a *Professional Degree* by the Department of Education.
All other programs offered by WFUSM are classified as **Graduate Programs**.

Loan FAQs for Graduate & Professional Students

I'm currently enrolled in 2025-26. Can I receive a Grad PLUS Loan in 2026-27 even if I've never had one before?

- **Yes, IF** you have had a Direct Unsubsidized Loan disbursement before July 1, 2026. You may borrow a Graduate PLUS Loan for the 2026-27 academic year up to your cost of attendance less any other aid.
- **No, IF** you have never borrowed from the Direct Loan Program while enrolled in your current program. You would be considered a new borrower and therefore not eligible for a Grad PLUS loan.

I'm a prospective student for 2026-27. What are my loan options?

- If you matriculate after July 1, 2026, you are eligible for the following *federal loans:*
    - Enrolling in a Graduate Program *(PA, Nursing, Biomedical):*
        - Direct Unsubsidized Loan: $20,500
    - Enrolling in a Professional Program *(MD):*
        - Direct Unsubsidized Loan: $50,000
- WFUSM's financial aid team encourages you to utilize our ElmSelect site to compare loan products of trustworthy lenders. It is a free, unbiased tool to help you make informed decisions about private loans.

What is my direct unsubsidized federal loan eligibility for 2026-27?

- If you were disbursed a direct unsubsidized loan in your current program at WFUSM before July 1, 2026 **and** were actively enrolled in that program as of June 30, 2026:
    - You can continue borrowing under the current loan limits for 3 academic years or the remainder of your expected time to finish your program, whichever is less.

If you did not borrow a direct unsubsidized loan in your current program at WFUSM before July 1, 2026:

- Your annual and aggregate loan limits are:
  - Graduate Program:
    - $20,500 annually
    - $100,000 aggregate limit for graduate loans
  - Professional Program:
    - $50,000 annually
    - $200,000 aggregate limit for professional loans

Does my status as a part-time student impact my eligibility for federal student loans?

- Yes, if you are enrolled in a Graduate Program less than full-time during the academic year, the annual loan limit will be proportionally reduced based on enrollment (e.g., half-time = 50% of the maximum allowed).