

Ranching Systems Degree Application Instructions

2029 Graduation Cohort

2026 Application Period: September 30th through October 16th, 2026

*The **Ranching Systems Degree at Montana State University** is a **limited enrollment program** with the goal of providing high-quality, individually tailored educational opportunities to prepare students with the diverse array of skills in livestock production, rangeland ecology, business management and human resources needed by today's ranch managers.*

This application is open to sophomore students who have a minimum of 36 credits (including currently enrolled classes) in courses related to the Ranching Systems degree plan and have a cumulative GPA of 2.75 or better. If you have questions about your eligibility to apply, please contact Rachel Frost, frost@montana.edu.

*The application process is a time for examining and expressing one's commitment to the program, expectations of the experience, and career objectives. Remember, the application process is focused on potential, rather than immediate qualifications. Do not try to exaggerate previous experience or skills. **The truth is the absolute best currency in the application process.***

Tips:

- Read the application requirements carefully and follow directions completely!
- Combine all files into a single pdf file with the materials embedded in the order below. Save the file as: Your Name DSRMP Application 2026, e.g. John Doe DSRMP Application 2026.
- submit applications via email before midnight of the final due date. Send completed applications to Rachel Frost, frost@montana.edu

Application materials:

1. **Cover Letter** – introduce yourself and describe your background (both on and off-ranch). Tell us why you chose to apply for the Dan Scott Ranch Management Program. What are your career goals and how will a B.S in Ranching Systems prepare you to achieve those goals?
2. **Résumé** – limit to two pages; include both on and off-ranch work experience
3. **Completed application form, essay questions & skills assessment** – four general questions, three essay questions, and a skills assessment (pages 3-4 of this document).
4. **Two letters of recommendation** from non-relatives; at least one letter should be from a previous employer / supervisor
5. **Current transcripts** – include all post-secondary schools attended (these can be unofficial)
6. **Release of transcripts form** – Permission to share your unofficial transcripts with the interview committee, (page 5 of this document).

Timelines for application process

- **September 30, 2026** - Applications open for admittance to Ranching Systems Program (2029 Cohort)
- **October 16, 2026** – Applications due for Ranching Systems Program by 11:59 PM.
- **October 23, 2026** – Applications screened for completion and qualification. Qualified applicants sent to DSRMP Selection Committee for review. Dates set for interviews.
- **October - November 2026** - qualified applicants have in-person interview with Program Lead and Interview Committee

- **Prior to November 13, 2026** - applicants receive notification of acceptance
- **November 2026 – March 2027** – Interviews with potential host ranches
- **April 2027** – Students and ranches develop learning objectives and sign internship MOU. Pre-internship training conducted on campus.
- **May 2027**– Students attend the Montana Ranch Bootcamp (week after finals).
- **May 2027** (Third week of the month) – Students begin internship.

How are students placed at host ranches?

- Student and host ranch are introduced through the DSRMP Program Lead.
- Host ranches have the option to interview students for selection as an intern.
- Students must accept or decline an offer from a potential host ranch individually. Students will not interview at multiple ranches simultaneously.
- We aspire to place students in locations where they will be stretched in their knowledge and experiences. When possible, students will be placed on host ranches that have different goals, management strategies, and resources than operations where they have worked previously. We presume students would prefer to be placed on a working ranch that offers maximum potential for expanding their experience and knowledge, rather than limit their learning opportunity in favor of a specific geographic preference.

Dismissal from the Program

Students may be dismissed from the DSRMP prior to graduation for the following reasons:

- Failure to maintain a GPA of 2.75 for two consecutive semesters (*With the exception of personal or family tragedy*)
- Academic misconduct as defined by MSU Student Conduct Code
- Engaging in any illegal activities while a DSRMP student
- Failing an internship course (RS 398 or RS 498)

Montana State University Diversity Statement

Montana State University is committed to creating a culture of intellectual and personal growth. Because learning is enhanced when topics are examined from diverse perspectives and because individuals possess unique outlooks which reflect the world around us, Montana State University is dedicated to creating an inclusive community that embraces a rich mix in the composition of its student body, staff and faculty. The distinction in viewpoints that comes from differences in race, gender, age, language, socioeconomic status, religion, political affiliation and geographical background are appreciated and valued at MSU as important aspects of the campus community at every level and in every sector of the campus.

To this end, MSU welcomes international students and faculty and enthusiastically seeks engagement with peers from around the globe to expand our depth of understanding and share in the discovery of knowledge. MSU has an especially strong commitment to Native Peoples and actively engages in the development of social and educational initiatives to preserve the cultural integrity of all American Indian students, faculty and staff. MSU strives to advance the ideals of human worth and dignity for all by facilitating open discussion, supporting rational resolution of conflict and encouraging on-going examination of values.

Montana State University Discrimination Policy Statement

Montana State University's campuses are committed to providing an environment that emphasizes the dignity and worth of every member of its community and that is free from harassment and discrimination based upon race, color, religion, national origin, creed, service in the uniformed services (as defined in state and federal law), veteran's status, sex, age, political ideas, marital or family status, pregnancy, physical or mental disability, genetic information, gender identity, gender expression, or sexual orientation. Such an environment is necessary to a healthy learning, working, and living atmosphere because discrimination and harassment undermine human dignity and the positive connection among all people at our university. Acts of discrimination, harassment, sexual misconduct, dating violence, domestic violence, stalking, and retaliation will be addressed consistent with this policy.

DAN SCOTT RANCH MANAGEMENT PROGRAM APPLICATION FORM

Please **answer the following questions to the best of your ability.**

GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. Do you have a dog that you will need to take with you this summer? Yes No
2. Have you been convicted of DUI or another offense that would limit your ability to be insured to drive a host-ranch vehicle? Yes No
3. Most host ranches are very accommodating for family-related leave, weddings, and other commitments of short duration. Do you have any lengthy commitments that would prevent you from serving a full 12 weeks in your internship? Yes No
If answered "Yes", please explain _____
4. What is the monthly salary, in addition to housing, that you expect to receive when working as a intern? \$ _____

ESSAY QUESTIONS

PLEASE ANSWER EACH QUESTION ON AN INDIVIDUAL PAGE. LIMIT RESPONSES TO ONE DOUBLE-SPACED PAGE IN 12-POINT FONT. INCLUDE THE QUESTION AT THE TOP OF EACH PAGE.

- A. ESSAY QUESTION: What do you believe are the two most important professional skills of an effective ranch manager? Describe your current strengths and areas for growth related to these skills. Provide specific examples from your experiences and explain how participation in the Dan Scott Ranch Management Program will help you continue to develop as a future ranch manager.
- B. ESSAY QUESTION: What do you believe are the two most significant challenges facing the U.S. ranching industry in the next 2 to 5 years and the two most significant challenges in the next 10 to 20 years? Explain why these issues are important and how ranch managers can help address them.
- C. ESSAY QUESTION: The DSRMP includes two summer ranch internships. Describe the type of host ranch that would best support your professional development. Identify three specific learning goals you hope to achieve during the internship and explain how you will take initiative and work with your host ranch to accomplish those goals.

Skills Assessment

A man wearing a brown and white baseball cap, sunglasses, and a blue and white plaid shirt is working in a field. He is holding a red and silver tool, possibly a soil probe or a similar device, and appears to be taking a sample or measuring something. The background shows a vast, green field under a clear blue sky with some distant trees and hills.

“**COMPETENT**” = CAN PERFORM WITHOUT SUPERVISION / HELP
 “**HAVE DONE**” = DONE IN THE PAST, BUT WOULD NEED HELP OR ADDITIONAL TRAINING
 “**NEW TO THIS**” = NO EXPERIENCE WITH THIS TASK OR SKILL

[illegible]



AUTHORIZATION TO RELEASE INFORMATION

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974 is designed to protect the privacy of a student's educational records. Protected records include: financial aid, scholarship, and billing information, transcripts, departmental student files and data, any and all records maintained by this institution related directly to a student.

By signing this form, the student authorizes University personnel to release confidential information to designated persons (please print):

Student name: _____

Student GID number (last 4 digits): _____

I authorize the academic program personnel specified below to discuss confidential student records/information for the purposes of understanding and meeting University-related obligations, regulations, and procedures.

Name of academic department/program (please print):

Dan Scott Ranch Management Program – Program Lead

Specific purpose for the release of confidential student records (please print):

Transcripts for the purpose of program admissions

I understand that the person(s) specified below may have access via telephone or in person, through U.S. or electronic mail services, to information that may include the following: academic and scholarship records (including academic and eligibility status), student advising records and statements, and administrative records directly related to my student accounts.

Name(s) of people to release information to:

Members of the Dan Scott Ranch Management Program Selection Committee:

Greg Collins

Morgan Densbarger

Billy Whitehurst

Additional member TBD

This authorization will remain in effect for one month, unless withdrawn in writing by the student sooner, and solely relates to the specified purpose/department and personnel listed above.

Student signature: _____

Date: _____

Dan Scott Ranch Management Program

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