

NEBRASKA

\$2,461,156 in Academic Competitiveness (AC) Grants awarded to 3,071 students

\$1,134,082 in National Science and Mathematics Access to Retain Talent (SMART) Grants awarded to 367 students

For AC and National SMART Grants, students must 1) apply for financial aid by submitting the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and be determined to be eligible for a Federal Pell Grant; 2) be a U.S. citizen; 3) be enrolled in a two- or four-year degree program; and 4) be enrolled full-time.

The following are Nebraska's pre-approved rigorous high school programs of study students must complete to earn an Academic Competitiveness Grant:

- Nebraska Scholars;
- A set of courses similar to the State Scholars Initiative;
- Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) courses and test scores.

For more information about these programs visit:
<http://www.ed.gov/admins/finaid/about/ac-smart/2007/ne07.doc>

**STUDENTS SHOULD SELF-IDENTIFY ON THE FAFSA THAT
THEY TOOK ONE OF THESE PROGRAMS**

Academic Competitiveness and National SMART Grants were created by the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005. Congress appropriated \$4.5 billion for the programs between 2006 and 2011.

The Department of Education has set a goal to double the number of students receiving AC and National SMART Grants by 2010-11. States, colleges, and high schools should promote AC and National SMART Grants because completing a rigorous high school program is the best way to increase college readiness, reduce remediation, and increase college completion rates for low-income students. Increased postsecondary attainment will help the United States compete in the 21st century.

In addition to the Pell Grant amount, **up to \$750** will be awarded to eligible first-year AC Grant students, and **up to \$1,300** to second-year AC Grant students. **Up to \$4,000** will be awarded to eligible National SMART grant students for each year in addition to the Pell Grant funds. *States and colleges can package these grants with the Pell Grant and state and institutional awards to provide low-income students an early commitment that if they complete high school and take challenging courses, college expenses can be fully paid.*



Top five schools in Nebraska with the highest number of AC Grant recipients:	
1. University of Nebraska	730
2. University of Nebraska - Omaha	393
3. University of Nebraska - Kearney	366
4. Creighton University	182
5. Wayne State College	182

Top five schools in Nebraska with the highest number of National SMART Grant recipients:	
1. University of Nebraska - Omaha	93
2. University of Nebraska	85
3. University of Nebraska - Kearney	31
4. Bellevue University	21
5. Creighton University	19

Nebraska's Top National SMART Grant majors:	Top Foreign Languages:
1. Biological and Biomedical Sciences	1. N/A
2. Engineering	2. N/A
3. Computer Science	3. N/A

High schools need to do a better job graduating more students on-time and ready for college and work. Nationally, 4% of low-income high school students complete a rigorous course of study.

- 36.5% of first-time, full-time Pell recipients in Nebraska received an AC Grant compared to 25.6% nationally. States with the highest rates of AC Grant participation among the eligible population include Nebraska (36.5%), Minnesota (34.1%), and Arkansas (31.1%).
- 7.9% of Nebraska's recent high school graduates received an AC Grant compared to about 5.3% nationally.

The effort in the first year of implementation can be improved upon going forward. To do this, high school and postsecondary personnel, state policymakers, and access advocates should:

1. **Know your state's approved programs of rigorous study.**
2. **Accept the challenge to double the number of students in Nebraska receiving AC and National SMART Grants by 2010-11.**
3. **Advocate for low-income students' access to rigorous, college preparatory classes, and pursuit of high-demand, high-wage majors in the National SMART Grant program.**



The Department of Education has set a goal to double the number of students receiving AC and SMART grants by 2010-11. To do this, the Department has compiled descriptions of common issues faced during the first year of implementation and how some innovative states and institutions addressed them.

Issue:

It is difficult for institutions to identify students who have taken a rigorous high school curriculum.

Solution: Institutions and states can establish a branded core curriculum for college admissions.

- University of California system: Four campuses of the University of California system are among the top 10 schools receiving AC Grants nationally. The University of California's A-G coursework requirements for admissions are well-known by high schools and students throughout the state. The A-G subject area requirements are approved as a course of study for Californian students to receive AC Grants and are also used for admissions by the California State University system.

For more information visit: <http://www.ucop.edu/a-gGuide/ag/faq.html>

Solution: The state can certify AC Grant eligibility by sending reports of eligible students to postsecondary institutions.

- Florida: Students graduating from eligible high schools in Florida who have earned the Bright Futures Scholarship have completed requisite test scores and GPA in the designated college preparatory curriculum. This curriculum portion of their award is an approved course of study in Florida to receive an AC Grant. The state informs colleges which students are scholarship recipients and maintains a website where institutions can identify Florida Bright Futures Scholars and therefore students who are potentially eligible for AC Grants.

For more information visit: <http://www.floridastudentfinancialaid.org/ssfad/bf/>

Solution: Institutions can reach out to all Pell Grant recipients, not just students who self-identify as eligible.

- Brigham Young University (BYU)—Idaho: BYU Idaho had 674 AC Grant recipients. To accomplish this, BYU Idaho conducted an exhaustive evaluation to identify AC Grant-eligible students by contacting all students who self-certified on their FAFSA and by contacting other students who appeared to be potentially eligible based on a review of transcripts and financial aid records.



Issue: It's a new program. How do we get the word out?

Solution: Include AC Grants in existing state, local, and school-level outreach

- Indiana Commission on Higher Education: Indiana provides an extensive college outreach program to every student in the state. The initiative, called Learn More Indiana, includes sending out magazines starting in eighth grade, a comprehensive website dedicated to information about going to college, and publications on paying for college. AC Grant and National SMART Grants are presented as options in every contact with students and high school counselors.
For more information visit: <http://www.learnmoreindiana.org/Pages/default.aspx>

Issue: Too few low-income students are encouraged to take, or have the opportunity to take rigorous, college preparatory courses.

Solution: Make a college preparatory course of study the default requirement for high school graduation

- Arkansas Department of Education: Arkansas requires its high school graduates to complete a college preparatory curriculum, branded as Smart Core. The Arkansas Department of Education hosted five regional summits across the state to explain the benefits of completing the Smart Core, including receiving additional federal financial aid through the Academic Competitiveness Grant program.
For more information visit: http://www.nextsteparkansas.org/educators/educators_what.html

Solution: Amplify the incentive, and/or tie to a similar state financial aid program

- Minnesota's new ACHIEVE Scholarship: In 2007, Minnesota piggy-backed on the federal Academic Competitiveness Grant program and created the ACHIEVE Scholarship. The ACHIEVE Scholarship provides low-income students who take a rigorous high school curriculum an extra \$1,200 to attend a college in Minnesota. The additional money serves to greatly increase the incentive to take a rigorous high school course of study.
For more information visit: <http://www.getreadyforcollege.org/gPg.cfm?pageID=1789>

Did you know students need to self-identify on the electronic FAFSA as having taken an approved rigorous course of study in high school? Make sure your high school students know which approved course of study they've completed and indicate it on the FAFSA.



STATE	ACG Program		SMART Grant Program	
	RECIPIENTS	TOTAL DISBURSED	RECIPIENTS	TOTAL DISBURSED
Alabama	3,697	\$2,835,803	1,007	\$3,098,359
Alaska	60	\$43,373	63	\$204,327
Arizona	1,448	\$1,095,388	2,460	\$7,591,975
Arkansas	4,049	\$3,063,658	496	\$1,489,899
California	29,808	\$23,376,675	7,162	\$22,532,651
Colorado	2,981	\$2,314,696	1,375	\$4,390,894
Connecticut	1,836	\$1,531,646	292	\$967,104
Delaware	234	\$176,179	53	\$181,813
District of Columbia	1,083	\$958,091	133	\$485,063
Florida	16,270	\$11,948,147	2,644	\$8,085,749
Georgia	9,782	\$7,453,213	1,557	\$4,948,483
Hawaii	345	\$230,317	204	\$650,964
Idaho	1,916	\$1,474,914	1,088	\$3,592,053
Illinois	9,353	\$7,426,655	2,709	\$8,994,836
Indiana	8,521	\$6,656,111	1,215	\$3,737,577
Iowa	4,343	\$3,584,210	832	\$2,701,519
Kansas	2,997	\$2,463,473	688	\$2,128,485
Kentucky	5,405	\$4,093,931	826	\$2,725,227
Louisiana	6,446	\$4,816,553	954	\$3,034,635
Maine	1,694	\$1,373,295	227	\$786,557
Maryland	3,466	\$2,750,844	584	\$1,974,145
Massachusetts	8,438	\$7,165,041	1,336	\$4,775,424
Michigan	6,469	\$5,299,151	2,082	\$6,632,723
Minnesota	5,591	\$4,610,427	1,059	\$3,487,519
Mississippi	3,900	\$2,977,060	546	\$1,720,030
Missouri	5,325	\$4,242,149	1,163	\$3,699,162
Montana	1,003	\$786,501	384	\$1,247,635
Nebraska	3,071	\$2,461,156	367	\$1,134,082
Nevada	522	\$389,096	203	\$604,500
New Hampshire	1,195	\$1,009,072	195	\$676,663
New Jersey	5,867	\$4,164,988	835	\$2,854,029
New Mexico	1,083	\$797,187	499	\$1,448,334
New York	24,916	\$19,996,284	4,202	\$13,143,354
North Carolina	11,510	\$8,885,508	1,319	\$4,321,772
North Dakota	1,351	\$1,052,734	316	\$993,153
Ohio	14,467	\$11,114,321	1,877	\$5,857,850
Oklahoma	4,754	\$3,567,533	970	\$2,941,144
Oregon	2,318	\$1,836,362	1,106	\$3,423,172
Pennsylvania	18,944	\$14,963,404	2,856	\$9,500,360
Rhode Island	1,921	\$1,625,118	174	\$638,001
South Carolina	5,440	\$4,316,960	701	\$2,298,277
South Dakota	1,422	\$1,151,029	339	\$1,090,490
Tennessee	6,707	\$5,089,237	1,035	\$3,354,357
Texas	27,668	\$20,204,037	3,027	\$9,913,929
Utah	744	\$612,117	3,450	\$11,397,721
Vermont	896	\$756,858	142	\$511,981
Virginia	6,020	\$4,681,345	971	\$3,251,321
Washington	3,346	\$2,710,765	1,566	\$4,833,023
West Virginia	2,065	\$1,722,322	474	\$1,564,095
Wisconsin	6,049	\$4,926,247	1,129	\$3,669,905
Wyoming	353	\$257,227	84	\$258,417
Total:	299,089	\$233,038,410	60,976	\$195,544,735

