

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON AC/SMART GRANTS

1. Eligible Students

An eligible student may receive an Academic Competitiveness Grant (AC Grant) of up to \$750 for the first academic year of study and up to \$1,300 for the second academic year of study. To be eligible for each academic year, a student must:

- Be a U.S. citizen;
- Be a Federal Pell Grant recipient;
- Be enrolled full-time in a degree program;
- Be enrolled in the first or second academic year of his or her program of study at a two-year or four-year degree-granting institution;
- Have completed a rigorous secondary school program of study (after January 1, 2006, if a first-year student, and after January 1, 2005, if a second-year student);
- If a first-year student, not have been previously enrolled in an undergraduate program; and
- If a second-year student, have at least a cumulative 3.0 grade point average on a 4.0 scale (as set forth in regulations to be promulgated soon) for the first academic year.

An eligible student may receive a National SMART Grant of up to \$4,000 for each of the third and fourth academic years of study. To be eligible for each academic year, a student must:

- Be a U.S. citizen;
- Be a Federal Pell Grant recipient;
- Be enrolled full-time in a degree program;
- Be enrolled in a four-year degree-granting institution;
- Major in physical, life or computer science, engineering, mathematics, technology, or a critical foreign language; and
- Have at least a cumulative 3.0 grade point average on a 4.0 scale (as set forth in regulations to be promulgated soon).

Note that the amount of the AC or SMART Grant, when combined with a Pell Grant, may not exceed the student's cost of attendance. In addition, if the number of eligible students is large enough that payment of the full grant amounts would exceed the program appropriation in any fiscal year, then the amount of the grant to each eligible student may be ratably reduced.

2. Recognized rigorous secondary school programs of study for Academic Competitiveness Grant program in 2006-07 and 2007-08

Listed below are the existing Advanced or Honors programs that will be immediately recognized as rigorous. This list has been compiled based on the Department's best efforts in this short time period and may not be exhaustive of all rigorous secondary school programs within a State. If a program is not correctly identified for your State, or if you have an additional rigorous program for recognition, please indicate this to the Department by June 1.

Alabama Advanced Academic Endorsement
Arkansas College Preparatory Core Curriculum
California Golden State Seal Merit Diploma
Delaware Distinguished Achievement Diploma
Georgia College Preparatory with Distinction Diploma
Indiana Academic Honors Diploma
Kentucky Commonwealth Diploma
Louisiana Academic Endorsement to the Standard Diploma
Massachusetts Certificate of Mastery
Missouri College Preparatory Studies Certificate
Nevada Advanced Diploma
New York Regents Diploma with Honors or Advanced Designation
Ohio Honors Diploma
Oklahoma Certificate of Distinction
Pennsylvania Certificate of Distinction
Texas Distinguished Achievement Diploma
Virginia Advanced Studies Diploma
Washington Scholar Designation
Wyoming Advanced Endorsement Diploma

In order to provide options to students, the following three programs will be recognized as evidence of rigor in a secondary school program of study.

- *The State Scholars Initiative requirements.* Students who participate in and complete the State Scholars program will be eligible. This program, currently offered in fourteen States and patterned after the recommendations of the National Commission on Excellence in Education, requires at least four years of English, three years of math (including Algebra I, Algebra II and Geometry), three years of lab science (biology, chemistry, physics), three-and-one-half years of social studies, and two years of a language other than English.
- *A required set of courses similar to the State Scholars Initiative.* This program of study includes four years of English, three years of Math (including Algebra I and a higher level course such as Algebra II, Geometry, or Data Analysis and Statistics), three years of science (including at least two courses from biology, chemistry or physics), three years of social studies, and one year of a foreign language. The program of study must be completed with passing grades.
- *Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate courses and test scores.* This program requires a minimum of two Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) courses in high school and a minimum passing score on the exams for those classes. Students must score 3 or higher on AP exams and 4 or higher on IB exams. This recognition is consistent with the Administration's belief that AP and IB courses demand rigor from a student, and complements the Administration's proposal to expand the AP/IB Incentive Program in Fiscal Year 2007.

3. Process to Submit a State Request for Recognition

If a State Educational Agency (SEA) wishes to establish an alternative rigorous secondary school program of study for recognition by the Secretary, the SEA should submit a proposal by June 1, 2006. The submission should describe how the successful completion of the program of study ensures that students will be exposed to rigorous high school coursework that will prepare them for college. The submission should also contain evidence that a State university in your State's system will consider students college-ready if they complete the program. Furthermore, the submission should provide evidence that input on the program was received from the Governor, State Educational Agency, appropriate higher education officials, and the business community.

If a State does not submit a proposal by this date, it will signify its affirmation of the four options for rigor listed above.

Proposals should be submitted electronically by June 1, 2006, to:

Secretary Margaret Spellings
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

ACGRANTS@ed.gov

If a State wishes to establish a new program of study that would apply to the 2007-08 academic year (that is, one that differs from the recognized programs of study in 2006-07), it must submit information on that program of study by November 1, 2006. This will allow the Department time to prepare for timely administration of the AC Grant program in the 2007-08 academic year. Proposals should be submitted as described above.

4. AC Grant recognition of programs of study: 2008-09 and beyond

Future rulemaking activity will establish the criteria for the Department to recognize rigorous programs of study and to implement other program provisions in the 2008-09 academic year and beyond. The guidelines I am setting forth below are my suggestions for how we can more accurately reflect what is required for success in college in the 2008-09 academic year.

- *State-defined Advanced or Honors diplomas.*
- *The State Scholars Initiative requirements.* As described above.
- *A set of course requirements similar to the State Scholars Initiative.* This program of study is more rigorous than the set of course requirements that will be recognized for the 2006-07 and 2007-08 academic years. This program of study will include four years of English, three years of Math (including Algebra I, Algebra II and a higher level course such as Geometry, Pre-calculus, or Data Analysis and Statistics), three years of lab science including biology, chemistry,

and physics (one of these courses can be substituted with a higher level course), three years of social studies, and two years of a language other than English. Any otherwise eligible student who completes, with passing grades, this program of study will be eligible for an AC Grant.

- *Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate courses and test scores.* As described above.