



New Financial Aid Funding Available: ACG and SMART Grants

Two new grant programs are available to encourage math and science education and increase academic rigor at the high school level. The new programs, named Academic Competitiveness Grants (ACG) and National Science and Mathematics Access to Retain Talent (SMART) Grants, were established as part of a growing national consensus relating to the need for high school reform and the need to refocus on math and science education. The new grant programs make \$790 million available in the 2006-07 academic year and \$4.5 billion over five years to provide aid to low-income college students who meet general Pell Grant program guidelines and specified academic requirements.

“This is the first major expansion of financial aid grant funding for higher education in years,” said David Feitz, Associate Executive Director for Utah Higher Education Assistance Authority (UHEAA). “All eligible students should take full advantage of the new programs.”

The ACG program provides up to \$750 for first-year students and \$1,300 for second-year students who:

- Are U.S. citizens and
- Have a Pell Grant award and
- Are enrolled in the first- or second-year of their programs of study and
- Are enrolled full time and
- Have completed a “rigorous high school curriculum” and
- Are first-year students who graduated from high school after January 1, 2006 and have not previously enrolled in an undergraduate program or
- Are second-year students who graduated from high school after January 1, 2005 and have at least a 3.0 grade point average (GPA).

Utah students can meet the rigorous high school program of study requirement by completing one or more of the following options:

- ***The State Scholars Initiative requirements.*** This program, currently offered in Utah and 21 other 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 set of courses similar to the State Scholars Initiative.*** This program of study requires passing grades in the following:
 - 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.
 - ***Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) 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.
 - ***Utah Concurrent Enrollment Program.*** This program requires completion of at least 6 credits of concurrent enrollment (college-level courses) in core academic areas (English, math, science, social studies, or foreign language) with no course grade lower than a B.

The SMART Grant program provides up to \$4,000 for third- and fourth-year students who:

- Are U.S. citizens and
- Have a Pell Grant award and
- Are enrolled full time and
- Major in physical, life or computer science, engineering, mathematics, technology or a critical foreign language and
- Maintain at least a cumulative 3.0 GPA for all semesters or quarters of eligibility.

“Students should contact the financial aid office at their college or university for help in determining their eligibility and processing their grant,” said Feitz. Additional ACG and SMART Grant information, including a list of qualifying SMART Grant majors, can be found at www.uheaa.org.