

Session 21

Requirements and Suggested Practices for ACG and National SMART Grants Sophia McArdle



The Law

The Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) and the Ensuring Continued Access to Student Loans Act (ECASLA) made changes to the ACG and National SMART Grant Programs that may expand opportunities for students to qualify for these programs.

Interim Final Regulations

- Published May 1, 2009
- Effective July 1, 2009 (2009-2010 award year)
 - Comments included need to clarify the eligibility of certificate programs to be at degree-granting institutions only

Interim Final Regulations

- This presentation highlights regulatory changes that may impact barriers to student participation barriers by increasing the number of eligible students and programs

Grade Level Progression

- Title IV academic year or weeks of instructional time are no longer used
- Grade level progression is used instead
 - Year refers to grade level in the eligible program, as determined by the institution

Grade Level Progression

- Use only credit or clock hours credited toward completing the eligible program, including AP, IB, testing out, life experience, or similar competency measures
- Must be the same year as used for FFEL/DL annual loan limits
- Must use the student's grade level at the start of the payment period (cannot advance during payment period)

Grade Level Progression

- For award year 2009/2010 must use current grade level to determine student's year
- Must ignore placement by academic year in prior years

Student Eligibility

- Eligible noncitizens are now eligible for both ACG and National SMART Grants
- Students enrolled at least half-time are now eligible for ACG and National SMART Grants
 - Payments are calculated based on annual award amounts for part-time students just like Pell
 - Correspondence study eligible

ACG: Eligible Program

- Certificate/diploma programs now eligible
- For a first-year ACG award must be
 - A certificate or diploma undergraduate program that is at least one academic year in length
 - Offered at a two- or four-year degree granting school

ACG: Eligible Program

- For a second-year ACG award must be
 - A certificate or diploma undergraduate program that is at least two academic years in length
 - Offered at a two- or four-year degree granting school

ACG: Prior Enrollment

- Prior enrollment restriction for first-year students does not apply to
 - Students who were enrolled in postsecondary education as part of a dual-enrollment program
 - Transfer students

Rigorous Secondary Program

- A curriculum recognized by the Secretary after 1/01/05 and before 7/10/09 will continue to be considered rigorous
- State-designated programs:
 - State-submitted program
 - An advanced or honors program established by a State and in existence for the 2004-2005 school year or 2005-2006 school year and

Rigorous Secondary Program

- State Scholars Initiative
- Completion of at least 2 Advanced Placement (AP) courses with a passing test score of 3 for those courses or 2 International Baccalaureate (IB) courses with a passing test score of 4 for those courses
- A set of courses as outlined in the regulations

Rigorous Secondary Program

The recognized set of courses consists of:

- 4 years of English
- 3 years of mathematics, 2 of which must be Algebra 1 and above
- 3 years of science, 2 of which must be one each of biology, chemistry, or physics
- 3 years of social studies
- 1 year of a language other than English

Rigorous Secondary Program

- Effective July 1, 2009 (2009-2010 award year), new rigorous programs will be submitted by a designated State official and accepted by the Secretary

GPA and Second Year Eligibility

- GPA of at least 3.0 required at end of first year
- If sophomore solely due to AP/IB credits
 - Has no GPA, therefore not eligible
- If sophomore solely due to dual enrollment credits
 - Has grades, therefore could be eligible

GPA and Second Year Eligibility

- If sophomore due to combination of AP/IB and dual enrollment credits
 - Has dual enrollment credit grades, therefore could be eligible

ACG: Self-Identified Applicants

Reviewing Self-Identified Applicants:

- Students who apply for aid via FAFSA on the Web or (with FAA help) FAA Access to CPS Online will be screened for potential eligibility and will have the option to provide ACG information

ACG: Self-Identified Applicants

- Paper FAFSA filers who are potentially eligible will receive a comment on their SAR directing them to provide information to the Federal Student Aid Information Center (FSAIC) over the phone
- These ACG self-Identification results from the CPS are sent as comments to the school on the student's ISIR or to the student on the SAR

ACG: Self-Identified Applicants

- A special flat file is sent to the schools containing ACG self-identification responses

SMART: Third Scheduled Award

- Third Scheduled Award for fifth year of five-year degree program
- Requirements:
 - Must have 5 full undergraduate years of coursework for program completion as certified by an appropriate institutional official and documented
 - Is not applicable to eligible liberal arts major

SMART: Third Scheduled Award

- Contains not less than 24 semester hours, 36 quarter hours, or 900 clock hours in each year of the program

SMART: Extension of Eligibility

- For a program with less than 5 full years of coursework for program completion
 - The 4th year of eligibility extends from the start of the 4th year to program completion
- For program with at least 5 full years of coursework for program completion
 - The 5th year of eligibility extends from the start of the 5th year to program completion

SMART: Eligible Major

- Must document that student is progressing in program of study
 - Are no longer required to document at least one course in the major
- Dear Colleague Letter GEN-09-09 issued July 7, 2009
 - Lists eligible SMART majors for the 2009-2010 award year

SMART: Eligible Major

- May be a bachelor's degree with a liberal arts curriculum as an eligible major
 - Offered prior to 2/08/06
 - Is the only curriculum at the institution
- The liberal arts curriculum may qualify as an eligible major if it has requirements
 - At least equal to requirements identified for a SMART-eligible major at an institution offering a bachelor's degree in that major **OR**

SMART: Eligible Major

- Requires student to undertake rigorous course of study in math, biology, chemistry, and physics with
 - At least 4 years of math
 - At least 3 years of sciences, with a lab in each year
- Is not a five-year program
- Requires prior Departmental approval

SMART: Eligible Major

- Three programs approved under this provision
- Website to GEN-09-09
<http://www.ifap.ed.gov/dpcletters/GEN0909.html>
- Website to GEN-09-03
<http://www.ifap.ed.gov/dpcletters/GEN0903.html>

Be Aware

Program funding for the ACG and National SMART Grant Programs is over at the end of the 2010-2011 award year

Panel Discussion

Overcoming barriers that prevent schools from maximizing student participation

Contact Information

We appreciate your feedback and comments. We can be reached at:

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