

Academic Competitiveness and SMART grants Fact Sheet

Providing a rigorous high school curriculum provides students with the tools they need to succeed in college and in their future careers. Now that rigorous high school program will also enable students to receive additional financial support for their postsecondary education.

Federal Academic Competitiveness and SMART grants are available to Pell Grant-eligible seniors who have completed rigorous high school coursework as defined by the state and recognized by the US Department of Education (USDOE).

American Competitiveness grants of \$750 are available to first year, Pell Grant eligible, students. Grants up to \$1,300 are available for second-year students. National Science and Mathematics Access to Retain Talent (SMART) grants will provide up to \$4,000 annually for Pell Grant eligible students in their third and fourth year of college who major in science, technology, math or critical foreign languages and maintain a 3.0 GPA.

Superintendents, high school guidance counselors, and parents are asked to encourage all students to complete a rigorous high school curriculum. Further, high schools should notify the postsecondary institution if a student has completed one of the approved programs.

Approved Programs

1. Successful completion of coursework necessary for admission to a state institution of higher education.
2. Recipients of the *High Schools That Work* (HSTW) Award of Educational Achievement
3. The State Scholars Initiative Requirements
4. Project 720
5. Dual Enrollment Program (successful completion of 9 college credits and proficient on the PSSA)
6. Pennsylvania Certificate of Distinction
7. Advance Placement or International Baccalaureate courses (completion of 2 courses and received passing scores on the tests)

More detailed information regarding high school curriculum defined as rigorous, visit <http://www.pdehighered.state.pa.us/higher> and select Financial Aid.

How to Apply

To apply for the AC grant (available to college freshman and sophomores), students should ask their high school guidance counselor or their college's financial aid office if they qualify for the AC grant. Additional information can be found at <http://www.studentaid.ed.gov/PORTALSWebApp/students/english/AcademicGrants.jsp>

To apply for the Smart Grant (available to college juniors and seniors), students should visit: <http://www.studentaid.ed.gov/PORTALSWebApp/students/english/SmartGrants.jsp> for a complete list of eligible fields of study. Again, the college financial aid office will be able to determine eligibility for the grant.