

Section IV: Academic Competitiveness Grants (ACG)

Objectives

- Provide basic information about the program
- Explain eligibility criteria
- Define GPA requirements for second year awards
- Discuss available options for rigorous secondary school program of study
- Explain application process
- Discuss what counselors can do to increase number of eligible students

Materials

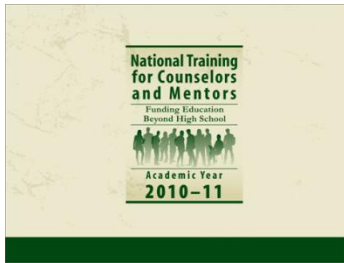
- PowerPoint Presentation
- ACG/SMART Fact Sheet

Trainer Tips

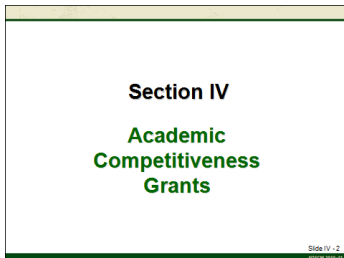
- The instructor's guide is just that, a guide. If you feel more comfortable training from the PowerPoint slides, feel free to do so.
- The material should allow plenty of time for questions.
- The student eligibility criteria for ACG changed recently. Stress to counselors that eligible noncitizens and students attending less than full time are now eligible.
- Unless Congress reauthorizes the program, ACG will not be available after the 2010-11 award year.

Section IV: Academic Competitiveness Grants (ACG)

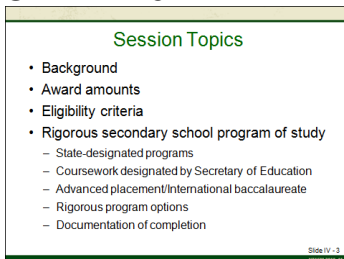
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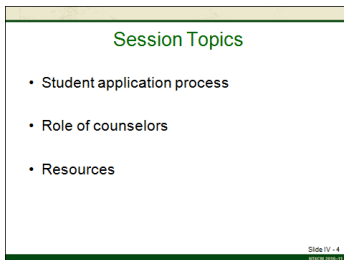
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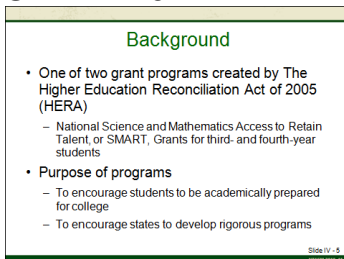
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IV. Academic Competitiveness Grants (ACG)

- Background
 - Award amounts
 - Eligibility criteria
 - Rigorous secondary school program of study
 - State-designated programs
 - Coursework designated by Secretary of Education
 - Advanced placement/International baccalaureate
 - Rigorous program options
 - Documentation of completion
 - Student application process
 - Role of counselors
 - Resources
- ➔ *Refer participants to Page 1 of the Handout.*
- ### Background
- One of two grant programs created by the Higher Education Reconciliation Act of 2005, or HERA
 - Second program is the National Science and Mathematics Access to Retain Talent, or SMART, Grant for third-, fourth-, and some fifth-year students
 - Purpose of the programs is to encourage students to be academically prepared for college and to encourage states to develop rigorous programs.

→ *Before proceeding, ask participants if they think many of their students would qualify for ACG. Ask them why they think students would or would not qualify.*

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Award Amounts

- Up to \$750 for first-year students
- Up to \$1,300 for second-year students

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Eligibility Criteria

- Completion of a rigorous secondary school program
- Federal Pell Grant recipient for same award year
- First- or second-year student in a:
 - Two- or four-year degree program, or
 - One- or two-year certificate program offered at a two- or four-year degree-granting institution

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**Additional Eligibility Criteria:
Second-year Students**

Have at least a 3.0 grade point average (GPA) in an eligible program at end of freshman year of college

- GPA only checked once at end of first year

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Award Amounts

- First-year students: up to \$750
- Second-year students: up to \$1,300

ACG Eligibility Criteria

- Completion of a rigorous secondary school program
- Federal Pell Grant recipient for same award year
- First- or second-year student in a
 - Two- or four-year degree program, or
 - One- or two-year certificate program offered at a two- or four-year degree-granting institution

Additional Eligibility Criteria: Second-year Students

- Have at least a 3.0 grade point average (GPA) in an eligible program from freshman year of college study; GPA only checked once at the end of freshman year
 - Cannot gain eligibility based on second year GPA. If a student's GPA is not a 3.0 or higher at the end of first year, he or she cannot gain eligibility by pulling grades up during second year.

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Rigorous Secondary School Program of Study

- State-designated programs
- Coursework designated by Secretary of Education
- Advanced Placement (AP)/International Baccalaureate (IB)

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State-designated Programs

- An advanced or honors diploma established by a state and in existence for the 2004-05 school year or later
- State Scholars Initiative
- Program designated by state as rigorous

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Coursework Designated by Secretary of Education

- 4 years of English
- 3 years of mathematics (Algebra I and at least one higher level class)
- 3 years of science (biology, chemistry, physics)
- 3 years of social studies
- 1 year of a foreign language

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AP/IB

Successful completion of any secondary school program for a student who completes at least two courses with a minimum passing test score on the exams in those courses

- Score of at least 3 for AP exams
- Score of at least 4 for IB exams

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Rigorous Secondary School Program of Study

- State-designated programs
- Coursework designated by the Secretary of Education
- Advanced Placement (AP)/International Baccalaureate (IB)

➔ *Refer participants to Page 2 of the Handout for the following discussion.*

State-Designated Programs

- An advanced or honors diploma established by a state and in existence for the 2004-05 school year or later
- State Scholars Initiative
- Program designated by state as rigorous

Coursework Designated by the Secretary of Education

- 4 years of English
- 3 years of mathematics (Algebra I and at least one higher level class)
- 3 years of science (biology, chemistry, physics)
- 3 years of social studies
- 1 year of a foreign language

AP/IB

- Successful completion of any secondary school program for a student who completes at least two courses with a minimum passing test score on the exams in those courses
 - Score of at least 3 for AP exams
 - Score of at least 4 for IB exams

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Rigorous Program Options

- All states have at least one designated rigorous program
- Students from every state have at least three ways to meet rigorous program requirement

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Documentation of Completion

- Colleges required to collect and retain documentation that a student meets at least one of the options
- Colleges may document the program option that is the most efficient for them
 - Students may be eligible under more than one definition of rigorous program

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Student Application Process: *FAFSA on the Web*

- Submit FAFSA at www.fafsa.ed.gov
- Respond to prompts if data indicates possible eligibility
- Wait for follow-up contact from school

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Student Application Process: Paper FAFSA

- *Student Aid Report* (SAR) indicates possible eligibility
- SAR includes toll-free number for Federal Student Aid Information Center (FSAIC) at 1-800-4-FED-AID (1-800-433-3243)
 - Students can call FSAIC for answers to questions about eligibility

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Rigorous Program Options

- All states have at least one designated rigorous program
 - Students from every state have at least three ways to meet rigorous program requirement
- ➔ *Ask participants if they can identify the rigorous secondary school programs designated in their state.*

Documentation of Completion

- Colleges required to collect and retain documentation that confirms a student meets at least one of the rigorous program options
- Colleges may document the eligibility option that is the most efficient for them
 - Students may meet more than one definition of rigorous program

Student Application Process: *FAFSA on the Web*

- Submit FAFSA at www.fafsa.ed.gov
 - Respond to prompts to answer questions if data indicates possible eligibility
 - Wait for follow-up contact from school
- ➔ *Ask participants to turn to Page 3 of the Handout.*

Student Application Process: Paper FAFSA

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Student Application Process: Self-identification

- Student self-identifies to financial aid office at college in person or in writing
- Student has to submit documentation

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Role of Counselors

- Tell students about ACG program
- Encourage students to take rigorous courses
- Provide documentation of completion of rigorous program in a timely manner
 - To students or directly to colleges
- Inform students enrolled in AP or IB courses of the importance of taking course exams
- Emphasize importance of first-year GPA

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Resources

[ACG Recognized State Rigorous Secondary School Programs of Study: www.ed.gov/admins/finaid/about/ac-smart/state-programs.html](http://www.ed.gov/admins/finaid/about/ac-smart/state-programs.html)

- Rigorous high school program codes
- Programs listed by graduation year
- "Submit a question" feature

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Student Application Process: Self-identification

- Student self-identifies to financial aid office at college in person or in writing
- Student has to submit documentation

➔ *Refer participants to the top of Page 3 of the Handout for the next section of the presentation.*

Role of Counselors

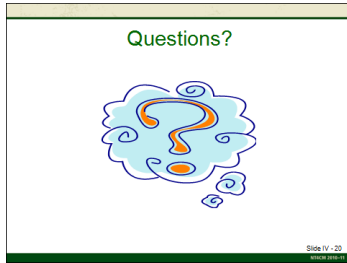
- Tell students about ACG program
- Encourage students to take courses that meet the definition of "rigorous"
- Provide documentation in a timely manner showing that students have met the rigorous program criterion
 - To students or directly to college
- Inform students enrolled in AP or IB courses of the importance of taking course exams
- Emphasize importance of first-year GPA

➔ *Ask participants how they are counseling students in reference to ACG. Are students asking them about the grant? Are they working with students early enough to encourage them to complete rigorous courses in order to qualify? Is the incentive of receiving additional grant funds enough to encourage students to pursue a rigorous program?*

Resources

- ACG Recognized State Rigorous Secondary School Programs of Study: www.ed.gov/admins/finaid/about/ac-smart/state-programs.html
 - Rigorous high school program codes
 - Programs listed by graduation year
 - "Submit a question" feature

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Questions

- Answer questions from participants

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