

**Series: 2005-2006**  
**Circular Letter: C-18**

TO: Superintendents of Schools

FROM: Dr. Betty J. Sternberg, Commissioner of Education

DATE: June 26, 2006

SUBJECT: Federal Academic Competitiveness Grant Program

Congress has funded a new student grant program, the *Academic Competitiveness Grant (AC Grant)*, to recognize students who complete a rigorous secondary school program. Funding is available beginning in the 2006-07 academic year with approximately \$4.5 billion over five years. The purpose of this grant is to provide low-income college students with additional financial aid in their first and second year of college.

In order for students to be eligible to receive these grants, they must participate in a rigorous high school program. The U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) considers the following to be evidence of rigor in a secondary school program of study:

- *The State Scholars Initiative requirements:* A student may complete the courses required under the State Scholars Initiative which include: four years of English, three years of math, three years of lab science, three-and-one half years of social studies and two years of a language other than English.
- *A set of courses similar to those required under 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 world language. The program of study must be completed with passing grades.
- *Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) courses and test scores:* A student may demonstrate that he or she has taken two AP or IB courses and received passing scores on the AP or IB tests.

The CT State Department of Education will recognize the above set of options as *rigorous secondary school programs of study* for at least the next two academic years (2006-2007 and 2007-2008).

These grants will be available to any Pell-Grant eligible student who:

- is enrolled full-time in a degree program;
- is a Federal Pell-Grant recipient;
- is a citizen of the United States;
- is enrolled in a two- or four-year degree-granting institution of higher education;

- has completed a **rigorous secondary school program of study**, graduating after January 1<sup>st</sup> of their senior year; and
- is a first-year student who has not been previously enrolled in an undergraduate program. (It has been determined that students taking dual-enrollment classes are not considered to be “enrolled,” thus they are eligible.)

If you should have questions, please contact Ann R. Gaulin, High School Program Manager, by e-mail at [ann.gaulin@ct.gov](mailto:ann.gaulin@ct.gov) or by phone at 860-713-6769.

FMR:ag

cc: High School Principals  
High School Guidance Counselors