



Dear President:

September 2006

On February 8, 2006, President Bush signed into the law the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005, which included the "Higher Education Reconciliation Act of 2005" (HERA). HERA creates two important new grant programs for certain students: **Academic Competitiveness Grants (ACG)** and **National Science and Mathematics Access to Retain Talent (SMART)**. For both programs, the students must be Pell Grant eligible, U.S. citizens. Your school has received an initial allocation for one or both of these grant programs.

- ACG's are for students who are enrolled full-time in their first and second academic years and have graduated from a rigorous high school program of study.
- SMART grants are for students who are enrolled full-time in their third and fourth academic years, major in mathematics, science, technology, engineering or critical foreign languages, and have at least a 3.0 grade point average.

Implementing and administering these programs requires a cooperative effort among several offices at your institution. Successful administration will require the close working coordination of the Admissions function, the Records and Registration function, the Bursar or Business Office function, and the Financial Aid function.

The Department of Education knows success also depends on our making information available to schools for successful administration of these programs. Our efforts to date include:

- Two live Internet "webinars" on HERA.
- Forty-two, two-hour web training sessions over a period of seven weeks.
- The creation of a special HERA section on our Information for Financial Aid Professionals website at <http://ifap.ed.gov> that includes a growing list of policy guidance, electronic announcements, and frequently asked questions.
- HERA information will be incorporated into the 2007-2008 version of our Federal Student Aid Handbook.

Beginning September 26, 2006, we will offer a series of nationwide, daylong instructor-led training sessions on HERA. The dates and locations for these sessions are available at <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSFAP/training/index.html>. Additionally, we will feature the two new grant programs at our annual Federal Student Aid conferences. For more information on the Federal Student Aid conferences, go to <http://fsaconferences.ed.gov/>. We ask that you make it possible for your staff to attend one of these training sessions, and to make use of the guidance that we are providing. Thank you for helping us ensure that students eligible for the ACG and National SMART Grant programs receive the benefits that are now available to them.

Sincerely,


Kay Jacks

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