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To: info@languagepolicy.org
Subject:  U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION ANNOUNCES STUDENT ELIGIBILITY
OPTIONS FOR NEW ACADEMIC GRANTS
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This is an ED press release dealing with "Student Eligibility Options For New Academic Grants" that will have a major impact on foreign languages in higher education. "Students who completed rigorous coursework in high school or who are pursuing degrees in math, science, and critical foreign languages are eligible for a portion of \$790 million in new federal funding for higher education." This was passed as part of the Higher Education Reconciliation Act in Congress' last session. The Department of Education has now reached a decision on how these SMART and Academic Competitiveness Grants will be administered. This presents a significant opportunity.

U.S. Department of Education
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FOR RELEASE

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION ANNOUNCES STUDENT ELIGIBILITY OPTIONS FOR
NEW ACADEMIC GRANTS

Washington, D.C. - The U.S. Department of Education today announced guidelines for current college students and high school seniors to apply for new Academic Competitiveness Grants and National SMART Grants for the 2006-07 academic year. Students who completed rigorous coursework in high school or who are pursuing degrees in math, science and critical foreign languages are eligible for a portion of \$790 million in new federal funding for higher education.

In creating these programs, Congress directed that students who Completed rigorous programs of study in high school, as established by a state or local educational agency and recognized by the U.S. Secretary

of Education, would be eligible for Academic Competitiveness Grants. Because many states do not yet offer formally recognized rigorous programs of study, and to ensure that private school students, home-schooled students and students enrolled in Department of Defense overseas schools are eligible, the Secretary of Education will immediately recognize four options for eligibility. They are:

--Advanced or Honors diploma programs. The Secretary of Education Will recognize all Advanced or Honors diplomas conferred by the states as rigorous programs of study. According to research by the Department, nineteen states currently offer such diplomas upon completion of recognized coursework.

--State Scholars Initiative requirements. This program, supported by Congress, sets course requirements modeled after the National Commission on Excellence in Education recommendations. Fourteen states participate in this program, and eight additional states will begin participation this year.

--Course requirements similar to the State Scholars Initiative. This program of study includes four years of English, three years of math, three years of science, three years of social studies, and one year of a foreign language.

--Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) Courses and scores. Students who have taken two AP or IB courses and received passing scores on the exams for those courses will be considered eligible.

These guidelines will define rigorous secondary school programs of study for academic years 2006-07 and 2007-08 while long-term coursework guidelines are established. States that wish to identify alternative rigorous programs of study for 2006-07 have the option of submitting proposals to the Department by June 1, 2006. To identify alternative programs for 2007-08, the deadline is November 1, 2006.

"We worked quickly to establish these options so that deserving Students could benefit from the grants this year, while states had the flexibility to recognize their unique rigorous programs," said U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings. "As time goes on, standards will be tightened and toughened. But these initial options will give states and students the time to adjust if they start planning now.

"The bottom line is that, to ensure our nation's economic

competitiveness, we must first expect high academic performance from our students. Rigorous coursework and an increased focus on math and science will prepare students to succeed in college and the workforce of the future."

Congress passed the Academic Competitiveness Grants and National Science and Mathematics Access to Retain Talent (SMART) Grants as part of the Higher Education Reconciliation Act of 2005, signed by President Bush on February 8, 2006. These grant programs make available \$790 million in the 2006-07 academic year and \$4.5 billion over the next five years.

Congress established that first-year students may receive up to \$750 and second-year students up to \$1,300 in Academic Competitiveness Grants, if the student has successfully completed a rigorous secondary school program of study. Second-year recipients must also have attained at least a 3.0 grade point average in their first year of study. According to the statute, a rigorous secondary program of study is one that is established by a State or local educational agency and recognized as such by the Secretary.

Up to \$4,000 in National SMART Grants will be available to students in the third and fourth years of college and pursuing a major in mathematics, physical sciences, life sciences, computer sciences, technology, engineering, or a critical need foreign language. Students must have a cumulative 3.0 college grade point average. In the coming weeks, a full list of eligible postsecondary majors will be posted to www.ifap.ed.gov.

To qualify for either program, students must also be eligible for Federal Pell Grants, be United States citizens, and be full-time students enrolled in a two- or four-year degree-granting institution of higher education.

In addition, for Academic Competitiveness Grants, a first-year student must not have been previously enrolled in a program of undergraduate education.

For more information on Academic Competitiveness and National SMART Grants, visit www.ed.gov.

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