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The Department of Education recently released a document meant to help the public better understand the Academic Competitiveness Grant and the National “SMART” Grant Program. The programs, which will go into affect during the 2006-2007 school year, were created when Congress passed the Higher Education Reconciliation Act in 2005. The new document is titled “Student Eligibility Options for New Academic Grants” and will help financial aid administrators and school counselors understand who exactly is eligible for the grants, making it easier to advise students during the financial aid process.

FAFSA Criticized in Scholars’ Paper

In a paper written by two Harvard University Kennedy School of Government scholars, the FAFSA is blamed for keeping students out of college. The paper states that the complexity of the form and the relatively slow process of determining the amount of aid a student is eligible for actually hinder students from applying to college. The two writers proposed doing away with some of the questions and making the form much simpler as a way of ensuring students are not discouraged during the often-intimidating financial aid process.

Law Firm Celebrates 25 Years with Scholarship

Steeffel, Levitt & Weiss is celebrating its 25th anniversary by offering its first scholarship. The San Francisco-based firm is focused on promoting diversity in the legal field and will launch the Steeffel, Levitt & Weiss Diversity Scholarship. Partnering with the University of California at Berkeley School of Law’s Boalt Hall, the firm will award \$25,000 annually to a student going into his/her second year of law school. The student must demonstrate excellent academic performance and financial need, and special priority will be given to minority students. More information on the scholarship can be found on the firm’s website at www.steeffel.com.

Marine Corps Scholarship Foundation Has Banner Year

The Marine Corps Scholarship Foundation, which awarded \$1.75 million in 2005, is a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization made up of men and women volunteers. This is the 13th consecutive year that the foundation has awarded more than a million dollars in financial aid. The foundation’s goal is to make financial aid available to the family members of United States Marines and former Marines, and it gives preference to children whose parent or parents were killed or wounded in action. More information about the scholarship foundation can be found at www.marine-scholars.org.