



SWIM WITH LEGITIMATE COLLEGE GRANTORS

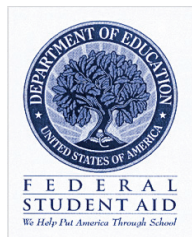
Instead of Getting Eaten by Sharks!

by Meghan O'Neill Haight

Millions of internet sites promote grant funding opportunities for every life purpose one can imagine. "Pay off credit cards – buy a home – start a business with no money down - go to college for FREE!" Hoping for that magic bullet often keeps us from recognizing and pursuing legitimate opportunities. In fact, a multitude of scams and phonies that look and sound very attractive are counting on optimistic folks just like you. Unless and until you begin to know the difference, you are at risk for spending a lot of time and even some of your hard earned money chasing ghost-grants and fake scholarships, many of which are put forth by identity thieves who anxiously await your personal information and your "application fee."



LEGITIMATE FEDERAL GRANTS like these are available for students pursuing higher education:



- **Federal Pell Grant.** This is a jumpstart grant to students beginning undergraduate work for the first time. Grants for 2008 are approximately \$4,731 a year and are based on economic needs and education costs. <http://www.ed.gov/programs/fpg/index.html>
- **Academic Competitiveness Grant.** A relatively new grant, created to supplement Pell grantees based on their academic aptitude or accomplishment. First-year students receive \$750 in addition to the Pell Grant; second-year students with at least a 3.0 grade average can receive up to an additional \$1,300 a year. www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/ac-smart.html
- **Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant.** For students with extreme financial need. Lowest income students and Federal Pell grantees get first priority for up to \$4,000 a year. <http://www.ed.gov/programs/fseog/index.html>
- **National SMART Grant.** Third and fourth-year higher education students who qualify for a Pell Grant and have at least a 3.0 grade point average are eligible to apply for an additional \$4,000 a year. Must be majoring in the sciences, engineering, mathematics, technology, or in a foreign language determined by the federal government to be critical to national security. <http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/ac-smart.html>
- **Teach Grant Program.** New in 2007. Students enrolled in undergraduate or graduate-level teacher training programs who commit to teach for four academic years in an elementary or secondary school serving low-income students can receive \$4,000 a year toward tuition. <http://studentaid.ed.gov/PORTALSWebApp/students/english/TEACH.jsp>

BEST PRACTICES in exploring college grants and scholarships are:

check

the source out fully and from all angles before you disclose any personal information ...

ask

someone unbiased to help you (like your local University Cooperative Extension or Financial Aid offices) if you are having trouble determining whether it is legitimate ...

remember

what your grandmother told you, "If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is."

This article was produced with contributions from Jennifer Salley-Ruland, Principal at LivingWellGrants, LLC. LivingWellGrants, www.livingwellgrants.com, provides one stop, personalized grant research and writing services for individuals and organizations. Megan O'Neil Haight is Family, Youth and Communities Finance Educator for Maryland Cooperative Extension and serves Wicomico and Somerset Counties. To contact Ms. O'Neil-Haight, email her at oneil@umd.edu