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White Students Seeing More Aid

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Many institutions are allowing non-minority student to apply for and receive fellowships and scholarships that were originally intended for minorities. The redirecting of this aid is largely due to pressure from the federal government and the possibility of facing litigation such as the two University of Michigan Supreme Court cases in 2003. UM was targeted for its minority-friendly admissions policy; today, the state of the law remains ambiguous.

KY Law Students Lose Funds

Low-income students at Kentucky's three public law schools are losing a badly needed source of financial aid. A scholarship program known as Kentucky Legal Education Opportunity (KLEO) was recently ended by the state Senate, causing a wave of distress in both school administrators and government officials.

KLEO was created by Kentucky Supreme Court Chief Justice Joseph Lambert to increase the opportunities for disadvantaged students to attend law school.

According to one lawmaker, the Kentucky House of Representatives included \$250,000 for the program in its budget, but the Senate cut the program completely. Some state senators feel it would be more appropriate to fund the program through the state's financial aid agency.

Two Congressmen Seek To Restore FinAid

U.S. Congressman George Miller (D-CA) and U.S. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) are coming to the rescue to American students and financial aid administrators. The Reverse the Raid on Student Aid Act aims to remedy the recent \$12-billion cut from federal student aid programs beginning in the 2007 fiscal year. Part of the plan includes an interest-rate cut for federally guaranteed student loans from 6.8 to 3.4 percent and PLUS loans from 8.5 to 4.25 percent.

As expected, a wide range of activists, student groups, and financial aid administrators are organizing to support the act.

UM Clears Path for Debt-Free Grads

In the face of crippling reductions to federal student aid funding, the University of Maryland has initiated a program to graduate debt-free students.

Due to a record 11-percent increase in Maryland's budget for higher education financial aid, administrators are planning to use an undisclosed sum to fund three "Pathways" to debt-free graduation.

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For the lowest-income students, UM has created a work/grant program.

These students will work between 8 and 10 hours per week at on-campus jobs and will receive significant grants to cover the remainder of their tuition.

The second level provides funding to students who lose out on federal aid because they hold jobs while enrolled in school. The third level gives funding to seniors with more than \$15,900 in federal student loans, allowing them to comfortably afford their senior-year expenses.

Eligibility is determined by how much money students and families are able to contribute and not strictly on a their income. So far, around 500 students have enrolled in the Pathways programs.

So far, 24 of 30 institutions of higher education in Louisiana have now reopened. This figure includes 10 of the 15 that were closed in New Orleans. Two-thirds of postsecondary students in New Orleans have returned to class, and both of Mississippi's closed postsecondary institutions have reopened.

SPOTLIGHT ON SCHOLARSHIPS

Two New Grants for '06-'07

Two grant programs created under the Higher Education Reconciliation Act will take effect beginning with the 2006-2007 school year. The Academic Competitiveness Grant will be available to first- and second-year, Pell-eligible students who have demonstrated financial need and academic ability. Third- and fourth-year students who are eligible for Pell grants may also qualify for the Science and Mathematics to Retain Talent (SMART) Grant.

The Academic Competitiveness Grants will be worth \$750 first-year students and \$1,300 for sophomores, and SMART Grants will be worth \$4000 per year. Student will be notified of their eligibility upon completing a FAFSA.

Research Grant Deadline Approaches

The National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition is seeking applications for the Paul P. Fidler Research Grant. The grant is open to faculty, staff, and graduate students who plan to conduct research and disseminate knowledge that has potential to improve the experiences of college students in transition. The comprehensive award package that includes a \$5,000 stipend, travel to two national conferences, and a potential publication has an application deadline of June 1, 2006.

The grant is available to faculty, staff, and graduate students who plan to conduct research on issues of college student transitions. Cross-institutional research teams are encouraged to apply.