



AMERICAN  
PSYCHOLOGICAL  
ASSOCIATION

August 31, 2006

Margaret Spellings  
Secretary of Education  
U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Secretary Spellings:

We are writing on behalf of the American Psychological Association (APA), the largest scientific and professional organization representing psychology in the United States, to express our concern regarding the August 25th revised list of eligible majors for the National Science and Mathematics Access to Retain Talent (SMART) grant program. We appreciate the flexibility that the Department has shown in modifying the list to include a broader list of scientific majors and hope that you will consider our request to include relevant areas of psychological and behavioral science.

We are most concerned that under the Department's latest list of eligible fields of study, undergraduates pursuing degrees in areas of psychological or behavioral sciences continue to be ineligible for a SMART grant. This omission would appear to conflict with the goal of encouraging more undergraduates to pursue degrees in rigorous scientific fields. The Department's own Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) recognizes the diverse nature of the concentrations within the domain of psychology, as well as classifying other areas of psychological science under multidisciplinary studies, such as behavioral science and cognitive science.

In the attachment to your letter of May 2 entitled National SMART Grant – Fields of Study (revised 8/25/2006), it is clear that psychology fits within the definition of Life Sciences:

Life sciences: The branch of knowledge or study of living things, including such fields of knowledge or study as biology, biochemistry, biophysics, microbiology, genetics, physiology, botany, zoology, ecology, and behavioral biology, except that the term does not encompass the health professions.

Psychology is by its nature a discipline that is closely linked to other disciplines with deep connections to many of the life sciences. It would seem arbitrary to prevent a student studying animal behavior (26.0708) from receiving a SMART grant simply

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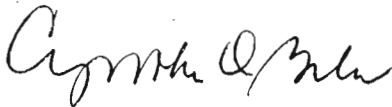


because the program is in the department of psychology. Although there are certainly areas of psychology that would not qualify under the SMART grant program, many fields of psychology should be included, such as: cognitive psychology and psycholinguistics (42.0301); comparative psychology (42.0501); developmental and child psychology (42.0701); experimental psychology (42.0801); industrial and organizational psychology (42.0901); physiological psychology/psychobiology (42.1101); geropsychology (42.2201); psychopharmacology (42.2401); and psychometrics and quantitative psychology (42.1901).

We are also concerned about an apparent inconsistent rationale for including programs of study under the area of multidisciplinary studies. The list of eligible majors currently includes one of the most prominent fields of psychology, cognitive science, but omits other multidisciplinary fields within the same CIP designation. Those fields of study that would qualify under multidisciplinary studies include: behavioral sciences (30.1701) and biopsychology (30.1001).

We appreciate the opportunity to provide you with this additional information and look forward to working with you as the SMART program is implemented. We request that an additional revised and more inclusive list of eligible majors be published to clarify to undergraduates which areas of scientific inquiry are eligible as well as a rationale for excluding instructional programs in scientific psychology.

Sincerely,



Cynthia Belar, PhD  
Executive Director for Education



Steven Breckler, PhD  
Executive Director for Science

cc: James F. Manning, Acting Assistant Secretary for Postsecondary Education