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**national association of state student grant and aid programs**

**MAY 16, 2005**

**EMBARGOED RELEASE**

RELEASE DATE: MAY 23, 2005

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**STATE FUNDED STUDENT FINANCIAL AID VITAL TO TODAY'S STUDENTS**

According to the results of the annual National Association of State Student Grant and Aid Programs (NASSGAP) survey released today states provided about \$7.3 billion in state-funded, student financial aid in 2003-2004, an increase of 9 percent over the \$6.3 billion states provided to students in 2001-02. States made about 3.7 million awards to students in the form of grant aid, loans, work study conditional grants, tuition waivers and other programs. Grant aid, or gift aid, is usually considered the most important type of financial assistance available and is key to removing college enrollment and attendance barriers for low-income undergraduate students. The survey report shows that the majority of state-funded assistance, nearly \$5.7 billion, was in the form of grants to undergraduate students. State spending on grant aid for all students has increased nearly 70 percent across the last five years.

The survey, completed by National Association of State Student Grant and Aid Programs (NASSGAP), annually gathers information on state-funded, postsecondary student financial aid by program type and amount awarded. Data from the report demonstrate the continuing commitment by states to assisting students and families meet the costs of a college education.

Theresa Antworth, president of NASSGAP, indicated "States continue to recognize the importance of education funding and continue to make it a priority even in uncertain budgetary times. The partnership between the states and the federal government, combined with the efforts of educational institutions and

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the private sector are essential to making four years of college accessible to any student who wants to attend," Antworth said.

Antworth also noted, "Only level funding or modest increases have been proposed for some key federal aid efforts, such as Pell grants, Supplemental Education Opportunity Grants, and Federal Work-Study, while other federal programs such as the Leveraging Educational Assistance Partnership program, Perkins loans, and the TRIO programs are facing elimination or drastic cuts. Many postsecondary education institutions have increased prices and it has become even more difficult for low-income families to participate in higher education. State efforts to step in and help beleaguered students meet college costs are crucial." In addition, Antworth suggested "The benefits of a college education continue to be tremendous. Not only are college graduate more likely to have higher paying jobs, they contribute more to their communities, are better consumers, have a higher quality of life, are less dependent of government support, and are more able to adapt to changing workforce conditions. States understand the benefits of educating their populations and investing in their future."

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NASSGAP is the professional association of agencies in the 50 states and the territories that administer state appropriated student financial aid. The organization has been the primary source of state student financial aid program information since 1969. The latest annual report highlights the ongoing efforts of the states to provide access to postsecondary education for needy students.

Electronic copies of the report, the 35<sup>th</sup> annual survey, are available in PDF format free of charge at [www.nassgap.org](http://www.nassgap.org). A limited number of printed copies are available by writing to: NASSGAP Report, c/o Illinois Student Assistance Commission, 500 West Monroe, Springfield, IL 62704-1876 or [nassgapsurvey@nassgap.org](mailto:nassgapsurvey@nassgap.org).

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