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Posted on September 29th, 2011, by [Jonathan Robe](#) [1 Comment](#)

In a [plea](#) designed to drum up a public outcry to any proposed reductions to the federal Pell Grant Program, Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse refers to the Pell Program as a “vital program for middle-class families.” Now I suppose the good Senator knows a good deal more than I do about federal law, regulations and spending programs, but as far as my limited understanding takes me, it appears that the Senator’s claim about the Pell Program emphatically doesn’t jibe with the U.S. Department of Education’s [own statement](#) about the purpose of the Program:

The Federal Pell Grant Program provides need-based grants to low-income undergraduate and certain postbaccalaureate students to promote access to postsecondary education.

Whether or not the Pell Grant Program should be extended to cover more of the populace than low-income students is an entirely different question (CCAP has [argued rather strongly](#) that it should not). But when an elected representative makes blatantly false misrepresentations about the program as it really exists, it does nothing to facilitate proper discussions about the appropriate course policy should take. I should note that Sen. Whitehouse is not the only one who has committed this error recently; [Neal McCluskey](#) has previously pointed others who have done the same thing.