

COMMERCE

## BMW Financial Services seeks lifetime customers with new college graduate program

October 5, 2011



By KAYLA HUTZLER

German automaker BMW's financial services group is seeking to increase its customer base by making it easier for recent college graduates to buy or lease a branded vehicle through an exclusive financing program.

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The BMW Financial Services College Graduate Program includes leases and loans that will make it possible for consumers who have graduated in the past year to own a BMW or Mini vehicle or a BMW motorcycle. The new program will expand BMW's potential customer base to the entry-level market and help increase brand loyalty.

"This program allows for young professional customers just starting out in professional life to become an owner of a BMW or Mini product," said Steve Swecker, general manager of sales operations for [BMW Group Financial Services](#), New York.

"The BMW College Graduate Program takes into consideration that young professionals are able to make buying decisions based on their income rather than limiting them to an entry-level vehicle," he said.

Graduating to better car

The BMW Financial Services College Graduate Program is available to consumers who have graduated from an accredited college with an undergraduate or graduate degree in the past 12 months.

Students who are within four months of graduation and have a guaranteed employment offer are also able to take advantage of the program.

The college graduate program will give consumers who meet these requirements the best possible rates based on their Fair Isaac Company [FICO] scores for BMW loans or leases and save up to 200 basis points depending on their credit score.

Additionally, consumers who choose to lease will be waived the security deposit of \$600 on average.



The college graduate loans and leases can be applied to BMW and Mini automobiles and BMW motorcycles.

Essentially, the program provides young professionals with to access to the brand based on their ability to pay, not a capped allowance, according to BMW Group Financial Services.

Not many recent graduates are currently BMW customers, per Mr. Swecker.

“Many of the recent college graduates think they may not qualify for a BMW new or used product so they don’t put it on their shopping lists,” Mr. Swecker said.

“This program gives them the opportunity to qualify for a lease or loan,” he said.

Down the road

The program aims to grab consumer attention as well as pick up new customers as they enter the marketplace to increase their brand loyalty and possibly boost repeat business.

Once consumers own or lease a BMW, the company offers numerous value programs and rate packages for their next purchase.

BMW Group Financial Services also sees recent graduates as new consumers in the workforce who are looking to reward themselves, per the organization.

The marketing efforts for the college graduate finance options will be largely digital, particularly social, which makes sense given the younger target base.

Indeed, the program is already highlighted on the Financial Services tab on the BMW USA Facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/bmwusa>.

An advertisement for the BMW College Graduate Program. On the left, a blue BMW sedan is shown with several graduation caps (mortarboards) floating above it. To the right of the car, the text reads: "GRADUATE TO A CAR THAT PUTS YOU IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT." Below this, it says: "College is over, but the time of your life starts now. Get special finance rates on the purchase or lease of a new BMW, exclusively through the BMW College Graduate Program." At the bottom right of the ad is a button that says "LOCATE A DEALER".

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• LOCATE A DEALER

The Financial Services tab is a relatively new feature on the BMW Facebook page and marked the first time that financial services for any automaker was available on Facebook ([see story](#)).

The new financing program is expected to increase new sales, as well as drive repeat purchases down the road.

“This is an opportunity for us to gain a customer for life,” Mr. Swecker said. “We count on the customer to remember who was willing to work with them on a lease or loan right out of college and plan on developing a lifelong loyal customer.

“This program is just the first step,” he said. “We also offer a variety of incentives to returning customers.”

Final Take

*Kayla Hutzler, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York*