



UNITED STATES OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

Washington, DC 20415

The Director

Friday, October 12, 2001
MSG 2001-082a

MEMORANDUM FOR: Directors Of Human Resources And Chief Information Officers

FROM: Richard A. Whitford, Acting Associate Director for Employment

Subject: Scholarship for Service Program

We live in an era of increasing dependency on the complex electronic infrastructure that supports the Internet, electronic communications, and a vast network of information systems. Unfortunately, with every day that passes, this infrastructure becomes more vulnerable to intrusion. We are all struggling for answers to the following question, "How are we going to find the skilled people needed to protect the Federal government's sensitive data from hackers and others?"

The Scholarship for Service (SFS) program was created to provide one of the answers to this question under this program, through grants to selected academic institutions, the National Science Foundation is providing scholarships to students who commit to an academic program in information assurance and computer security. In exchange, these students agree to serve at a Federal agency after graduation for a period equivalent to the length of the length of the scholarship. We expect at least 35 students to enroll in the program this year, with the numbers growing in subsequent years. The attached "Frequently Asked Questions" provides basic information about the SFS program.

We are hosting a briefing about the SFS Program from 9:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. on October 26, 2001, at the Theodore Roosevelt Building, 1900 E Street, NW, in the OPM Auditorium. Registration and networking will begin at 8:00 a.m. in the lobby area in front of the OPM Auditorium. Please notify the SFS Program Office no later than October 19, 2001, if you plan to attend. You may respond by E-mail at sfspo@opm.gov. If you wish to reply by phone, please contact Kathy Roberson or Miquel Hernandez, SFS Program Office, San Antonio Service Center, OPM at (210) 805-2423. Ms. Roberson may be reached at extension 506. Mr. Hernandez may be reached at extension 502. The fax number is (210) 805-2429.

We look forward to your participation.

Attachment

Scholarship For Service

—Frequently Asked Questions—

1. What is the Scholarship For Service (SFS) program?

It's the Federal Government's response to deal with the threat to our information technology infrastructure by strengthening the cadre of professionals who protect it. This program provides capacity building grants to selected 4-year colleges and universities to develop or improve their capacity to train information assurance professionals. It also provides selected 4-year colleges and universities scholarship grants to attract students to the information assurance and computer security fields.

2. What agency administers the SFS program?

The Interagency Coordinating Committee (ICC) oversees the program. The ICC is composed of representatives from the National Security Council (NSC), National Security Agency (NSA), Critical Infrastructure Assurance Office (CIAO), National Science Foundation (NSF), U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM), and Office of Management and Budget (OMB). NSF administers the issuance of grants process and the capacity building component. The scholarship component (including the placement and tracking of participants) of the SFS program is administered by the SFS Program Office in OPM's San Antonio Service Center. Questions about the program may be addressed to Kathy Roberson, SFS Program Manager, at sfspo@opm.gov or (210) 805-2423, extension 506.

3. Why is the SFS program important to the Federal agencies?

The SFS program is important to the Federal agencies because it helps them obtain the talent they need to protect their information systems. Upon graduation, participants must serve at a Federal agency for a period equivalent to the length of the scholarship. This service must be in a position concerned with information assurance or computer security. During their period of Federal service, participants join the agency's cadre of professionals that protect its information systems.

4. Is there any evidence that the SFS program will work?

The SFS program is modeled after other successful programs and borrows some of their best features. For example, much like the PMI Program, top-level students are nominated by their institutions. The summer internship offers the student-agency bonding opportunity of the co-op work experiences. The scholarships and stipends mirror the recruiting bonuses and retention allowances Federal agencies may use to attract top talent.

5. Can any college or university participate?

No. Only colleges and universities that meet the criteria for certification by the National Security Agency as Centers of Academic Excellence for Information Assurance Education (CAE/IAE) may participate. There are 23 CAE/IAE-certified colleges and universities at present. Six of them (Purdue University, Iowa State University, University of Idaho, University of Tulsa, Carnegie Mellon University, and Naval Postgraduate School) are participating in the SFS program in the 2001-2002 school year.

6. What costs are covered by the SFS program?

The SFS program covers tuition, room and board, and books for up to two years of undergraduate or master's level study. In addition, undergraduates receive an annual stipend of \$8,000. The stipend for graduate students is \$12,000

7. When, and for how long, can a student get a scholarship?

The scholarship is conferred during an undergraduate's junior and senior years. Graduate students are conferred the scholarship while pursuing a master's degree. Scholarships may be conferred for up to two years.

8. How long must a student serve at a Federal agency?

A student must serve for a period equivalent to the length of the scholarship. An academic year (i.e., the fall and spring semesters) is equivalent to a calendar year of employment. If the student is funded for two academic years, he or she must serve at a Federal agency in a covered position for two calendar years. If the student is funded for one academic year, he or she must serve for one calendar year.

9. Who pays for the scholarships?

The grants for the scholarships are awarded to the selected colleges and universities by the National Science Foundation. The Federal agencies that choose to participate by hiring program participants bear none of the cost for the scholarships.

10. How may students apply, and how are they selected for the program?

Students must apply to a participating university. Students who apply will be selected in accordance with the process and screening criteria set forth by the participating university.

11. What are the student eligibility requirements?

The student must meet all of the following:

- be pursuing a bachelor's or master's degree at an institution that has been awarded an NSF grant under the SFS program;
- be attending school on a full-time basis while receiving a scholarship under the SFS program;

- be willing to pursue studies with an emphasis in information assurance and computer security;
- be a United States citizen;
- meet criteria for Federal employment; and
- be able to obtain a security clearance, if required.

12. When will the first group of students join the program? When will they be ready to join the Federal service?

Approximately 35 students will join the program in the 2001 fall semester. Approximately half are graduate students. Virtually all of these students will receive scholarships for the full two years. Therefore, they will be ready to begin serving their Federal employment commitment in May 2003.

13. What will be the process for "matching" students with Federal agencies?

Participants are asked to file an electronic résumé in OPM's Résumé Builder. We will provide Federal agencies electronic copies of these résumés. Agencies will then be able to contact students directly. Student Federal employer preferences will be given consideration to the extent possible. However, if agency needs greatly exceed the number of students available, the SFS Program Office will limit the number that may be hired by an agency. Further details will be provided at the SFS Program Kick-Off Meeting scheduled for October 26, 2001 at OPM Headquarters in Washington, D.C.

14. Will students be required to work at a Federal agency while receiving the scholarship?

Students who receive funding for more than one academic year will be required to serve a full-summer internship at a Federal agency during the intervening summer.

15. Does the student have to serve the summer internship at the Federal agency that will employ him or her upon graduation?

No. The student may serve the summer internship at another Federal agency. However, the nature of the work assignments must meet program requirements. Moreover, for several reasons, it is strongly recommended that the summer internship be served at the agency that will ultimately hire the student. For example, the summer internship provides the environment that helps create a bond between the student and the employer. It also helps create in the student a sense of belonging, of being a part of that agency's cadre of information assurance professionals. More importantly, the summer internship should be an integral part of a mentoring process that should span throughout the entire academic and employment phases of the program.

16. What authority will agencies use to appoint SFS program participants?

Federal agencies may appoint participants using any authority under which the participant is appointable. For example, if the participant is a reinstatement eligible, the agency may reinstate him or her into the Federal service. However, the appointment must be of sufficient duration to permit the participant to serve for a period equivalent to the length of the scholarship period. If the person is not appointable under any other authority, the agency may make an appointment

under 5 CFR 213.3102(r) and seek conversion to a permanent competitive appointment at a later date.

17. What happens if the student leaves his Federal position before he or she serves for the required period?

The student must repay a prorated amount equivalent to the length of the period not served. For example, if the student received funds for two years and serves for one-and-a-half years, he or she must repay 25% of the funds received.