

ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- § **Federal Agency Name(s):** Office of Education, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Department of Commerce
- § **Funding Opportunity Title:** Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program
- § **Announcement Type:** Initial Announcement
- § **Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number(s):** 11.429, NOAA, NOS, National Marine Sanctuary Program
- § **Dates:** Completed applications must be received by the Program Manager between December 1, 2006 and February 9, 2007, at 5:00 P.M. Eastern Standard Time
- § **Funding Opportunity Description:** Funding is contingent upon availability of Federal appropriations. NOAA is committed to continual improvement of the grants process, and to accelerated award of financial assistance to qualified recipient in accordance with recommendations of the NOAA Program Review Team (information available at www.noaa.gov). In meeting these responsibilities, this solicitation announces that approximately five awards will be made to successful applicants. The Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program provides support for independent graduate-level studies in oceanography, marine biology, or maritime archaeology, particularly to women and minorities. Individuals who have been accepted into a graduate program and are U.S. citizens may apply. Scholarship selections are based on financial need, academic excellence, recommendations, and research and career goals. Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarships may provide, subject to appropriations, yearly support of up to \$32,000 per student: a 12-month stipend of \$20,000 in addition to a tuition allowance of up to \$12,000. A maximum of \$64,000 may be provided to masters students (up to 2 years of support) and up to \$128,000 may be provided to doctoral students (up to 4 years of support). Information about the scholarship can be obtained from the web site: www.fosterscholars.noaa.gov

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

The Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program is authorized at 16 U.S.C. 1445c-1 to recognize outstanding scholarship in oceanography, marine biology, or maritime archaeology, particularly by women and members of minority groups, and encourages independent graduate-level research through financial support of graduate studies in such fields. Gender and minority status are not considered when selecting award recipients. However, special outreach efforts are employed to solicit applications from women and minorities. Scholarships are distributed by disciplines, institutions, and geography, and by degree sought, with selections within distributions based on financial need, the potential for success in a graduate level studies program, and the potential for achieving research and career goals. The program is administered through NOAA's Office of Education and is funded annually with 1% of the amount appropriated each fiscal year to carry out the National Marine Sanctuaries Act.

B. Program Priorities

The Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program's endeavors to support individuals, particularly women and minorities, who otherwise would not be able to pursue an advanced degree in oceanography, marine biology, or maritime archaeology due to financial constraints. The Program seeks to increase the numbers of women and minorities in these scientific disciplines.

C. Program Authority

16 U.S.C. 1445c-1

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability for FY2007

Subject to appropriations, approximately \$160,000 will be available for FY 2007. Up to 5 awards may be made. The Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program provides yearly support of up to \$32,000 per student: a 12-month stipend of \$20,000 in addition to a tuition allowance of up to \$12,000.

B. Project/Award Period

The award periods are 2 and 4 years respectively. A maximum of \$64,000 may be awarded to students matriculating in a Master's program and up to \$160,000 may be awarded to students matriculating in a doctoral program (up to four years of support). The anticipated start date is August 1, 2007. If an application is selected for initial funding, NOAA has no obligation to provide additional funding in connection with that award in subsequent years.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

The funding instrument is a grant to the individual applicant

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Only individuals who are United States citizens currently pursuing or accepted to pursue a masters or doctoral level degree in oceanography, marine biology, or maritime archaeology, including the curation, preservation, and display of maritime artifacts, are eligible for an award under this scholarship program. Universities or other organizations may not apply on behalf of an individual. Prospective scholars do not need to be enrolled, but must be admitted to a graduate level program in order to apply for this scholarship. Recipients of scholarship awards may be employed at the time of the award if it is a requirement of their degree program or directly related to their research effort. Eligibility must be maintained for each succeeding year of support and annual reporting requirements, to be specified at a later date, will apply.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching

There are no matching requirements for this award.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

The application package and instructions can be found on grants.gov. Information that should be included in the applications submission is shown below. Further information about the scholarship and NOAA's research priorities can be found on the web site at <http://fosterscholars.noaa.gov> Information in hard copy may be requested from: Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program, Attention: Chantell Haskins, Office of Education, 1315 East-West Highway, Room 10703, Silver Spring, MD 20910.

Information Contact(s): Send your request for information to the Program Manager, Chantell Haskins, at the address shown above, by telephone (301) 713-9437 x125, or via e-mail to fosterscholars@noaa.gov

B. Content and Form of Application Submission

Each application package must include the following items: Failure to submit these items exactly as described in each section below or if any item is omitted will disqualify the application from consideration. All of these items, except as stated in section B.6. about the submission of letters of recommendations, must be submitted as part of the on-line submission process.

1. Standard Form 424 (SF-424), Application for Federal Assistance is located on grants.gov and must be completed with information pertinent to the applicant.

2. General Information Sheet

Provide the information outlined below, but do not exceed 2 typewritten pages. General Information Sheets that are longer than 2 pages in length will not be accepted and will result in the application being disqualified.

a. **Personal Data:** Provide your full name, country of citizenship, current address, permanent address, and home and work telephone numbers. If you can be reached by fax or e-mail, include that information. Optional B for statistical collection purposes only: indicate your gender, and race or ethnicity.

b. **Degree Sought:** State your proposed field of study (oceanography, marine biology, or maritime archaeology) and degree type you are seeking (e.g. M.S., M.A., Ph.D.). Include the month and year you expect the degree to be awarded. State the name and location of your institution.

c. **Education:** List the academic degrees you have received, or expect to receive by the start of your proposed graduate studies for this program, including the date of receipt and institution. Provide your graduate advisor's name, address, telephone, fax number, and e-mail address.

d. **Academic Honors.** List any academic honors that you have received.

e. **Relevant Work Experience.** List work experience related to your field of study. You may include research and teaching assistantships and any other paid or unpaid work.

f. **Statement of Financial Need:** In a concise paragraph, discuss how you plan to fund your graduate level education and what the impact will be if you do not receive this scholarship. Also, list the following in the order stated: estimated amount needed for tuition and fees, all resources currently available to you to cover your graduate studies (e.g., grants, student loans, scholarships, research or teaching assistant positions, personal funds), the length of time these resources will be available and if they include work requirements, other resources for which you have applied and have received, as well as those for which you have not received a response.

3. Statement of Intent

The Statement of Intent is a self-description of your academic research and career goals, and how your proposed course of study or research will help you achieve these goals. This is your opportunity to present yourself, your beliefs, and your aspirations. Include any background information you believe is pertinent, and provide insight into why you have chosen the goals you are pursuing. This statement should not be a research proposal or scientific abstract. This statement will be used to evaluate you as an individual, not necessarily as a scientist, and your motivation for applying for this scholarship. This statement should demonstrate your organizational, analytical, and written communication skills. The statement of intent should be typewritten, single-spaced on a blank sheet of paper, and should not exceed one

page in length. Statements longer than one page will not be accepted and will result in the application being disqualified.

4. Institute Certification

A letter from the applicant's institution certifying that the student is enrolled or has accepted an offer to a graduate program must be submitted with the application. The letter should consist of the following information on school letterhead and be signed by a school official: Name and location of the academic institution, the school and department that you are currently attending or plan to attend, and the month and year your studies will begin if you are not currently enrolled. It is preferable that the institute certification described above be used. However, some institutions will only provide a standardized institute certification, in which cases they will be acceptable. If you have a graduate advisor, list his/her name, address, telephone and fax numbers, and an e-mail address, if available in the Institute Certification portion of your application. Current transcripts or letters of acceptance from the institution will not be accepted in lieu of the Institute Certification. Failure to include the Institute Certification specifically as indicated above will result in the application being disqualified.

5. Transcripts

Provide transcripts for all university/college level studies. Photocopied transcripts are acceptable. Transcripts must be included with all other application materials. Those mailed separately will not be accepted. Failure to include transcripts from all previous university/college-level studies will result in the application being disqualified.

6. Three Letters of Recommendation

Each application must include three, and only three, signed letters of recommendation from individuals who have knowledge of your academic record, research effort, work and/or life experience. Relevant paid work, such as internships and volunteer efforts, is applicable. If you have a sponsor or advisor in the program, one of these letters should be from that individual. Letters of recommendation should be opened and uploaded for electronic submission via <http://grants.gov>. If an individual writing a recommendation requests that the applicant not open the letter of recommendation, the applicant should send all of the three letters of recommendation together in one envelop to the address stated in IV. A above. Applications without three, signed letters of recommendation or with more than three letters of recommendation will result in the application being disqualified.

7. Declaration

Applicants must certify that all statements and information in their application are true and correct by copying the following on a separate plain sheet of paper, signing it, and including it in their application package:

I, the undersigned, declare, under penalty of perjury, that all statements and information in my application are true and correct.

Executed on [insert date] _____
Print or type Name _____
Signature _____

Failure to include this statement, signed by the applicant, will result in the application being disqualified.

C. **Submission Dates and Times** -- Applications must be received between December 1, 2006, and February 9, 2007, by 5:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time. Date and time of receipt of each application sent via grants.gov is electronically recorded. If hard copy submission is necessary, each envelope is time and date stamped as it is received. Applications received prior to December 1, 2006, will not be accepted. The applicant will be notified and requested to submit the application within the application period. Applications received after February 9, 2007, at 5:00 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time will not be reviewed or considered, and will be disqualified.

D. **Intergovernmental Review**

Applications under this program are not subject to Executive Order 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs.@

E. **Funding Restrictions**

No special restrictions apply.

F. **Other Submission Requirements**

Applicants should submit their application via grants.gov. Only those applicants who do not have access to the internet should submit a hard copy application. If a hard copy application is necessary, it **should be sent to the Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program, Attention: Chantell Haskins, NOAA Office of Education, Room 10703, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910.**

V. Application Review Information

A. **Evaluation Criteria.**

The evaluation criteria and weighting of the criteria are as follows:

1. Academic record and statement of career goals and objectives of student (goals and objectives described in the Statement of Intent). (20%)
2. Quality of project and applicability to program priorities. (For the Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship, quality of project relates to the applicant=s research goals and its applicability to NOAA.) (20%)
3. Recommendations and/or endorsements of students. (15%)

4. Additional relevant experience related to diversity of education: extra-curricular activities; honors and awards, interpersonal, written, and oral communication skills. For the Nancy Foster Scholarship Program, this also includes relevant work experience. (Interpersonal and written skills will be evaluated from information in the Statement of Intent.) (15%)

5. Financial need of student (30%)

B. Review and Selection Process

Once an application is received by NOAA, an initial administrative review is conducted to determine compliance with requirements and completeness of the application. The initial administrative review will be based on:

1. Eligibility - Applications will only be accepted and reviewed from graduate students (as defined in Section III);
2. Submission date - Applications will only be accepted and reviewed if they are received in the NOAA Office of Education by the designated deadline;

All proposals will be evaluated and scored individually in accordance with the assigned weights of the above evaluation criteria by an independent peer panel review. The peer panel will be comprised of three or more individuals, having expertise in NOAA-related science. All proposals will be evaluated and scored individually. The peer panel shall rate the proposals using the evaluation criteria and scores provided above. A numerical ranking will be assigned to each application based on the average of the panel members' ratings. The individual peer panelist scores shall be averaged for each application and presented to the Program Officer. The Program Officer will neither vote nor score proposals as part of the independent peer panel nor participate in discussion of the merits of the proposal. No consensus advice will be provided by the independent peer review panel. The Selecting Official, the Director of Education, will award in rank order unless an application is justified to be selected out of rank order based on one or more of the selection factors below.

C. Selection Factors

The merit review ratings shall provide a rank order to the Selecting Official for final funding recommendation. The program officer may first make a recommendation to the Selecting Official applying the selection factors below. The Selecting Official shall award in rank order unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon one or more of the following factors:

1. Balance/Distribution of Funds
 - a. Across academic disciplines (not applicable to this program)
 - b. By types of institution
 - c. Geographically
2. Availability of funds
3. Program-specific objectives
4. Degree in scientific area and type of degree sought

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

The Grants Office sends a hard copy congratulatory letter to each successful applicant along with an award document describing the terms of the award and providing forms that the applicant must complete. These forms include the CD-346, Applicant for Funding Assistance; CD-511, Certifications Regarding Debarment, Suspension and Other Responsibility Matters; Drug-Free Workplace Requirements and Lobbying; and SF-270, Request for Advance or Reimbursement. The award document must be signed and returned along with the completed forms listed above. The annual reporting requirements are also included in the award package.

The names, academic institutions, degrees being sought, research plans, and biographical information of the scholarship awardees will be posted on the Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program web site: <http://www.fosterscholar.noaa.gov> after selections have been confirmed. The information posted on the web site may also be published in marketing materials developed to advertise the Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program.

B. Notification of Unsuccessful Applicants.

Unsuccessful applicants will be notified in writing after the selections have been confirmed. Applications for these applicants will be destroyed after notification has been made.

C. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

1. Pre-Award Notification Requirements

The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register Notice published December 30, 2004 (69 FR 78389) are applicable to this solicitation.

2. Limitations of Liability

In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for proposal preparation costs if these programs are cancelled because of other agency priorities. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds..

3. It has been determined that the Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarships are categorically excluded from the requirements under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

D. Reporting

Awardees are required to provide semi-annual reports discussing the scholar=s activities, accomplishments, academic progress and research progress. The report must include a certification from the scholar=s academic advisor indicating that the student=s work is on track. It may be requested to be submitted electronically or in hard copy.

E. Classification

This document contains collection-of-information requirements subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA). This application has been approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) under control number 0648-0432. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is 4.5 hours for an application and 45 minutes per letter of recommendation. These estimates include the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person is required to respond to, nor shall any person be subject to a penalty for failure to comply with, a collection-of-information subject to the PRA unless that collection displays a currently valid OMB control number.

VII. Other Information

A. The Stipend and Tuition. The annual stipend will be paid directly to the scholar. The stipend is intended to defray cost-of-living expenses, and not to support research costs. NOAA anticipates the student and their faculty advisor will secure research funds independent of the scholarship. Tuition and academic fees will be negotiated between the academic institution and the Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship program manager at NOAA prior to the receipt of funds. This negotiation is intended to leverage scholarship funds and enhance opportunities for scholarship recipients. In those instances in which tuition and academic fees are not totally waived by the academic institution, the tuition allowance in an amount equal to the tuition and fees not waived (but not to exceed \$12,000) will be paid directly to the scholar for remittance to the academic institution. If tuition and fees are reduced or waived by the academic institution, then that portion of the tuition allowance not needed (i.e., up to \$12,000 in the case of a total waiver) will be retained by NOAA for future scholarships. No money will be paid directly to the student from the tuition allowance for purposes other than the payment of tuition and fees.

B. General Scholarship Information. Specific instructions regarding the disbursement, management, and reporting requirements for all stipend and tuition allowance payments will be provided to the scholarship recipients upon selection for the award. The awarding of funds beyond the first year will be based on availability of funds, continued eligibility of the student, periodic certification by the academic institution that adequate academic progress is being made, and compliance with applicable reporting requirements. At its discretion, each academic institution may supplement a scholar=s stipend from institutional funds in accordance with the supplementation policy of the institution.

VIII. Agency Contact(s)

Send requests for information to fosterscholars@noaa.gov or mail requests to the attention of Chantell Haskins, Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program, Office of Education, 1315 East-West Highway, Room 10703, Silver Spring, MD 20910.

Dated:

Mark Brown
OAR, Chief Financial Officer
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce
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