

## OPM soliciting input on student pathways regulations

By Julie Davidson, **cyber FEDS**<sup>®</sup> Editorial Director

**IN FOCUS:** WASHINGTON -- The Office of Personnel Management is currently developing regulations to formalize the new student pathways program authorized by [Executive Order 13562](#), OPM Director John Berry told a group of federal and academic officials during a working session on the EO.

"The EO is just the starting pistol and not the finish line," Berry said. "We want to get the regulations stood up as quickly as possible, but we want to do them right."

The working session was sponsored by the National Academy of Public Administration and the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration to help identify strategies to ensure the EO is effectively implemented to help the government recruit and retain future leaders.

Attendees agreed this is critical because the perfect human capital storm is approaching government, as federal agencies will have to deal with more competition for talent from the private sector, increased federal retirements, decreased budgets, the pay freeze, negative images of federal employees, and reduced staffing levels.

Berry assured attendees that all recommendations are on the table.

"We are taking a totally new approach to writing these regulations," he said. "We plan to use social media and unprecedented outreach to invite comments. These will be as open a set of regulations that have ever been drawn up."

An OPM official told **cyber FEDS**<sup>®</sup> this is important because many groups affected by the regulations, including students, parents, and schools, are "not familiar with the traditional notice and comment process run through the *Federal Register*."

"We want to point the students and recent graduates who will be affected by these regulations in the right direction, so they can engage in the rule-making process, just like other stakeholders do," the official said. "Using social media, such as our existing hiring reform Twitter feed and Facebook page, to point them to the place they can comment is one good option that we are looking into. ... We will also be looking to engage students and parents at open forums across the country -- educating them about the comment process and encouraging them to participate."

Until the regulations are finalized, the official said, agencies should continue to use existing authorities to hire students and recent graduates, including the Presidential Management Fellows program, the Student Career Experience Program, the Student Temporary Employment Program, Schedule A for people with disabilities, and veterans hiring authorities, in addition to the regular competitive process.

But, as of March 1, the Federal Career Intern Program can no longer be used. The controversial program was ended by the EO and replaced by the new student pathways program.

Paul Posner, director of George Mason University's Public Administration program, said he hopes the administration will ultimately create something like the FCIP program that allows agencies to "target specific talent pools."

"It really takes a whole village to reinforce [the importance] of all of this," Posner said. "There are so many goals competing for federal managers' attention, so the president, OPM and the Office of Management and Budget must all work together to reinforce it. Ideally we would like to see the recognition that human capital is an investment," not a liability.

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