



Statement on OPM Proposed Regulations to Create Student Pathways for Federal Service

August 4, 2011

The National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA) applauds the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) for proposing regulations today to set up pathways to federal service for students and recent graduates.

The three Pathways Programs will be new government-wide Internship and Recent Graduates programs and a strengthened Presidential Management Fellows (PMF) program. The proposed regulations envision programs that are rigorous, accountable, and that fully include graduate students.

The proposed regulations establish a foundation to fulfill the promise of the Executive Order signed by President Obama last December. The goal of the Pathways Programs will be to develop students and recent graduates for careers in public service, not merely to hire them. The programs will attract the nation's very best and produce future generations of federal leaders and managers.

NASPAA additionally recognizes OPM's pioneering initiative to solicit feedback during the public comment period from those who have the most at stake in the programs: universities and students.

The Pathways Programs are essential to meeting federal human capital needs, as the current competitive hiring process (USAJobs.gov) has proven *not* to be competitive for students. This is especially true for graduate students, who are highly educated and prepared to fill mission-critical and "hard to fill" positions throughout the federal government.

It is therefore crucial that the final Pathways regulations retain the full inclusion of highly skilled graduate students in the Internship and Recent Graduates programs, letting market demand set the programs' size. The final regulations should also preserve provisions to strengthen the PMF program's rigorous selection process.

Nonetheless, what will truly make or break the success of Pathways is its implementation. NASPAA urges federal agencies to begin planning substantive programs that will attract, recruit, develop, and retain students and recent graduates to become future agency leaders. We urge OPM to use its resources to support agencies throughout this process, but to exert its oversight where necessary. NASPAA will offer its expertise and assistance to all agencies desiring to create new graduate-level Recent Graduates programs.

The nation's ability to address the challenges of 21st century governance rests on how well it can recruit a new generation of leaders who are prepared to tackle complex management and fiscal problems. The Executive Order and proposed Pathways Programs regulations have made a promise to accomplish this goal. The final regulations must keep it.

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The National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA) is the membership organization of graduate programs in public administration, public policy, and public affairs. Its 275 members confer more than 10,000 master's degrees annually. NASPAA's mission is to ensure excellence in public service education and promote the ideal of public service, and it is the specialized accreditor of master degree programs in public affairs.
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