

**Department of Defense
Information Assurance Scholarship Program**

Sponsored by the
DoD Chief Information Officer

SOLICITATION FOR PROPOSALS

From
Universities Designated by the
National Security Agency (NSA) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS)
as
National Centers of Academic Excellence in Information Assurance Education
and
National Centers of Academic Excellence – Research,
(herein after referred to as CAEs)

Issued by the National Security Agency on behalf of the Department of Defense

Proposal Submission: February 28, 2012
(Proposals must be postmarked on/before February 28, 2012)

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**DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
INFORMATION ASSURANCE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM
SOLICITATION**

I. INTRODUCTION

The Department of Defense (DoD) Information Assurance Scholarship Program (IASP) was established, in accordance with provisions of Chapter 112, "Information Security Scholarship Program," of title 10, United States Code, added by Public Law 106-398, The National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2001. The purpose of the program is to increase the number of qualified students entering the fields of information assurance, information technology, and cybersecurity (IA/IT/cybersecurity) to meet the DoD's increasing dependence on information technology for war fighting and the security of its information infrastructure.

Regionally and nationally accredited U.S. institutions of higher education, designated by the National Security Agency (NSA) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) as National Centers of Academic Excellence in Information Assurance Education or National Centers of Academic Excellence – Research (hereinafter referred to as CAEs) are invited to submit proposals for developing and managing a full-time, institution-based, grant-funded scholarship program in the disciplines underpinning IA/IT/cybersecurity for Academic Year 2012-2013. CAEs may propose collaboration with other accredited institutions, and are encouraged to include accredited post-secondary minority institutions. CAEs may also propose to undertake a special partnering agreement with the Information Resources Management College (IRMC) of the National Defense University (NDU). Proposal requirements for addressing the IRMC/NDU partnership options are described in ANNEX I and should be responded to in a separate ANNEX I submission.

Consistent with 10 U.S.C. 2200b, CAE proposals to this solicitation may also request modest collateral support for purposes of institutional capacity building to include faculty development, laboratory improvements, curriculum development, and/or faculty/student research in information security related to providing a strong foundation for an Information Assurance Scholarship Program. Requirements for proposing modest capacity building support are detailed in ANNEX II, and should also be responded to in a separate ANNEX II submission.

To continue the development of a strong foundation for the scholarship program during the Academic Year 2012-2013, competition will be limited to full-time students entering their third or fourth years of undergraduate education; students in their first or second year of a master's degree program; students pursuing doctoral degrees; and students enrolled in graduate certificate programs.

II. TERMINOLOGY

A. Information Assurance: For purposes of this program, the term Information Assurance encompasses the scientific, technical, and management disciplines required to ensure computer and network security including the following functions:

- System/network administration and operations
- Systems security engineering
- Information assurance systems and product acquisition
- Cryptography
- Threat and vulnerability assessment, to include risk management
- Web security
- The operations of computer emergency response teams

- Information assurance training, education and management
- Computer forensics
- Defensive information operations
- Critical information infrastructure assurance

Relevant academic disciplines, with concentrations in information assurance, would include, but are not limited to biometrics, business management or administration, business process analysis, computer crime investigations, computer engineering, computer programming, computer science, computer systems analysis, cyber operations, cybersecurity, cybersecurity policy, database administration, data management, digital and multimedia forensics, electrical engineering, electronics engineering, information security (assurance), information systems, information technology acquisition, information technology program/project management, mathematics, network management/operations, software engineering, systems engineering, and other similar disciplines as approved by the DoD Chief Information Officer (DoD CIO).

B. The opportunities exist for part-time Government (DoD) employment while receiving scholarship (see Student Application), through the Agency intern and hiring options, to include the authority to employ individuals completing Department of Defense Scholarship or Fellowship programs, and/or the related “r” waiver authority.

III. OVERVIEW OF PROGRAM SCOPE

The key elements of the DoD IASP, and the CAEs role in the process, are addressed in the subsections that follow. University grantees will be required, as a condition of grant award, to establish and manage the program, including disbursement of scholarship funds to students. Grant awards are made to the universities, not directly to the students.

A. Academic Year 2012-2013: The DoD estimates awarding scholarships (via grant awards) for a period of one year (beginning with the fall semester) to designated CAEs, operating independently or in collaboration with other accredited institutions, including accredited post-secondary minority institutions. The purpose is to lay a sound foundation for the development of a robust information assurance program for undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in the CAE or its collaborating institutions’ degree and graduate certificate information assurance programs. To this end, institutions receiving grants will be required to conduct a self-evaluation to identify improvements in program design and management for implementation in future years. In addition to proposing establishment of an IA scholarship program within the university, CAEs may also propose developing a partnership with the IRMC, and/or request funds for capacity building activities. Grant awards are contingent upon availability of funds.

B. IRMC/NDU Partnership: CAEs wishing to partner with the IRMC/NDU will be required to accept the DoD civilian employees and military officers into their graduate degree programs, who have successfully completed the IRMC graduate level CIO Certificate Program with an information assurance concentration. Requirements for addressing the IRMC/NDU Partnership option are described at ANNEX I, and are to be responded to in separate ANNEX I Technical and Cost Proposal submissions. *Administrative costs allowed for the program should include a visit to the IRMC, for one overnight if necessary (if you are not in the local area). Additionally, if you do not currently have IRMC partnerships students, please provide prices for a per student option, with a breakout of in-state/out-of-state (as applicable), MS and PhD (if both), and indicate the maximum number of partnership students you can accept during each year. Those with current partnership students must also address the*

necessary continuation costs for them. The requirements for the student application nomination and review process described below and in the accompanying Student Application materials for this program ***do not apply to current DoD/Federal civilian employees or military personnel*** whose applications for this program will be handled directly by the Department of Defense as described in ANNEX I.

C. Capacity Building: This particular area is subject to the availability of funds. In developing a strong educational base for the scholarship program, CAE proposals may also address plans for building the institution's capacity for research and education in information assurance and technology as described in ANNEX II. Funding may be requested to address needs in: ***1) IA faculty development, 2) laboratory development/improvements, 3), IA curriculum development and/or, 4) faculty and student research in IA/IT/cybersecurity to support the development and sustainment of critical IA/IT/cybersecurity competencies required in support of national interests and the transformation of the DoD to a network centric force.***

Details for all activities will be described in ANNEX II. CAE requests for capacity building support should be submitted in separate ANNEX II Technical and Cost Proposal Submissions. Costs for administering scholarships should clearly be part of the basic proposal. Items related to laboratory enhancements, and research, to include faculty travel to conferences, should clearly be part of the ANNEX II proposal.

D. Proposal Formats: At a minimum, the proposal must respond to **either** the establishment/continuation of an Information Assurance Scholarship Program (Basic recruitment) **or** the establishment/continuation of an Information Assurance Scholarship Program ANNEX I submission proposing a partnership with IRMC. One or both scholarship options must be submitted as part of the proposal in order to be eligible for any ANNEX II capacity building opportunities.

E. The DoD IASP Application Due Dates: CAEs electing to submit a proposal to establish a scholarship program must ensure that they establish a due date for student scholarship applications that will allow them sufficient time to evaluate the student applicants and prepare their recommendations of student candidates for postmarking on/before **Tuesday, February 28, 2012**. These dates are critical in order to ensure grant awards as close to August 1, 2012 as possible. See Section XII, "Deadline for Submission", for dates and Attachment A "Proposal Preparation Instructions and Certifications" for details on submission requirements.

F. The DoD Role: While CAEs are required to provide the DoD an assessment of each applicant, the actual selection of student scholars will be made by the DoD evaluators. Students selected as Information Assurance scholars will receive the full cost of tuition, books (from the recommended list, not all books on the "optional reading lists"), required fees, and a stipend to cover room and board. The stipend levels¹ are \$14,000 for undergraduate students and \$19,000 for graduate (Master's/PhD) students. Awards will be made via a grant to the CAE. Selecting agencies will also provide sponsors who will maintain contact with the student during the scholarship period, and who will facilitate the student's entry into internships, if applicable, and eventually DoD employment. The DoD IASP Program Office will contact CAEs submitting successful proposals to develop agreements governing the character, scheduling, and periodic assessment of student internships.

¹ If a student is applying for only one half of a school year (or graduates 1 semester early), that student shall only receive half the stipend amount. The stipend is based upon an annual full-time attendance at the CAE. Students planning to graduate in December 2012, must be clearly identified (**for placement purposes**).

G. *Future Opportunities for Returning Students*: Contingent on adequate funding appropriations, it is anticipated that current CAE grantees and successful scholarship recipients will receive follow-on support to complete their degree program. Returning students will be required to re-apply each year by submitting the entire student application, one copy of their official transcript (**web printed transcripts are not accepted**), reflecting maintenance of the required grade point average and an endorsement/recommendation letter from the Principal Investigator.

IV. STUDENT OBLIGATIONS

Students selected to participate in the DoD IASP will be required to sign a written agreement obligating them to work for the DoD, as a civilian *employee for one calendar year for each year, of scholarship assistance. For example, should a student apply for only one semester of scholarship, the student must agree to work for the DoD for one year.* This agreement is provided to the selecting agency for their records to ensure compliance with the service commitment. Students will also be required to serve in internship positions, if timing permits, with the DoD organizations during the time they are receiving scholarship support until they complete the course of study provided for by the scholarship. These internships will be arranged by the DoD to occur during the summer or other breaks between school terms, as appropriate to the individual's circumstances and the institution's calendar. The internship does not count toward satisfying the period of obligated service incurred by accepting the Information Assurance scholarship. Students will be required to formally accept or decline the scholarship within 21 days of notification. Non-acceptance by this date will mean the scholarship will be offered to the next available student.

The students will be required to complete a security investigation questionnaire to initiate the process for a background investigation in preparation for their internships, if applicable, and as a condition of future employment with the DoD. Drug tests or other suitability processing will occur as appropriate. The students will also be required to sign an agreement stating that they will accept assignments requiring travel or change of duty stations as interns or employees. Individuals who voluntarily terminate employment during intern appointments or before the end of the period of obligated service required by the terms of Chapter 112, title 10, United States Code, will be required to refund the United States, in whole or in part, the cost of the educational assistance provided to them. Web pages have been provided in the Application Background and Application Package for review about security clearances to assist both the P.I.s and the students in understanding these requirements before they apply.

An opportunity also exists for scholarship payback through military service². Individuals choosing to enlist or accept a commission to serve on active duty in one of the Military Services shall incur a service obligation of a minimum of 4 years on active duty in that Service upon graduation. The Military Services may establish a service obligation longer than 4 years, depending on the occupational specialty and type of enlistment or commissioning program selected.

Undergraduate scholarship recipients will be required to maintain a 3.2 out of 4.0 grade point average or the equivalent; graduate students will be required to maintain an overall 3.5 out of a 4.0 grade point average, or equivalent. Failure to maintain satisfactory academic progress will constitute grounds for termination of financial assistance and termination of internship and/or employment appointment. Additionally, students who fail to complete the degree program satisfactorily or to fulfill the service commitment upon graduation shall be required to reimburse the United States, in whole or in part, the

² Includes full-time active duty Guard and Reserves

cost of the financial (scholarship) assistance provided to them. CAEs will be responsible for monitoring student progress and will notify the DoD IASP Program Manager should any student scholar fail to attain minimum academic standards required for continuing scholarship support.

Except for small achievement awards, not to exceed \$3,000 in any academic year, a student may not accept simultaneous remuneration from another scholarship or fellowship.

Graduate programs may include a reasonable amount of teaching or similar activities that are, in the CAE's opinion, contributory to the student's academic progress; however, the development of students, not service to CAE, will govern the assignment of these activities.

V. CONDITIONS OF THE GRANT COMPETITION

In order to be competitive in this grant solicitation, CAEs must be willing to advertise and manage a competition for scholarship applicants; conduct an evaluation of applicants' qualifications and abilities; and submit all the applications received to the DoD, along with the CAE's assessment and recommendation of each proposed scholar's capabilities and potential. CAEs are reminded to establish a date for student application submissions that will allow sufficient time for this process. The specific requirements for advertising the scholarship among the candidate student populations, collecting and assessing student applications, and reporting on the process are addressed below in paragraph VII below. Proposal evaluation criteria will review how well CAEs conduct the recruitment and assessment process.

VI. CAEs ROLE IN RECRUITING AND ASSESSING SCHOLARSHIP CANDIDATES

If a CAE decides to participate in this portion of the grant competition, the following requirements apply:

A. Announcing and Promoting the Program: The CAE wishing to submit a proposal will be expected to take the following actions, at a minimum, to promote student interest in the DoD IA scholarship opportunity:

1. Determine and communicate to the relevant student populations any CAE unique conditions, instructions, and/or materials (including due dates) that are associated with the acceptance of applications for the DoD IASP opportunity.
2. Publish and ensure that all appropriate DoD IASP application materials are made available to all relevant student populations. This includes providing equal access to hard copy and soft copy application documents/materials, any CAE and the DoD unique instructions, notices of deadlines; and any additional required information about the DoD IASP.

B. Managing the Application Review and Candidate Assessment Process: CAEs electing to propose establishment of a scholarship program are required to verify each applicant's eligibility for scholarship and academic sufficiency, to evaluate each eligible candidate's knowledge and ability in certain competency areas important to successful information assurance work, and to provide a relative endorsement level for each eligible candidate. CAEs may determine the procedures to be followed in conducting the evaluation, including records verification, individual interviews, faculty review panels, as long as all applicants are afforded full and equal opportunity for consideration in appropriate review phases.

1. Eligibility for Scholarship and DoD Appointment. CAEs shall verify documentation of the eligibility of each applicant for scholarship and appointment and shall exclude from further evaluation any applicant unable to meet the following minimum administrative requirements which are noted in Attachment C, DoD Information Assurance Scholarship Application Background and Requirements.
2. CAE Endorsement. Please use Attachment E, Cost and Student Endorsement and Ranking Form, for the following: CAEs shall provide an endorsement of each applicant meeting administrative and academic sufficiency requirements that is based on its overall evaluation of all applicant materials, including the competency evaluations described above. CAEs shall indicate only one of the following **three levels** of endorsement for each applicant:
 - a. **Not Recommended**
 - b. **Recommended**
 - c. **Highly Recommended**

C. Submitting Student Scholarship Applications and CAE Review and Endorsement: CAEs that propose to support the scholarship program are required to receive and retain all applications submitted in response to the announcement and to evaluate the applicants as described in detail above. See instructions on requirements and submissions in the Attachment A, Proposal Preparation Instructions.

VII. TECHNICAL PROPOSALS

See instructions on requirements and submissions in the Attachment A, Proposal Preparation Instructions.

VIII. COST PROPOSALS

The cost proposal information can be found in Attachment A, Proposal Preparation Instructions.

IX. GRANT PROPOSAL EVALUATION CRITERIA AND SELECTION PROCESS

Proposals will be evaluated by a panel of Department of Defense specialists in Information Assurance drawn from the Military Departments, the Office of the DoD Chief Information Officer, the National Security Agency, and other DoD Components. Proposals will be evaluated against the following criteria:

A. The merits of the institution's proposed approach to designing and developing a robust Information Assurance Scholarship Program and the likelihood of its producing the highest quality Information Assurance scholars for the DoD employment.

B. The quality of the institution's process for promoting and advertising the IASP opportunity and evaluating students for scholarship and the DoD appointment, and the effectiveness of this process in producing well-qualified candidates for the DoD selection.

C. The proposed program's congruence with statutory intent, the requirements of the DoD, and its relevance and potential contribution to the DoD mission needs.

D. The qualifications of key faculty, staff and advisors and their proposed role in the scholarship program.

E. The adequacy of the institution's existing resources to accomplish the program objectives.

F. The realism and reasonableness of the cost proposal.

X. AWARDS

Scholarship notifications for students will be announced to the CAEs in the May 2012 time frame. The grants for Scholarships (Basic) and ANNEX I and ANNEX II will be awarded in the July/August 2012 timeframe. Awards will be made for one year only. The DoD may award a lower level of funding than that proposed.

The DoD recognizes the considerable CAE investment required to conduct the student recruitment and assessment process, and to develop and submit a competitive proposal in this competition. Depending on the availability of funds, the DoD may elect to award capacity grants to CAEs that have submitted outstanding proposals, and have managed the recruitment and assessment process in an exceptional manner, but whose student candidates the DoD may not select in the competition for scholarship and the DoD appointments. Because expectations are that the program will grow in future years, these program awards should enable CAEs to complete planning for implementing a comprehensive scholarship program and be prepared to manage succeeding rounds of student recruitment.

Similarly, DoD may also elect to make awards in support of the IRMC/NDU partnership described in ANNEX I, even if none of the CAE's student candidates are selected for participation in the basic scholarship program. However, as in the case of the capacity grants described above, the institution's basic (scholarship program) technical proposal must demonstrate exceptional merit and potential for full implementation in succeeding phases of student recruitment and selection.

XI. DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION

See the proposal preparation instructions for details on the submission of proposals. All institutionally approved, signed, and completed proposals must be postmarked by the CAE Point of Contact on/or before **Tuesday, February 28, 2012**.

XII. LATE SUBMISSIONS

The CAE is responsible for submitting the proposal and student materials so as to reach the DoD IASP Program Office at the National Security Agency by the date and time specified.

A. Proposals or student materials that arrive at the designated offices after the postmarked deadline are "late" and will not be considered for an award or scholarship program selection, unless there is acceptable evidence that, although it was not received in the NSA office designated, the proposal/student materials were postmarked by the deadline; or

B. In case the operation of the designated Government office is interrupted and the office is unable to receive the proposal, the deadline is extended to the same time of the first day when the office is back in operation.

XIV. INCOMPLETE PROPOSALS

Proposals or student materials that arrive missing the require documents/CDs will be deemed incomplete and will not be considered for an award or scholarship program selection.

XV. CONTACT INFORMATION

The central IASP Points of Contact for information regarding this solicitation are:

DoD IASP Program Office
9800 Savage Road
Fort Meade, MD 20755-6744
e-mail: askisap@nsa.gov
410-854-6206