

JUSTIFICATION FOR CHANGE
OMB CONTROL NO. 0648-0568

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration: (1) Office of Education, Educational Partnership Program (EPP), (2) Ernest F. Hollings Undergraduate Scholarship Program; (3) Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program; and, (4) National Marine Fisheries Service Recruitment, Training, and Research Program

NOAA proposes to add two voluntary questions to the online application forms for the Ernest F. Hollings Undergraduate Scholarship (Hollings Scholarship) and Educational Partnership Program with Minority Serving Institutions Undergraduate Scholarship (EPP/MSI USP) as outlined below. There is no estimated burden change due to these additions.

In both cases, applicants will be given the option to Decline to Answer and questions will include language explaining that data are collected for program management purposes only and have no bearing on review of the application. This information will not be shared with reviewers.

Date of birth (DOB). NOAA proposes to begin routine collection of DOB from applicants to the Ernest F. Hollings Undergraduate Scholarship (Hollings Scholarship) and Educational Partnership Program with Minority Serving Institutions Undergraduate Scholarship (EPP/MSI USP). This will 1) facilitate verification of degree completion and advanced degree enrollment by scholarship recipients, and 2) provide a comparison group (those who did not receive the scholarship) to assess program impact. Although NOAA conducts surveys to verify graduation and assess post-graduate outcomes (graduate degrees, fields of employment, etc.), the response rate is low and is also dependent on maintaining up to date contact information, which frequently changes following undergraduate degree completion. A great deal of information can be gleaned through web searching, however this process is extremely time consuming and labor intensive and leaves inevitable gaps in data. Verification of degree completion and enrollment through the National Student Clearinghouse (www.studentclearinghouse.org), provides cost effective, empirical evidence of graduation and, where applicable, graduate degree enrollment/completion with minimal staff effort. This analysis requires a name and DOB as a unique identifier, which is provided to the organization via an encrypted server.

Race/Ethnicity. This information is currently collected on a voluntary basis for Educational Partnership Program scholarship applicants. We plan to begin collecting it for Hollings Scholarship applicants as well. Presently, NOAA has no way to measure the demographic changes over time in recipients of the Hollings Scholarship, nor the impact of the Hollings program on diversity in the NOAA mission sciences – an important aspect of NOAA’s education mission. Therefore, this data would be highly valuable, particularly in light of increased emphasis on diversity and inclusion. Ethnicity categories will be defined per the US Census and will include the option to Decline to Answer.