

POLICY ISSUE (Information)

August 16, 2006

SECY-06-0183

FOR: The Commissioners

FROM: Luis A. Reyes
Executive Director for Operations /RA/

SUBJECT: MINORITY SERVING INSTITUTIONS PROGRAM

PURPOSE:

To provide the Commission with information about the Minority Serving Institutions Program (MSIP) and its related Communication Plan, which are being implemented in accordance with the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) responsibilities under the Energy Policy Act (EPA) of 2005. This paper does not address any new commitments.

BACKGROUND:

On August 8, 2005, President Bush signed the EPA into law. In the law, Section 651(c)(4), "Partnership Program with Institutions of Higher Education" authorizes NRC to establish and participate in programs and activities relating to research, mentoring, instruction, and training with institutions of higher education, including Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), and Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs). Also, Section 651(c)(4) allows NRC intervention to strengthen the capacity of these institutions to educate and train students and faculty, and conduct research in the field of science, engineering, law, or any other fields determined to be important to the work of NRC. The purpose of Section 651(c)(4) is for the NRC to establish and operate an outreach partnership program with institutions of higher education.

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On October 31, 2005, in SECY-05-0201, the staff provided the Commission with its plan to implement the EPA, and requested approval of the staff's recommendations for funding specific activities. On January 5, 2006, the Commission issued its Staff Requirements Memorandum for implementation of the EPA. The Office of Small Business and Civil Rights (SBCR) was directed to establish a Minority Serving Institutions Program (MSIP) that would go beyond NRC's current program of funding research activities at HBCUs to include HSIs and TCUs.

In July 2006, SBCR finalized the MSIP based on comments received from the Office of Human Resources (HR), the Office of Administration (ADM), and the Office of General Counsel (OGC).

DISCUSSION:

EPA provisions allow NRC to provide a wide range of programs, activities and support services that go well beyond the population and delivery of services provided by the HBCU Research Participation Program, which is currently conducted by the Oak Ridge Institute for Science and Engineering. The MSIP addresses the unmet needs of those HBCUs, HSIs and TCUs identified by the EPA, and include fields that have been determined by NRC to be important to the work of the Commission, including science and engineering.

The MSIP illustrates NRC's commitment to establish an expansive Partnership Program, by providing financial assistance to a broad range of innovative programs and activities that address the needs of MSIs and their students and faculty. These programs and activities include mentoring, leadership, training, education, instruction, technical assistance, research and development, retention and recruitment initiatives, cooperative agreements, fellowships, internships, scholarships, student tuition assistance, direct institutional subsidies, program evaluation, facilities and equipment, housing and arrangements under the Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPA).

MSIP is designed to enhance NRC's ability to:

- Exchange and transfer knowledge, ideas, concepts and skills in areas deemed critical to NRC's mission
- Develop human capital to the fullest potential (talents, skills and abilities)
- Ensure individuals have meaningful and equal access to opportunities and benefits provided by NRC conducted and financially assisted programs and activities, to include educational preparation, job readiness skills and work experience; and
- Produce a diverse pool of skilled potential employees

The MSIP is also designed to track, analyze and measure outcomes of NRC conducted and financially assisted programs and activities, to include compliance requirements, individual and combined participant progress reports, before and after assessments, accomplishments (individual and program based), and will also measure the efficiency, effectiveness and results of programs and activities.

The MSIP's programmatic approach provides NRC the continuous benefit of a diverse pool of skilled potential employees in science, engineering, law, information technology and other critical fields. The MSIP also provides NRC with recognition for a variety of high quality and greatly needed programs, activities and initiatives.

CONCLUSION:

EPA created an opportunity for NRC to develop a programmatic approach that expands the number and kinds of programs, activities and support available to MSIs and their students (including present and potential NRC employees) and faculty.

The MSIP provides underlying benefits that are not offered by the HBCU Research Participation Program to include the ability to establish a relationship between NRC, MSIs and their students and faculty. The SBCR administered MSIP allows NRC to nurture and develop a bond with program participants, and acquire first hand knowledge about their skills and talents. In turn, these potential recruits gain knowledge about NRC as an agency and possible employer.

The MSIP affords NRC employees the opportunity for personal and professional growth. Employees can develop and enhance their skills as well as assist MSIP through serving on proposal review panels, mentoring students and faculty, providing training and technical assistance, aiding in recruitment and retention efforts, or assisting in other ways.

The MSIP also allows continuity, cohesiveness, and the opportunity for SBCR, HR (Internship Program Recruitment and University Champions Program), and other NRC Headquarters and regional offices to:

- Establish and build internal and external relationships and partnerships
- Examine best practices and approaches to delivering effective programs and activities
- Identify and address unmet needs
- Establish new educational initiatives
- Host and co-host career and learning fairs, booths, and recruitment and retention activities
- Share resources
- Dispense information regarding NRC grants, training, internships and career opportunities sponsored by HR and SBCR
- Evaluate the effectiveness of services and progress of participants enrolled in programs and activities; and
- Bridge the divide between the delivery of NRC programs and activities

SBCR is ideally suited to administer the MSIP, given its dual responsibility to ensure participants have meaningful and equal access to NRC conducted and financially assisted programs and activities, and fulfill both EPA provisions and White House education initiatives to strengthen the capacities of MSIs to provide the highest caliber of education excellence.

RESOURCES:

SBCR's FY 2006-2007 budget includes funds for the HBCU Research Assistance Program and seed money for HSIs and TCUs.

COORDINATION:

The MSIP, Communication Plan and SECY paper have been coordinated with the OGC, and there are no legal objections.

/RA/

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Enclosures:

1. Minority Serving Institutions Program
2. Communication Plan

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