

## ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Federal Agency Name(s): Office of the Under Secretary (USEC), National Oceanic And Atmospheric Administration, Department of Commerce

Funding Opportunity Title: Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: SEC-OED-2009-2001418

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 11.481, Educational Partnership Program.

Dates: Complete applications must be received and validated by Grants.gov on or before 5 p.m. EST March 31, 2009. PLEASE NOTE: It may take Grants.gov up to two (2) business days to validate or reject the application. Please keep this in mind in developing your submission timeline. Completed applications must be received by the Program Manager between January 1, 2009 and March 31, 2009, at 5:00 P.M. Eastern Daylight Time, through Grants.gov.

Funding Opportunity Description: The Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program provides support for independent graduate-level studies in oceanography, marine biology or maritime archaeology (including all science, engineering, and resource management of ocean and coastal areas), particularly to women and minorities. Individuals who have been accepted to a graduate program and are U.S. citizens may apply. Scholarship selections are based on academic excellence, letters of recommendations, research and career goals, and financial need. Applicants must have and maintain a minimum 3.0 grade point average each term and cumulatively and maintain full-time student status for the duration of the appointment. Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarships may provide, subject to appropriations, yearly support of up to \$32,000 per student (a 12-month stipend of \$20,000 in addition to a tuition allowance of up to \$12,000), and up to \$20,000 support for a four to six week research collaboration at a NOAA facility. A maximum of \$84,000 may be provided to masters students (up to 2 years of support and one research collaboration opportunity) and up to \$168,000 may be provided to doctoral students (up to 4 years of support and two research collaboration opportunities).

Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program recipients will travel to Silver Spring, MD, for a NOAA Orientation and to meet with National Marine Sanctuaries Program staff. Awards will include travel expenses to attend the mandatory Scholarship Program orientation.

Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship recipients will also be required to participate in a

research collaboration at a NOAA facility. Master`s candidates will be supported for one research collaboration opportunity and Doctoral candidates will be supported for up to two research collaboration opportunities over the duration of the scholarship. The research collaboration opportunity is designed to allow scholars to conduct their research at a NOAA facility and on NOAA mission research for four to six weeks.

Support for the research opportunity may be used toward allowable travel costs such as: travel to and from the NOAA facility, housing, and per diem; while conducting research at the NOAA facility. Applicants who are awarded the Nancy Foster Scholarship will identify their research collaboration opportunity(s) topic and NOAA facility during the initial scholarship year.

Additional Information about the scholarship can be obtained in the full announcement text of the Federal Funding Opportunity.

## FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

### I. Funding Opportunity Description

#### A. Program Objective

The Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program is authorized at 16 U.S.C. 1445c-1 and 16 U.S.C.A. 1445c to recognize outstanding achievement in oceanography, marine biology or maritime archaeology (including all science, engineering, and resource management of ocean and coastal areas) particularly by women and members of minority groups. The scholarship supports independent graduate level research through financial support of graduate studies in such fields. Gender and minority status are not considered when selecting award recipients. However, special outreach efforts are employed to solicit applications from women and minorities. Scholarships are distributed by disciplines, institutions, and geography, and by degree sought, with selections within distributions based on financial need, the potential for success in a graduate level studies program (academic achievement), and the potential for achieving research and career goals. The program is administered through NOAA's Office of Education and is funded annually with 1% of the amount appropriated each fiscal year to carry out the National Marine Sanctuaries Act.

#### B. Program Priorities

NOAA's Office of Education is seeking applications for the Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program from individuals, particularly women and minorities, who otherwise may not be able to pursue an advanced degree in oceanography, marine biology or maritime archaeology (including all science, engineering, and resource management of ocean and coastal areas) due to financial constraints. The Program seeks to increase the numbers of women and minorities in these scientific disciplines.

#### C. Program Authority

U.S.C. 1445c-1 and U.S.C.A. 1445c

### II. Award Information

#### A. Funding Availability

Subject to appropriations, approximately \$500,000 will be available for FY 2009. Up to 10 new awards may be made, based on the availability of funds. The Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program provides yearly support of up to \$32,000 per student (a 12-month stipend of \$20,000 in addition to a tuition allowance of up to \$12,000) and up to \$20,000 support for a four to six week research collaboration at a NOAA facility. A maximum of \$84,000 may be provided to masters students (up to 2 years of support and one research collaboration opportunity) and up to \$168,000 may be provided to doctoral students (up to 4 years of support and up to two research collaboration opportunities). Travel support will also be provided to Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program recipients to attend a NOAA orientation in Silver Spring, MD, where they will also meet with National Marine Sanctuaries Program leadership and staff.

#### B. Project/Award Period

The award periods are up to 2 years for a Master's program candidate and up to 4 years for a Doctoral candidate. The anticipated start date is August 1, 2009. If an applicant is selected for initial funding, NOAA has no obligation to provide additional funding in connection with that award in subsequent years.

#### C. Type of Funding Instrument

The funding instrument is a grant to the individual applicant.

### III. Eligibility Information

#### A. Eligible Applicants

Only individuals who are United States citizens currently pursuing a masters or doctoral level degree in oceanography, marine biology or maritime archaeology (including all science, engineering, and resource management of ocean and coastal areas) at a U.S. accredited graduate institution are eligible for an award under this scholarship program. In addition, students must have and maintain a minimum cumulative and term grade point average of 3.0 and maintain full-time student status for every term and for the duration of their award. Universities or other organizations may not apply on behalf of an individual. Prospective scholars do not need to be enrolled, but must be admitted to a graduate level program in order to apply for this scholarship. Eligibility must be maintained for each succeeding year of support and annual reporting requirements, to be specified at a later date, will apply.

## B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

There are no matching requirements for this award.

## C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

There are no other criteria that affect eligibility.

# IV. Application and Submission Information

## A. Address to Request Application Package

The application package and instructions can be found on [Grants.gov](http://Grants.gov). Information to be included in the applications submission is shown below. Further information about the scholarship and NOAA's research priorities can be found at the web sites: [www.noaa.gov](http://www.noaa.gov) and <http://fosterscholars.noaa.gov>. Information in hard copy may be requested from: Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program, Attention: Dr. Priti Brahma, Office of Education, 1315 East-West Highway, SSMC3, Room 10725, Silver Spring, MD 20910.

Information Contact(s): Send requests for information to the Program Manager, Dr. Priti Brahma, at the address shown above, by telephone (301) 713-9437 x150, or via e-mail to [fosterscholars@noaa.gov](mailto:fosterscholars@noaa.gov)

## B. Content and Form of Application

Each application package must include the items listed below, unless otherwise indicated. Failure to submit all items as described in this section will disqualify the application from consideration.

1. Standard Form 424 (SF-424), Application for Federal Assistance is located on [Grants.gov](http://Grants.gov) and must be completed with information pertinent to the applicant.

### 2. General Information Sheet

Provide the information outlined below, but do not exceed 2 typewritten single-spaced pages. General Information Sheets that are longer than 2 pages in length will not be accepted and will result in the application being disqualified.

a. Personal Data: Provide your full name, country of citizenship, current address,

permanent address, and home, work, fax, and cellular telephone numbers, and email address.

b. Optional personal Data: For statistical collection purposes only you may indicate your gender, and race or ethnicity (this information is voluntary).

c. Degree Sought: State your proposed field of study (oceanography, marine biology or maritime archaeology (including all science, engineering, and resource management of ocean and coastal areas)) and degree type you are seeking (e.g. M.S., M.A., Ph.D.). Include the month and year you expect the degree to be awarded. State the name and location of your institution and your department.

d. Education: List the academic degrees you have received, or expect to receive by the start of your proposed graduate studies for this program, including the date of receipt and institution. Provide your graduate advisor's name, address, telephone, fax number, and e-mail address.

e. Academic Honors. List any academic honors received.

f. Relevant Work Experience. List work experience related to your field of study. You may include research and teaching assistantships and any other paid or unpaid work.

### 3. Research Proposal

The Nancy Foster Scholarship program is designed to support students interested in NOAA mission related sciences of oceanography, marine biology or maritime archaeology (including all science, engineering, and resource management of ocean and coastal areas). Discuss the research area you plan to pursue in graduate school and its relationship to NOAA sciences in the aforementioned areas of emphasis and how your research activities support NOAA's mission, particularly the mission of the National Marine Sanctuary Program. Information about NOAA is available at [www.noaa.gov](http://www.noaa.gov) and in particular, the National Marine Sanctuary Program at <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/>. The research proposal should be typewritten, single-spaced and should not exceed 3 pages in length. Page limits are inclusive of figures, and other visual materials, but are exclusive of references. Statements longer than three pages will not be accepted and will result in the application being disqualified.

### 4. Statement of Intent

The Statement of Intent is a self-description of your academic, research, and career goals, and how your proposed course of study or research will help you achieve these goals. This is your opportunity to present yourself, and your aspirations and career goals. Include any background information that is pertinent, and provide insight into why you choose to pursue these goals. This statement should not be a research proposal or scientific abstract. This statement will be used to evaluate you as an individual, not necessarily as a scientist, and your motivation for applying for this scholarship. This statement should demonstrate your organizational and written

communication skills. The statement of intent should be typewritten, single-spaced, and should not exceed one page in length. Statements longer than one page will not be accepted and will result in the application being disqualified.

#### 5. Statement of Financial Need

To evaluate financial need, NOAA will use the Department of Education's Expected Family Contribution (EFC) determination. To receive an EFC determination, applicants must submit a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to the Department of Education. See <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov>. In response to the FAFSA, the Department of Education will provide the applicant with a Student Aid Report (SAR), which will contain the EFC determination. A copy of the SAR and a 1 page, single spaced essay describing your financial need must be submitted with the application. In your essay describing your financial need, discuss how you plan to fund your graduate level education and what the impact will be if you do not receive this scholarship. Also, list the following in the order stated: estimated amount needed for tuition and fees, all resources currently available to you to cover your graduate studies (e.g., grants, student loans, scholarships, research or teaching assistant positions, personal funds), the length of time these resources will be available and if they include work requirements, other resources for which you have applied and have received, as well as those for which you have not received a response. Statements longer than one page will not be accepted and will result in the application being disqualified.

#### 6. Institute Certification

A letter from the applicant's institution certifying that the student is enrolled or has accepted an offer to a graduate program must be submitted with the application. The letter should consist of the following information on school letterhead and be signed by a school official: Name and location of the academic institution, the school and department that you are currently attending or plan to attend, and the month and year your studies will begin if you are not currently enrolled. It is preferable that the institute certification described above be used. However, some institutions will only provide a standardized institute certification, in which cases that will be acceptable. If you have a graduate advisor, list his/her name, address, telephone and fax numbers, and an e-mail address, if available in the Institute Certification portion of your application. Current transcripts or letters of acceptance from the institution will not be accepted in lieu of the Institute Certification. Failure to include the Institute Certification specifically as indicated above will result in the application being disqualified. Applicants selected to receive the Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship will be required to submit a certification of enrollment at the start of each term.

Applicants who are applying to graduate school should submit a list of schools they have applied to, and any acceptance letters received at the time of application. Individuals selected to receive the Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship award must provide proof of acceptance into a graduate program at the time of notification else the individual will be ineligible to receive the award.

7. Transcripts

Official transcripts for all university/college(s) attended in the past two years must be received by March 31, 2009 at 5:00 P.M. Eastern Daylight Time. Official sealed transcripts must be mailed to:

Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program  
ATTN: Dr. Priti Brahma  
NOAA Office of Education  
1315 East West Highway  
SSMC3, Room 10725  
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Photocopied transcripts are not acceptable.

8. Two Letters of Recommendation

Each application must include only two signed letters of recommendation from individuals who have knowledge of your academic record, research effort, work and/or life experience. One of these letters must be from your academic advisor. Relevant paid work, such as internships and volunteer efforts, are applicable. Letters of recommendation must be mailed to:

Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program  
ATTN: Dr. Priti Brahma  
NOAA Office of Education  
1315 East West Highway  
SSMC3, Room 10725  
Silver Spring, MD 20910

The individual writing the recommendation must sign across the seal of the envelope containing the letter. All letters must be received by 5:00 P.M. Eastern Daylight Time on March 31, 2009. Applications without two, signed letters of recommendation will result in the application being disqualified.

9. Declaration

Applicants must certify that all statements and information in their application are true and correct by copying the following statement on a separate sheet of paper, signing it, and including it in their application package:

I, the undersigned, declare, under penalty of perjury, that all statements and information in my application are true and correct at the time of this application.

Executed on [insert date] \_\_\_\_\_

Print or type Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Failure to include this statement, signed by the applicant, will result in the application being disqualified.

Assistance on the application and submission process can be found under the "How to Apply" section at the website: <http://fosterscholars.noaa.gov>.

Each application package must include the items listed in the Application and Submission Information section. Failure to submit all items as described in the Application and Submission Information section or if any item is omitted will disqualify the application from consideration.

Answers to frequently asked questions on the application process are available at: [www.fosterscholars.noaa.gov](http://www.fosterscholars.noaa.gov).

### C. Submission Dates and Times

Complete applications must be received and validated by Grants.gov on or before 5 p.m. EDT March 31, 2009. PLEASE NOTE: It may take Grants.gov up to two (2) business days to validate or reject the application. Please keep this in mind in developing your submission timeline. Completed applications must be received by the Program Manager between January 1, 2009 and March 31, 2009, at 5:00 P.M. Eastern Daylight Time, through Grants.gov. Applications may not be submitted prior to January 1, 2009. Date and time of receipt of each application sent via Grants.gov is electronically recorded. If hard copy submission is permitted, each envelope is time and date stamped when received.

Applications received prior to January 1, 2009 will not be reviewed or considered and applicants will be required to resubmit their complete application during the application period. Applications received after March 31, 2009, will not be reviewed or considered, and will be disqualified.

### D. Intergovernmental Review

Applications under this program are not subject to Executive Order 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs.

### E. Funding Restrictions

No special restrictions apply.

### F. Other Submission Requirements

There are no other submission requirements.

#### G. Address for Submitting Proposals

Except for transcripts and letters of recommendation, as discussed in Sections IV.B.7. and IV.B.8. of the full Federal funding opportunity, applications must be submitted through Grants.gov. If an applicant does not have internet access to complete the application through Grants.gov, hard copy applications may be submitted in one envelope to:

Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program  
ATTN: Dr. Priti Brahma  
NOAA Office of Education  
1315 East West Highway  
SSMC3, Room 10725  
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Failure to submit all application items, except transcripts and letters of recommendation, in one envelope will result in disqualification of the application.

#### V. Application Review Information

##### A. Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation criteria and weighting of the criteria are as follows:

1. Academic record and Statement of Intent describing career goals and objectives of student. (25%)
2. Quality of project and applicability to program priorities. For this Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program, this also includes the mission of the National Marine Sanctuary Program. (35%)
3. Recommendations and/or endorsement letters. (15%)
4. Additional relevant experience related to diversity of education: extra-curricular activities; honors and awards, interpersonal, written, and oral communication skills. For the Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program, this also includes relevant work experience. (Interpersonal and written skills will be evaluated from information in the Statement of Intent.) (15%)
5. Financial need of student (10%)

## B. Review and Selection Process

Once an application is received by NOAA, an initial administrative review is conducted to determine compliance with requirements and completeness of the application.

All applications that pass the administrative review will be evaluated and scored individually in accordance with the assigned weights of the above evaluation criteria by an independent panel review. The panel will be comprised of three or more individuals, having expertise in NOAA-related science. The panel shall rate the proposals using the evaluation criteria and weighting provided above. The individual panelist scores will be averaged for each application, placed in a numerical ranking of all applications and presented to the Program Officer. The Program Officer will neither vote nor score proposals as part of the independent panel review nor participate in discussion of the merits of the application. No consensus advice will be provided by the independent review panel. The Selecting Official, the Director of Education, will award in rank order unless an application is justified to be selected out of rank order based on one or more of the selection factors below.

## C. Selection Factors

The merit review ratings shall provide a rank order to the Selecting Official for final funding recommendation. The program officer may first make a recommendation to the Selecting Official applying the selection factors below. The Selecting Official shall award in rank order unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon one or more of the following factors:

1. Balance/Distribution of Funds
  - a. Across academic disciplines
  - b. By types of institution
  - c. Geographically
2. Availability of funds
3. Program-specific objectives

#### 4. Degree in scientific area and type of degree sought

##### D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Subject to the availability of funds, review of applications and subsequent notification to applicants will be completed by June 30, 2009. Funds are expected to be awarded by August 1, 2009, which is the start date that should be used on the Application for Federal Assistance (Form 424) for successful applications.

#### VI. Award Administration Information

##### A. Award Notices

The Grants Office sends electronic notification to each successful applicant with instructions on how to view the terms of the award and accept the award in Grants Online. The annual reporting requirements are also included in the award package.

The names, academic institutions, degrees being sought, research plans, and biographical information of the scholarship award recipients will be posted on the Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program web site: <http://www.fosterscholars.noaa.gov> after selections have been confirmed and accepted. The information posted on the web site may also be published in marketing materials developed to advertise the Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program.

##### B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

###### 1. Pre-Award Notification Requirements

The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register Notice published February 11, 2008 (73 FR 7696), and all subsequent amendments are applicable to this solicitation.

###### 2. Limitations of Liability

In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for proposal preparation costs if these programs are cancelled because of other agency priorities. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds.

3. It has been determined that the Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarships are categorically excluded from the requirements under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

### C. Reporting

Scholarship recipients are required to provide annual reports documenting the scholar's activities, accomplishments, academic progress and research progress. The report must include a certification from the scholar's academic advisor indicating that the student's work is on track and a copy of the official transcript indicating the scholar has full-time student status and a minimum term and cumulative GPA of 3.0. These reports must be submitted through Grants Online.

### VII. Agency Contacts

Send requests for information to [fosterscholars@noaa.gov](mailto:fosterscholars@noaa.gov) or mail requests to Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program, ATTN: Dr. Priti Brahma, Office of Education, 1315 East-West Highway, SSMC3, Room 10725, Silver Spring, MD 20910.

### VIII. Other Information

A. The Stipend and Tuition. The annual stipend will be paid directly to the scholar. The stipend is intended to defray cost-of-living expenses, and not to support research costs. NOAA anticipates the student and their faculty advisor will secure research funds independent of the scholarship. Tuition and academic fees may be negotiated between the academic institution and the Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship program manager at NOAA prior to the receipt of funds. This negotiation is intended to leverage scholarship funds and enhance opportunities for scholarship recipients. In those instances in which tuition and academic fees are not totally waived by the academic institution, the tuition allowance in an amount equal to the tuition and fees not waived (but not to exceed \$12,000) will be paid directly to the scholar for remittance to the academic institution. If tuition and fees are reduced or waived by the academic institution, then that portion of the tuition allowance not needed (i.e., up to \$12,000 in the case of a total waiver) will be retained by NOAA for future scholarships. No money will be paid directly to the student from the tuition allowance for purposes other than the payment of tuition and fees.

B. General Scholarship Information. Specific instructions regarding the disbursement, management, and reporting requirements for all stipend and tuition allowance payments will be provided to the scholarship recipients upon selection for the award. The awarding of funds beyond the first year will be based on availability of funds, continued eligibility of the student, semi-annual certification by the academic institution that adequate academic progress is being made, and compliance with applicable reporting requirements. At its discretion, each academic institution may supplement a scholar's stipend from institutional funds in accordance with the

supplementation policy of the institution.