

INSPIRING STUDENTS TO FEDERAL SERVICE

HEARING

BEFORE THE

OVERSIGHT OF GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT,
THE FEDERAL WORKFORCE, AND THE
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA SUBCOMMITTEE

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON
HOMELAND SECURITY AND
GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

—————
JUNE 21, 2011
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Available via the World Wide Web: <http://www.fdsys.gov>

Printed for the use of the Committee on Homeland Security
and Governmental Affairs



U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

68-011 PDF

WASHINGTON : 2011

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office
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TUESDAY JUNE 21, 2011

U.S. SENATE,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT OF GOVERNMENT
MANAGEMENT, THE FEDERAL WORKFORCE,
AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA,
OF THE COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:34 p.m., in room SD-342, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Daniel K. Akaka, Chairman of the Subcommittee, presiding.

Present: Senator Akaka.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR AKAKA

Senator AKAKA. The hearing will come to order.

Aloha and thank you all for being here today as the Subcommittee examines how the Federal Government could better partner with colleges and universities to prepare and recruit students for Federal service. And I would like to recognize interns who are attending this hearing and thank you for coming to listen in on what we hope you can be a part of in the very, very near future. So thank you so much for being here.

The Federal Government is the largest employer in the United States, and Federal service is a noble profession. Within the next 5 years, the Federal Government is expected to face one of the largest retirement waves in the Nation's history, making the development of a new generation of workers even more vital.

In today's economy, many students are graduating only to find that they are locked out of a market that is not producing enough jobs. At the same time, the Federal Government has jobs that are mission critical and difficult to fill. There simply are not enough graduates to fill critical jobs in many scientific, technical, national security, and medical fields. We must develop innovative strategies to bridge this gap. We should not look at this solely as a challenge. This creates a unique opportunity for universities to place graduates in good jobs if we can make students aware the opportunities exist and prepare them to fill those jobs.

We need to continue to build stronger relationships between agencies and universities to help foster academic programs that prepare students for Federal service, especially for difficult-to-fill positions. I believe that, working together, we can maximize our recruitment efforts to address critical hiring needs while also creating direct pipelines for students into the agencies.

(1)

As part of this effort, we must continue to work to improve the broken Federal hiring process. This Subcommittee has focused on reforming the Federal hiring process. Since 2008, we have held three hearings on the issue and worked closely with the administration on its reform efforts. Additionally, I introduced the Federal Hiring Process Improvement Act last Congress with Senator Voinovich. I intend to continue that effort this year.

The Administration has been making some good progress, but we still hear stories of talented individuals who seek employment with the Federal Government, only to grow frustrated with the archaic hiring process and find work elsewhere. In the past, I believe there has been too much focus on creating exceptions to the competitive hiring process for recent graduates rather than making sure the competitive process works for them.

I strongly believe the competitive hiring process can serve as an effective avenue for bringing recent college graduates into the workforce. The competitive hiring process serves as our most effective tool to ensure that the Federal workforce is composed of the most qualified and able individuals, who are appointed only after competing in a fair and open process that is free from political interference.

As the President stressed when he issued his Executive Order last December on Recruiting and Hiring Students and Recent Graduates, the Federal Government benefits from a diverse workforce that includes the enthusiasm and perspectives of students and recent graduates. Once we recruit students and recent graduates, we must harness their enthusiasm and talents through focused training and development.

One program I am particularly proud of is the Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard apprenticeship program, which attracts thousands of applicants for 125 to 150 positions each year. The apprentices learn a trade and earn an associate's degree from the Honolulu Community College through this 4-year, paid work-study program.

I am so glad to have each of our witnesses here today representing both the public and private sectors. Each one of you brings a different and valuable perspective to this discussion. I look forward to hearing from each of you today and also continuing to work with you to ensure our next generation of Federal workers will be ready to lead.

I welcome our first panel of witnesses to the Subcommittee: Christine Griffin, Deputy Director of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM); Michael Kane, Chief Human Capital Officer (CHCO) at the Department of Energy (DOE); and Ms. Carolyn Taylor, Chief Human Capital Officer at the Government Accountability Office (GAO).

As you know, it is the custom of this Subcommittee to swear in all witnesses, so please raise your right hand. Do you swear that the testimony you are about to give before this Subcommittee is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you, God?

Ms. GRIFFIN. I do.

Mr. KANE. I do.

Ms. TAYLOR. I do.

Senator AKAKA. Thank you. Let it be noted for the record that the witnesses answered in the affirmative.

Before we start, I want you to know that your full written statements will be made part of the record, and I would like to remind you to please limit your oral remarks to 5 minutes.

Ms. Griffin, will you please proceed with your statement?

**STATEMENT OF THE HON. CHRISTINE M. GRIFFIN,¹ DEPUTY
DIRECTOR, U.S. OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT**

Ms. GRIFFIN. Thank you, Senator Akaka, and it is great to see you back in action and well.

Senator AKAKA. Good to be here. Thank you.

Ms. GRIFFIN. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today regarding the Office of Personnel Management's efforts to improve the way the Federal Government recruits and hires students. We are excited about all of the hiring reform measures that we are taking at OPM, both as an employer and as the Federal Government's H.R. adviser.

Hiring reform has several major components, all of which, in one way or another, create opportunities to improve Federal employment options. Essay-style questions have been eliminated from the initial application, and job seekers can apply for a Federal job with just a resume and a cover letter. Supervisors and managers are more involved in the hiring process, and they are held accountable for the quality of their hires and for supporting a successful transition of new employees into the Federal service. Once we get them, we need to keep them.

I am pleased to tell you that we recently launched USAJOBSRecruit. This is a one-stop recruiting site for Federal agencies that providing information, tools, and guidance on recruitment as well as provides an opportunity for agencies to collaborate with one another through the use of discussion forums and blogs.

Additionally, through USAJOBSRecruit, there is a new tool called the School Sorter. This allows agencies to sift through applicants by the type of university they attended. The School Sorter provides data in educational resources covering a full range of post-secondary institutions across the country, including over 7,000 colleges and universities. Users can share recruiting experiences, and they can search schools based on available majors and degrees, much like the ones you discussed, that are difficult to find or to fill Federal jobs with. Also, we can sort by historical commitment to serving diverse populations in promoting Federal service to their students.

The Student Pathways Programs are another major component of hiring reform. It establishes clear paths to Federal internships for students from high school through postgraduate level and to careers for recent graduates. This program requires agencies to invest in meaningful training and career development for individuals at the beginning of their Federal careers.

The three programs included in the Pathways framework are: An internship program, a Recent Graduates Program, and a reinvigorated Presidential Management Fellows (PMF) program. We expect

¹The prepared statement of Ms. Griffin appears in the appendix on page 31.

to issue proposed regulations for public comment sometime later this summer.

OPM also conducts extensive outreach to students in educational institutions with a particular emphasis on enhancing diversity within the overall Federal workforce. For example, OPM employees go directly to historically black colleges and universities and Hispanic colleges and universities to conduct training on how to apply for Federal internships or jobs. In the last few months, I personally have gone to the University of Texas-San Antonio, L.A., and San Diego to speak directly with students and university representatives to explain the opportunities for Federal internships and careers. I will be in Cincinnati next week doing exactly the same at the LULAC conference.

OPM, in collaboration with the Partnership for Public Service, helps educate a new generation of leaders about the importance and value of public service with the Call to Serve Initiative. This initiative reaches more than 700 schools and more than 75 Federal agencies, and right now we are planning to invite the hundreds and hundreds of Federal interns here in D.C. this summer to a briefing at OPM on Student Pathways so that when they return to their schools they can begin spreading the word. And, actually, a lot of the interns that are here today are involved in actually developing that briefing for their fellow interns through our government.

In addition to our efforts to spearhead the Pathways Program Framework governmentwide, we are also working to enhance our own internal agency programs for student interns and Presidential Management Fellows. We have long recognized that the PMF program offers an excellent source of talented individuals who have already been recruited and vigorously assessed by OPM.

You are a leader in this area, Mr. Chairman, and especially in the area of mentoring and supervisory training. We know that emphasizing the importance of supervisory training makes it clear that supervisory skills are valued in their own right, and the opportunity to become a supervisor or a manager is not merely a reward for achievements unrelated to one's potential as a supervisor. So we recognize the importance of training as we published in our regulations for supervisors that every 3 years they should know about mentoring employees, improving employees' performance, conducting performance appraisals, and assisting employees in addressing unacceptable performance. We know that good mentoring is an integral part of developing and retaining a diverse workforce.

Thank you again. I will be happy to respond to any questions you have.

Senator AKAKA. Well, thank you very much for your statement, and it is good to hear what you are doing, so thank you very much, Ms. Griffin.

Mr. Kane, please proceed with your statement.

STATEMENT OF MICHAEL C. KANE,¹ CHIEF HUMAN CAPITAL OFFICER, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

Mr. KANE. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much for the opportunity to appear before you today. We at the Department are particularly proud to be here and discuss our recruitment programs and, notably, what we are doing in the area of student Ambassadors, which furthers the competitive process and gives focus to those individuals of talent who want to pursue Federal service.

In the strategy, we looked at how the Department was recruiting. Specifically, we have 15,000 Federal employees. We have 18 servicing personnel offices, and they are spread throughout both rural and highly metropolitan areas.

When we looked at those offices, we discovered that they had tremendous local outreach. They did a very good job with local universities in and around our facilities and our laboratories in highly technical hiring environments where there were skill sets that we needed. However, just as you discussed, bringing the best and the brightest means reaching beyond those boundaries. It means broadening the view from just a job to a career, to a lifelong commitment.

So we studied where we were holding job interviews, where we were addressing student employment, and we found that although we did something on the order of 182 job fairs and events throughout the year, they were split: 40 percent of them in the West, about 25 to 27 percent in the Midwest, and then the remaining 20 on the east coast. And we were drawing what I call geographically related recruitment from them. We needed to broaden that activity.

We also needed to address the fact that OPM and the entire reform effort connected with USAJOBS gave students a wider window. That window opened them up to endless job possibilities, but they needed help and assistance to look at how those job opportunities translated into their specific condition.

We focused on establishing, back in 2009 and 2010, six positions called student Ambassadors. The intent was to put these students who had worked for us, who came from diverse program backgrounds—they were graduate and undergraduate students, engineering students, business students, international affairs students—out as our Ambassadors, providing peer-to-peer, student-to-student discussion about what it was like to work in the Department of Energy, what it was like for the Federal Government. So that behind USAJOBS and all the ability it gave students to locate jobs, they could talk about careers; they could talk about meaning; they could talk about the things that are important to the new generation: Commitment, the chance to make a difference, lifestyle changes. And the students themselves, using USAJOBS and using that knowledge, could look beyond just competing for a local job and ask where is the career path, how can I navigate that path, if I need more information how can I find it.

So what we had were people who were located on the college campuses, working with the professors, and here is the key factor to me. Those six people by the end of a 7-month rotation, basically the school semester year, had brought about contacts with over 71

¹The prepared statement of Mr. Kane appears in the appendix on page 39.

faculty. Now, those students may graduate and move on, but that bridge that they have created to mine the talent that is there, to refer it, is continual. It is a renewable resource for us. And so we believe the student Ambassadors are an excellent way to complement the electronic world that we live in. Whether we are tweeting or texting, we have the ability for students and faculty to find somebody who can tell them what we are really like, who can talk about our values, can talk about our training opportunities, can talk about the career paths in a language they understand, and they can tell us more directly what is working in our recruitment and what is not.

I thank you very much for that opportunity.

Senator AKAKA. Thank you very much, Mr. Kane, for your statement. It is good to hear what you are doing in helping students become future employees.

Ms. Taylor, will you please proceed with your statement?

STATEMENT OF CAROLYN M. TAYLOR,¹ CHIEF HUMAN CAPITAL OFFICER, U.S. GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE

Ms. TAYLOR. Thank you. Chairman Akaka, thank you for the opportunity to be here today to discuss GAO's campus recruitment program. As an organization committed to having a high-performing diverse workforce, we place great importance on attracting, hiring, training, and retaining employees with the skills needed to support GAO's mission to serve Congress and the American public. While our future hiring will be shaped by the budget environment, over the past 5 years we have hired about 300 employees each year, mostly at the entry level, for our analyst and analyst-related positions. Also over this time period, we have had a very robust student intern program.

Having a strong campus recruitment program has played a key role in attracting highly qualified candidates. Today I am going to focus my remarks on our campus recruitment program, our recent efforts to enhance that program, and other programs and policies we have in place to support and help new staff.

Now, GAO's campus recruitment program began about a decade ago. We use senior executives and staff from across the agency to develop and maintain relationships with many colleges and universities across the country. Our relationship building has been primarily based on campus visits to recruit both our candidates for entry-level as well as for intern positions.

In addition to these visits, each year since 2001 we have convened an Educators' Advisory Panel. This panel includes deans and professors from various colleges and universities. Through this panel we have obtained advice and provided feedback about ways schools can refine and strengthen their curricula to make their graduates more successful at GAO.

To supplement our campus-related efforts, we outreach to various professional organizations and groups and attend their conferences and make presentations. We also invite them to come to GAO to talk to our staff as well. This approach has been really very effective. Our brand recognition has grown tremendously, and

¹The prepared statement of Ms. Taylor appears in the appendix on page 44.

we get thousands of highly qualified candidates for each of our openings.

However, it is a 10-year-old approach. As part of our effort to focus more attention on strategic human capital management and to be consistent with our recommendations to other agencies, we have taken actions to enhance that approach. We established stronger linkages between our recruitment efforts and our workers' planning needs, and we set recruitment priorities based on data and recent evaluation from our program outputs.

Additionally, given the important role our recruiters are playing, we have taken steps to make sure we have a well-trained and diverse recruitment cadre. Also, we have instituted a number of institutional changes and administrative changes to make the program more efficient.

Along with our efforts to recruit and hire high-quality, diverse staff, we have other programs in place to support staff once they arrive at GAO. This support comes primarily from our 2-year professional development program. This program helps new staff learn about our core values, how we do our work, and the standards by which they will be assessed.

Each new employee is assigned an adviser, and each employee participates in many, many hours of training, both classroom and on the job. New employees receive formal feedback every 3 months and formal performance appraisals every 6 months to help them develop and improve their skills and competencies.

In addition to our professional development program, the involvement of our senior leaders and other policies have been really helpful to help employees adjust to GAO. For example, our leaders often participate in the new hire orientation. Our agency head, the Comptroller General, meets with our new employees. And most of our senior executives take an active role in some way or the other in the development opportunities that are provided for new staff.

New employees can participate in our mentoring program, and we have policies in place to help foster an inclusive and supportive work environment to help all staff balance work and life, including flexible schedules and telework.

We think these practices, policies, and programs have contributed to employees' decisions to stay. About 90 percent of the employees that we hired in 2008 are still with us today.

Finally, feedback from our new employees shows really high levels of job satisfaction. This positive feedback has contributed to GAO being named as the second best place to work in the government in 2009 as well as in 2010.

This concludes my prepared remarks. I will be very glad to answer any questions that you may have, Mr. Chairman.

Senator AKAKA. Thank you very much, Ms. Taylor, for your testimony here and your statement.

Ms. TAYLOR. You are welcome.

Senator AKAKA. Let me ask my first question to Ms. Griffin. Many companies that are successful in recruiting top talent require senior executives to devote time to recruiting and developing the workforce. What steps is OPM taking to engage senior leadership and focus their attention on recruiting and cultivating top talent?

Ms. GRIFFIN. Well, some of the initiatives that we have taken through the hiring reform agenda are getting managers more involved in the whole process, more involved in the recruiting, more involved in really the very beginning of the decision about what is needed, who is needed, and then getting them to take more ownership of the whole hiring process.

OPM works closely with the Chief Human Capital Officers, Council, and I am sure Mr. Kane can attest to the numerous discussions that we have about this very issue. And in addition to that, one of the things that we are implementing at OPM and we hope to share with the rest of the government as we get better at doing it ourselves is a mentoring program.

So there are a number of things that we are doing, but we are saying to senior executives and to managers overall, and to supervisors, that to get good-quality folks, you need to be involved in every aspect of the process.

Senator AKAKA. Well, thank you very much, Ms. Griffin.

Mr. Kane, understanding which strategies work and which do not and adapting accordingly are important parts of a successful recruiting program. To do this well, you must collect the right data and have metrics in place.

How are you evaluating and adapting your hiring strategies?

Mr. KANE. Mr. Chairman, we are looking at an number of factors. We look at the number of recruits that we have from certain universities in certain areas. We look at how many outreach activities occur by using tools like USAJOBS, for example, to hire, we are looking at the number of applicants that come through to us, identifying that they have an interest in employment, whether they file an application or not. We do that through a series of centralized tools. We do that so that we can track where the interest comes from and then localize our efforts at those schools.

I talked a little bit about the Ambassadors program. That is one of the things they do. If you look at the number of events they get involved in, it is tremendous. So they might result in 80,000 hits in terms of applications, requests for information, printed or otherwise, or just online conversations about employment. Now, that is a tremendous amount of information.

What we need to know more specifically is: Are they finding the right jobs? Are they getting to our executives to talk about what those jobs really are? Are they able to understand where our jobs and careers might result in lifestyle behaviors or changes that they want to have? Do they want to go on to graduate school? Do they want to go on to a Ph.D.? Do they like living in the desert? Are they thinking about a family and looking at a career path that will keep them in one place for a long period? Or are they looking to be involved in international work and want to travel overseas?

So we use USAJOBS and we use our Jobs One portal, particularly that automated information, to allow us to focus in on how well we are recruiting. Then we use the Ambassadors to focus in on how are we connecting.

Senator AKAKA. Thank you very much, Mr. Kane.

Ms. Christine Griffin, OPM has led extensive workforce planning to address the governmentwide shortage of veterinarians after this Subcommittee held a hearing on that issue. There are also short-

ages of qualified professionals in other areas, including many scientific, technical, and medical fields. Colleges would be eager to place their graduates in many of these positions, but they may need better information about what training is needed and how their students can get hired.

My question is: How can the Federal Government better work with schools to build pipelines into these difficult-to-fill, critical positions?

Ms. GRIFFIN. There is no doubt that we need to do a better job of actually working with not only our folks at OPM that go out and do the recruiting, but also with the other agencies and helping them develop any of the skills and tools they need to have access to the right colleges and universities as well as access to the folks that they can work with to educate the students about the opportunities that exist in the government, and at what agencies in particular.

We know that our refresh of the USAJOBS is a way of helping them do that, and the tool that I talked about, the USAJOBSRecruit, is a very recent tool—I think we only implemented it about a month ago—that will allow agencies to find schools specifically with the students that are getting the skills that they need in their agencies, and then they can go directly to those schools. They can develop relationships with the folks at those schools.

So we are using technology and developing better ways of using technology to help the agencies actually recruit the folks that they need.

In addition to that, there are other mechanisms by which we can help them do that, and agencies from time to time do come and ask us to help them develop particular registers and things like that of types of occupations that will help them hire people more expeditiously into the workforce.

Senator AKAKA. Thank you.

Ms. Taylor, your statement notes that GAO provides feedback to schools on how they can refine and strengthen their curricula to make their graduates more successful. I would like to hear your thoughts on what more the Federal Government could do to provide schools guidance on the skills the Federal Government needs and how schools can prepare their students to be successful Federal job candidates?

Ms. TAYLOR. I would say first that we have been working with our universities since 2001, a lot of the deans and professors, and we have pretty much tailored our feedback to them to fit the job areas and the competencies that we need, and so our feedback to them has been more directed in that regard.

And if I were to give some guidance or suggestions to some of the other agencies, I think we have to start with each agency's specific mission and focus and have them look for those organizations and schools that help them meet their needs and focus specifically on their agencies' key competencies. So it has to sort of be tailored to the individual agency.

Senator AKAKA. Thank you.

Ms. Griffin, historically, the competitive hiring process was the main route into Federal service. However, in recent years the Fed-

eral Career Intern Program grew so dramatically that most entry-level hires were made through that program. I repeatedly raised concerns that using the intern program as the general hiring authority undermined veterans' preference and merit principles. I want to thank the Administration for phasing that program out.

How will you make sure that the new Student Pathways Programs do not again become a substitute for the competitive hiring process?

Ms. GRIFFIN. One of the ways we can do that, Senator, is actually by providing more oversight of that program. It is something that we have discussed with all of the Chief Human Capital Officers. It is something that we have discussed with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) as well, and we will be seeking to have progress reviews and updates on how the program is going on a continuous basis so that we never find ourselves in that situation again.

Senator AKAKA. Well, Ms. Griffin, President Obama issued the Student Pathways Executive Order last December, but OPM has yet to release draft regulations to establish the new Pathways Programs. What is the cause of the delay? And when do you expect the draft regulations to be released?

Ms. GRIFFIN. Well, I am happy to report that they are complete. They are going out for agency comment. They will be available for public comment later this summer, so they are actually finished to the point where they are releasable to get comment, and we are in that process right now.

Senator AKAKA. Well, that is timely, and it will certainly help our cause here.

Mr. Kane, what are your thoughts on the Student Pathways Executive Order? And how will these new programs impact your agency's student recruitment strategies?

Mr. KANE. Pathways is certainly a critical piece of our recruitment programs. It has been in the past. What you look at with the Department of Energy is the fact that we do have a large number of highly specialized skills sets—nuclear engineering, environmental engineering, power transmission—and one of the things that the Pathways Program and others like it does is give us the ability to start working with students early on and to encourage those students to use internships, use viable, competitive methods coming straight out of school.

We also look at the Pathways Program as an opportunity for us to diversify our recruitment efforts. I talked a little bit about the things that we have been doing to try to broaden the recruitment so that we get what I call geographic harmony, where we do not hire from all one local area.

Pathways does that because it brings a whole large set of students into play. It provides an opportunity that other competitive means do not. That is not to say that we do not do a lot of competitive hiring. We do, from straight up, very specialized jobs. What we really want to do is get young individuals in and help them grow in their career path, bring them out in undergraduate school, bring them in and encourage them to go back to school, and change the direction of where they are going. They might come out a nuclear engineer, but then they need to understand something about man-

aging budgets and costs if they are going to work for the government. So they go back and get an MBA.

Pathways and programs like that provide that orientation. They provide that focus. So they are extremely valuable to us. They are much needed.

Senator AKAKA. Well, thank you very much for that. I have complimented and praised our military because, as they rise in rank, people do not realize how much training and education they go through so that they can deal with their troops and whatever mission they will be facing, which changes. And so they have constant education so that they are very, very well educated, and so in a sense we need that in the other departments as well.

Mr. KANE. And we need to provide that continuity so that those uniformed service members coming out who want to continue to serve their country can take that highly specialized training that they have, marry that with academic credentials, and continue to evolve. Pathways is one way to do that.

Senator AKAKA. Mr. Kane, some students considering Federal jobs are deterred by the complicated Federal hiring process. We have been working on that, all of us. OPM has made progress on reforming the hiring process, and as Ms. Griffin testified, OPM is also working to provide students with information to help them through this process.

How do you make sure your recruiters on campus have the training and ability they need not only to recruit students but also to help them navigate the Federal hiring process?

Mr. KANE. We actually train them on how the process works, what the good points and the bad points of an automated filing process are, how to go through looking at a job and aiding a student in deciphering that job, read what is there.

One thing that I think is very important to do with students in particular is to help them understand where they are in the process and what they are looking for. I talked about the student Ambassadors. That is a critical link for us in doing that because they have actually worked, they have spent a summer or longer working inside our buildings, inside our plants. They know the difference. They can tell somebody if you are looking to do hands-on work, you do not want to go to Washington. Washington worries about management and budgets and vision and direction. If you want to do hands-on engineering, you want to be in Los Alamos, in New Mexico. That is one example of what they can do. They can focus in on where the work is and help the students translate where the best opportunity for them at that point is.

So I think that is invaluable. We cannot use all the tools as just a way of getting people in. We have to keep the human touch there. We have to have that quality touch. It is old-fashioned HR. I am going to talk to you. I am going to sell you on my job and why this is important.

Senator AKAKA. Thank you.

Ms. Taylor, I know that you have stressed the importance of keeping strong relationships with universities, but in this current budgetary climate, many agencies are not hiring. How is GAO engaged with universities to continue to strengthen relationships on

campus in this current climate? And do you think these efforts have been successful?

Ms. TAYLOR. We are revising our campus recruitment approach. We are not going to visit as many campuses as we have in the past. It is just financially not efficient for us to do that. We are going to maintain our relationships through a variety of ways. We have lots of information that we share, that we can give them. We have our senior executives we call our campus executives, and each campus executive has probably one or two colleges that they stay in contact with, with that personal touch, as Mr. Kane mentioned. They will call and periodically talk about what is happening in GAO and talk about our announcements. We will invite some of the students and the colleges to come to GAO, particularly those who are coming to Washington. Many of them have a Washington semester or a Washington visit. We will invite them to visit there.

But we have readjusted our focus. We have what we call sort of a three-pronged approach. We are going to continue to visit a few schools. For most of our schools, we are going to have what we call a hybrid approach—some visits but more virtual information sharing—and then many others where we are just sharing information electronically.

Senator AKAKA. Well, here is my final question, and this is for the panel. For internship programs to succeed, they must not only meet agency needs, but also provide career development and training for participants that prepare them for a career in Federal service.

How do you make sure your internship programs provide students the opportunities they need to identify and prepare for careers at your agency or other Federal agencies? Ms. Griffin.

Ms. GRIFFIN. Well, one of the things that is actually discussed within the confines of the Pathways Program is that we as a government have to do a much better job of actually developing programs for students when they come in, everything from having an active program that teaches them about the opportunities within the Federal Government, within your agency in particular, making sure that they are exposed to all aspects of what a government job entails and what a career in the Federal Government can entail. And that could be everything from having, a speaker series where different people in different parts of the agencies actually talk to them and explain what their career path has been like and what led them to where they are, to very good advice from our own folks at OPM about how to develop a good resume, how to really apply for Federal jobs, how to navigate all the different systems that are involved.

I know that we are very active in not only doing that, but helping other agencies, reaching out to other agencies and helping them develop those same types of programs.

Senator AKAKA. Mr. Kane.

Mr. KANE. I could follow on with almost exactly what Christine had to say, but there is one other key piece that we as leaders have to do. We have to protect that budget authority and make sure it stays stable. So to provide those speaker series, to enter into rotational assignments, it involves temporary duty assignment and travel for these students and for new employees, for putting them

on work teams where they are coached and where they get mentoring, technical or otherwise, the formal course work that we require them to do.

They have to know that when they develop those plans with their supervisors, two things are going to happen:

First, that plan is going to be respected; it is going to be honored. And when they leave and come back, they are going to fit back into their job, and they are going to have work to do, not the fear that if I am gone, something is going to get moved to somebody else. That is the first piece.

The second piece, they can look at that agency budget and know that funding is being protected so that they are assured that the resources are there for that commitment we have made to them.

Senator AKAKA. Ms. Taylor.

Ms. TAYLOR. For the most part, our internship program has been a summer program, so we have candidates in GAO for, 3 or 4 months in the summer. We treat them like full members of the GAO team. We bring them in. We assign them a buddy, sort of a semi-mentor—but it is usually a young person as well—to help them understand GAO right from the beginning.

We have a few days of training that we ask them to participate in, and we incorporate them, again, as a full member of the team. We have set up various activities throughout the summer, a speaker series as well. We invite them to many of the engagement meetings. We bring them to the Hill for opportunities to understand that part of our work as well.

The performance management piece is important, too, so we start with, clear expectations and we give them feedback. And at the end of their session, we give them an appraisal and let them know what we thought about their performance.

Most of our interns at the end of the summer are given an opportunity to return. Many—about 70 percent—are given offers later on, assuming we have the budget authority and the staff year. But we have been refining our internship program for a while, and it has been really, really an excellent program for us. We value those students quite a lot.

Senator AKAKA. Well, I thank you very much for your valuable testimony this afternoon. As I mentioned, our Nation for the first time in history is facing a large retirement wave that is coming, and you have reported some of your activities in trying to deal with this wave. And just like the way they surf in Hawaii, we want to take advantage and even use it wisely as an opportunity to get a good ride. [Laughter.]

So let us look forward to that and continue to try to look for the best ways of not only recruiting but maintaining and sustaining and keeping well-qualified, well-educated employees for our Federal Government. It is in our hands.

Thank you for being together, and we will work hard to bring that about. Thank you very much.

I would now ask our second panel of witnesses to please come forward. On our second panel this afternoon, we have Mr. Tim McManus, Vice President for Education and Outreach at the Partnership for Public Service.

We have Ms. Laurel McFarland, Executive Director of the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration; Ms. Anne Mahle, Vice President for Recruitment at Teach for America (TFA); and Mr. Witold Skwierczynski.

Mr. SKWIERCZYNSKI. Good. W is like V, CZ is like CH. Skwierczynski. You did good, though.

Senator AKAKA. He is the President of the National Council of Social Security Administration Field Operations Locals at the American Federation of Government Employees.

Welcome to all of you, and it is the custom of this Subcommittee to swear in all witnesses, and I would like to ask all of you to please stand and raise your right hand. Do you solemnly swear that the testimony you are about to give this Subcommittee is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you, God?

Mr. MCMANUS. I do.

Ms. MCFARLAND. I do.

Ms. MAHLE. I do.

Mr. SKWIERCZYNSKI. I do.

Senator AKAKA. Thank you. Let it be noted for the record that the witnesses answered in the affirmative.

Let me also remind all of you that although your written statement will be included in the record, your oral statement is limited to 5 minutes. Your full written statements will be included.

Mr. McManus, will you please proceed with your statement?

STATEMENT OF TIMOTHY MCMANUS,¹ VICE PRESIDENT FOR EDUCATION AND OUTREACH, PARTNERSHIP FOR PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. MCMANUS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As Vice President for Education and Outreach at the Partnership for Public Service, I lead the Partnership's efforts to inspire top talent, including the Call to Serve Initiative—which you heard Christine Griffin talk briefly about—a joint initiative between the Partnership and the Office of Personnel Management. That initiative is now a vibrant network of more than 750 colleges and universities across the country and is the only group of colleges and universities dedicated specifically and exclusively to promoting Federal opportunities to students.

This is a critical time for this hearing. The challenge of inspiring students, particularly those in mission-critical fields, is greater than ever before. As we reported in our Where the Jobs Are report, there is a tremendous need for mission-critical talent across government, many of which are also the same hard-to-fill occupations in the private sector.

Budget constraints are also requiring us to look at new cost-effective ways to effectively bring colleges and universities and Federal agencies together to recruit top talent. Finally, with antigovernment sentiment and Fed bashing on the rise, we believe that the Federal Government may lose its competitive edge that it has worked so hard to gain over the last several years.

¹The prepared statement of Mr. McManus appears in the appendix on page 55.

I want to commend the Administration and the Office of Personnel Management for its attention to hiring reform and to creating new pathways for student employment, particularly through the Presidential Memo on Improving the Federal Recruitment and Hiring Process and the Executive Order on Recruiting and Hiring Students and Recent Graduates. I also want to applaud the Subcommittee for its attention to these important issues.

The bottom line, however, is that the only way we are going to see change happen is if agency leadership makes recruiting and hiring a priority. This Subcommittee should do whatever it can to ensure that leaders pay attention to these issues and hold them accountable for improvement.

One way to do this would be to require that talent recruitment and management be incorporated into performance reviews for all career and non-career Senior Executive Service (SES). In addition, OPM now requires that agencies collect data on three specific measures related to hiring effectiveness: Time to hire, manager satisfaction with the quality of applicants, and applicant satisfaction with the process.

Congress in its oversight function needs to hold agency leadership accountable for these measures and broader talent issues at every turn.

We also know this Subcommittee is interested in ways that agencies can work better with universities to build critical pipelines of talent. I would like to share five recommendations based largely on our experience with the Call to Serve initiative.

First, agencies may be limited in their ability to hire at the moment, but should continue to have an on-campus presence even if they are not actively filling jobs. If not, they risk losing all the hard work and the relationships they have built up over the years.

Second, the Partnership's research has shown that peers are an important source of career advice and inspiration. We agree with Mr. Kane that agencies should follow the lead of the Department of Energy and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and take advantage of peer recruiting opportunities by establishing their own student ambassador programs, as the Partnership has advocated for in the past.

Third, agencies and universities should take full advantage of the Intergovernmental Personnel Act, which provides for temporary exchanges between the Federal Government and colleges and universities, thereby more closely linking faculty and Federal agencies.

Fourth, scholarship and loan repayment programs should target individuals pursuing mission-critical fields in the Federal Government. Congress, in particular, should review current Federal scholarship and fellowship programs to better understand how the resources are being used, to consolidate duplicative programs and infrastructure, and to ensure that money is being used to strategically recruit critical talent to the Federal Government.

Last, agencies should see internship programs as a way to build long-term pipelines for entry-level talent. Internships are a vital component of the new Pathways Program, but Congress should also require that agencies collect metrics on the quality of the intern experiences through exit surveys. In addition, recognizing that there is no better way to assess candidates than direct, on-the-job obser-

vation, Congress should promote the notion of internships serving as a competitive examination for future Federal employment.

The Partnership looks forward to continuing to work with you, the Subcommittee, your staff, agencies, and OPM on these issues. Again, Mr. Chairman, thank you for your time and your attention, I am happy to answer any questions.

Senator AKAKA. Thank you very much, Mr. McManus, for your statement.

Ms. McFarland, will you please proceed with your statement?

STATEMENT OF LAUREL MCFARLAND,¹ EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS AND ADMINISTRATION

Ms. MCFARLAND. Thank you. I serve as the Executive Director of the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA), an organization of 275 graduate schools across the country, including the University of Hawaii, which have been committed to inspiring students to Federal service for more than four decades.

Our member schools annually confer over 10,000 Master of Public Administration (MPA), Master of Public Policy (MPP), and related degrees, and NASPAA is the accreditor of graduate programs in these fields.

More than 30 years ago, NASPAA helped OPM and the Federal agencies create the Presidential Management Fellowship program to attract the very best from our Nation's graduate schools. Unfortunately, while "excepted" hiring programs such as the PMF have been effective in attracting capable grad students to Federal service, there is overwhelming evidence in recent years that the existing competitive hiring system simply does not work for graduate students. Our data show that graduate students applying for Federal positions often have advanced training and cutting-edge skills, but little full-time work experience, especially in Federal employment. Applicants with this combination rarely get selected through USAJOBS.

Fortunately, the President and OPM have recognized this problem and addressed it directly in the Pathways Executive Order signed in December. NASPAA applauds the President's and OPM's vision and courage. Now we need to make the Executive Order stick. This is a watershed moment for the Federal workforce. We can implement a half-hearted, skeletal set of Pathways Programs, or we can make this a serious downpayment on high-performance government. And we know that hiring graduate students with the critical skills can do that. If we fail to do this, we put the entire future capability of the government at risk.

Students are vital in critical, hard-to-hire areas, and they represent the future leadership and management of the civil service. Moreover, our graduates have been trained to address public policy problems that are growing more complex, wicked, and global by the day.

¹The prepared statement of Ms. McFarland appears in the appendix on page 67.

So how do we convince these graduate students we need so much to consider Federal service? I have three recommendations, and Congress can play a critical role in each.

First, the Pathways Programs need to work for students by ensuring student pathways to Federal employment are clearly marked, coherent, and lead to further opportunities for careers in Federal service. Congress needs to insist on a few key elements in the Pathway Programs so that they contribute to high performance hiring and a coherent system for efficiently and accurately matching talent to need. Congress should use its oversight to ensure that OPM and Federal agencies collect and publish data about how we are doing in recruiting, selecting, matching, employing, developing, and retaining recent graduates in Federal positions.

Second, pay special attention to the Presidential Management Fellows program. It is both strategically and symbolically important in attracting some of the very best people to careers in the Federal Government. The PMF selection process has been famous for being rigorous, competitive, and daunting, which we at NASPAA think is a good thing. We should be unapologetic and proud that the purpose of the PMF is to identify and develop future leaders and senior managers of the Federal workforce. As such, the PMF should select, match, and convert fellows based on the Executive Core Qualifications (ECQs) developed for the Senior Executive Service.

Congress should ask for data on key performance measures of the program: Were the screening and selection mechanisms truly effective in identifying the most talented applicants? Were offers made in a timely fashion? Were the PMF positions posted by agencies consistent with the mission of the program? What percentage of finalists was successfully matched to posted PMF positions? And what happened to those finalists who did not match?

Third, and finally, we also need a strong partnership between Federal agencies and universities to give life to the Executive Order's new Recent Graduates Program. If we want this effort to be successful in drawing in graduates with the skills we need, it must serve both agencies and students. Congress should look for results that agencies have worked with education and professional associations to create Recent Grad Programs in critical functional areas, like budgeting and financial management, public procurement and acquisition, IT, human resource management.

Ultimately, the challenge here is not just the narrow task of hiring students and recent graduates. Federal hiring reform is about nothing less than ensuring the efficiency and effectiveness of the Federal Government in the years ahead and our ability to tackle the complicated public problems and fiscal pressures we will face.

Today's students, especially the most talented, can and will make a critical contribution to tomorrow's Federal Government and our Nation. Thank you.

Senator AKAKA. Thank you very much for your statement, Ms. McFarland.

Ms. Mahle, will you please proceed with your statement?

**STATEMENT OF ANNE MAHLE,¹ VICE PRESIDENT FOR
RECRUITMENT, TEACH FOR AMERICA**

Ms. MAHLE. Thank you, Senator Akaka. I am one of the vice presidents of recruitment at Teach for America, and I want to thank you for this opportunity to provide our testimony and hopefully provide some insight into how we have been successful to date.

We are honored to help our congressional leadership think through the important question of how we will meet the growing need of individuals to serve in these mission-critical positions within our Federal agencies.

Teach for America is the national corps of outstanding recent college graduates and professionals of all academic majors and career interests who commit 2 years to teach in urban and rural public schools and become leaders in the effort to expand educational opportunity for all children. Our mission is to build the movement that will eliminate educational inequity by enlisting our Nation's most promising leaders, both in college, graduate school, and professional sectors, to teach for 2 years in the short run and in the long term become lifelong leaders from all sectors who will work to eliminate the barriers that students, families, and communities face to achieving educational equity.

Each year we seek to grow in both scale and diversity and to engage more leaders from across the spectrum in our work. Over the last 21 years, and in particular in the last 5 years, we have learned a number of lessons that we are eager to share.

We are often asked what lies at the root of our success. I think that the answer is pretty simple. It is the hard, purposeful work of our on-the-ground recruitment team. In our last recruitment season, in individual and group meetings, they met with over 32,000 college seniors, graduates, and professionals, many of whom had never considered teaching in urban and rural public schools in low-income communities. And it is also the tight management that we exert around our recruitment campaigns. At the end of the day, it is not particularly fancy or flashy, but it makes a difference. The members of our on-the-ground recruitment team believe deeply in our mission and, more importantly, in the potential of the students and the families in the communities that we serve. This belief drives them, it inspires them in their work, and it is through their relentless efforts that we are able to engage more and more leaders in our efforts.

But beyond hard work and a passion for our movement, there are some relevant lessons that we have learned.

First, students and professionals want to serve. As they seek out their professional paths, they are looking for opportunities to positively impact their community and their country. But they do not want to serve simply for the sake of service. They want to know that they are making a real, on-the-ground impact. Students today are savvy consumers who are looking for the most effective and direct ways to make that impact. It is critical, therefore, that students are presented with a compelling value proposition for public service. They need to understand what problem they are trying to

¹The prepared statement of Ms. Mahle appears in the appendix on page 72.

solve, that the problem itself is solvable, how they can personally play a role in solving it, and then, finally, they need to believe that they are entering a program or a system that will embrace their talent, challenge and nurture them in their development, and help them engage deeply and meaningfully with the world around them.

Second, high-performing, diverse talent will drive impact. Teach for America's selectivity and diversity are central to our success. Our selectivity is critical because the success of our program relies on the effectiveness of our teachers in the classroom and in their leadership throughout their 2-year commitment and after the corps experience.

Diversity is central to our success because we believe that maximizing the diversity of our organization will allow us to benefit from the talent and energy of all those who contribute to this effort. And at the same time that we value each individual who commits to our cause, we do place a particular focus on fostering the leadership of individuals who share the racial and/or socioeconomic backgrounds of the students underserved by public schools. In terms of race, we place a focus on pursuing the overrepresentation of African American and Latino individuals, given that more than 90 percent of the students we reach are black or Latino. At the same time, we also seek to recruit American Indian, Native Hawaiian, and Asian-American corps members given that we reach many students of these backgrounds in certain Teach For America regions. I am pleased to announce that in our 2011 corps, 35 percent of them self-identify as people of color.

With respect to American Indian and Native Hawaiian recruitment, we recognize the historical legacy of inequity and marginalization. For example, only 49 percent of native children graduate from high school and only 11 percent go on to earn a college degree, as compared to the national average of 86 percent and 29 percent. In response to this reality, Teach for America has launched the Native Achievement Initiative, a major component of which is increasing the number of Native American, Native Hawaiian, and Alaska Natives in our teaching corps.

Finally—oh, I am sorry. I am out of time.

Senator AKAKA. That is all right. Will you complete your statement?

Ms. MAHLE. OK. Finally, we also think—and many of your previous witnesses spoke to this—that tactical support is incredibly important. Over the last 5 years we have instituted multiple application deadlines, which allows our applicants to complete the process within approximately 10 weeks. For example, we let people know within a week of the application deadline whether or not they have made it to the next step of the process. We instituted five application deadlines to better accommodate applicant preferences. And we think that multiple deadlines move people through the process quickly so that they can make the right decisions about their careers.

And, finally, we only ask for that data which we know is helpful in our process. We have eliminated essays when the data shows that it did not give us additional information, and we are constantly re-evaluating our processes based on the feedback of our candidates.

Through dedication, passion, and the relentless pursuit of results, we have significantly improved the size, diversity, and quality of our teaching corps. Yet hard work and innovative strategies do not account for all of our results. A key element of our recruitment is the value we place on teaching, leading, and the power of transformational change in our communities. Our applicants and corps members are drawn not only to the challenges and opportunities of impacting the lives of children, but the honor and prestige they associate with their work. Much like the military, joining Teach for America is a means of joining a mission that is greater than the sum of its parts.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.
 Senator AKAKA. Thank you very much, Ms. Mahle.
 Mr. Skwierczynski, please proceed with your statement.

STATEMENT OF WITOLD SKWIERCZYNSKI,¹ PRESIDENT, NATIONAL COUNCIL OF SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION FIELD OPERATIONS LOCALS, AMERICAN FEDERATION OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES

Mr. SKWIERCZYNSKI. Mr. Chairman, on behalf of the 625,000 Federal employees that American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) represents in 65 agencies throughout the Nation, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the subject of inspiring students to Federal service.

Hiring the next generation of Federal employees is a serious undertaking. Those charged with the task have a legal and social responsibility to conduct Federal hiring in a most open, fair, and competitive way possible. Working for a Federal agency is not the same as working for a private firm, and it takes time to make sure an applicant meets the standards our society expects the Federal Government to uphold.

AFGE applauds President Obama's Executive Order which repealed the Federal Career Intern Program, a discredited hiring system that made a mockery of the Merit System and its promise of open competition for Federal jobs, as well as veterans' preference.

In addition, the Executive Order created the Pathways Program to recruit, train, and retain well-qualified candidates. Because the OPM regulations are still in development, it is too early to tell whether they will avoid the pitfalls that plagued the Federal Career Intern Program (FCIP).

We continue to urge OPM to ensure that the programs use merit-based procedures for recruitment, provide for equal employment opportunity, apply veterans' preference, and comply with all applicable laws.

As an employee and a union representative in the Social Security Administration, I know well some of the pitfalls of the non-merit-based FCIP. In the last 7 years, at Social Security Administration (SSA) virtually all hiring was under FCIP. FCIP was characterized by the use of nepotism and cronyism in hiring, the failure to hire based on veterans' preference, and establishing an unnecessary 2-year probationary periods where the law provides for only one.

¹The prepared statement of Mr. Skwierczynski appears in the appendix on page 79.

The union surveyed SSA employees about their attitudes about the SSA hiring practices. Forty-six percent of respondents were aware of favoritism—favoritism being defined as the hiring of a friend or acquaintance or relative of a selecting official or other management official. Fifty-five percent of respondents indicated that FCIP was used to advance younger workers instead of more experienced and qualified employees. Sixty-two percent stated that FCIP was used to limit competition, and 61 percent of survey respondents stated that FCIP was used to avoid the merit promotion process.

The union obtained data from the agency regarding veterans' preference use in hiring. For example, in Fiscal Year 2008, only 4.6 percent of FCIPs were veterans; whereas, competitive hires that were hired that year, 17.4 percent were veterans.

When we published a newsletter for our SSA workers regarding some examples in the State of Wisconsin and Washington about hiring of relatives of managers, we received scores of reports from employees around the country regarding similar practices in their offices. Any new recruitment system and hiring system must have mechanisms in place to prevent such abusive hiring practices. Managers have shown that giving them carte blanche hiring authority leads to abusive practices.

Ms. Griffin indicated in response to your question that OPM oversight will cure the problems. We think that is not enough. Besides oversight, you need competitive practices and not open-ended hiring authority for Federal managers.

OPM Director John Berry has noted several times the desire of the Obama Administration to make government service cool again. We strongly agree that it is important to support in concrete ways our Nation's public servants and to educate the public about the value of service to America. If we do this, it will be certainly easier to attract the best and brightest to Federal service.

However, new hires need decent pay and benefits packages to make Federal employment attractive. Unfortunately, the current political climate for all public employees, including Federal employees, is harsh. Efforts underway throughout the country would eliminate pensions, severely curtail health insurance benefits, cut or freeze pay levels, contract out government work, and eliminate longstanding collective bargaining rights. In particular for Federal employees, the 2-year pay freeze is effective this year and next, but there are others in Congress who are advocating 5-year pay freezes, including freezing all performance based step increases and bonuses.

The Simpson-Bowles deficit reduction plan, which would provide to turn Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) into a voucher system, would almost double health insurance costs for Federal employees by the year 2030. In addition, it would severely reduce health insurance premiums for Federal retirees. The FEHB system can—there are overhead costs and prescription drug rebate costs that can be built into the system which would prevent shifting costs to employees and retirees and saving money of Federal Government costs.

The retiree situation that is being discussed on the Hill and before the Vice President, the proposals out there would provide for

almost a 7-percent increase for Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) employees in terms of their retirement pay. Right now FERS employees pay 12 percent of their salary—0.8 percent of salary for annuity, 6.2 percent of their salary for Social Security, and 5 percent for the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP). Congressional proposals to increase that by 7 percent would mean that FERS employees would pay over 18 percent of their salary for retirement. New employees would be unable to afford this. They probably would not contribute to the TSP, and they would lost investment earnings because of that. These kinds of proposals to attack the pay and benefits of Federal employees would severely inhibit recruitment of the types of individuals that we need in Federal service.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, unless these efforts to destroy the image and middle-class status of Federal employees are not halted, it will not make a bit of difference if the Administration creates the best possible programs for interns and recent graduates. A candidate with any sense at all would refuse to join a workforce which is constantly being maligned and financially undermined for political purposes.

That concludes my testimony. I would be happy to answer any questions.

Senator AKAKA. Thank you very much, Mr. Skwierczynski.

Ms. McFarland, I believe it is imperative that our agencies and universities work together to make sure universities understand the education and skills needed to prepare students for particular Federal career paths. This helps universities place their graduates in good jobs and helps the Federal Government recruit the people it needs, especially for technical, scientific, and medical jobs that often are difficult to fill.

How is NASPAA working with your members to encourage this coordination? And what more can we do to help with this effort?

Ms. MCFARLAND. I think NASPAA has a special role in coordination because we are an accreditor and we are able to bring employers and our schools together to talk about how students need to be prepared to serve the skill requirements of employers. And in this case, our employers are the Federal Government, State government, local government, nonprofits, et cetera.

Our accreditation process has become outcome oriented and is competency based, so we are very used to invoking the language of what can our graduates know and demonstrate they can do in their future workplace.

So we actually have an opportunity to bring this competency discussion to the table as to how you develop students into Federal workers using well-established skills and competencies that we have been working on since they were in college and graduate school, and in internships, and then as they enter some of the special Pathways Programs for students.

Senator AKAKA. Thank you.

Mr. McManus, you testified about the undersupply of qualified candidates in certain fields. Although interest in Federal service is high, students may not understand the available career paths and what training they need. Students interested in government might

be drawn to these fields if they knew about the opportunities available early enough.

How could we better inform students about Federal jobs early enough for them to target their preparation for mission-critical fields?

Mr. MCMANUS. Mr. Chairman, I think there are several ways that we can do a better job across the Federal Government to try to educate young people about the opportunities that exist. First and foremost Federal agencies too often wait to do their recruiting until somebody is in college—typically in their junior or senior year. Federal agencies, as well as society as a whole, need to change the perception of Federal employees and develop campaigns that show the great work that Federal employees are doing.

One of the programs that the Partnership conducts that does a great job of doing this is the Service to America Medals, which highlights outstanding Federal employees and the work they are doing. The program helps people understand that regardless of what occupation you are in, there are opportunities for you in the Federal Government.

Clearly on college campuses we need to do more and go beyond career services to connect directly with faculty in those areas where government needs talent the most. Again, largely we look at career services as the gateway to our talent on campuses. If we are going to be successful, we need to expand those efforts.

Senator AKAKA. Let me followup with this: Your testimony states that the new Student Pathways Programs lay the groundwork to improve recruiting. I would like to hear your thoughts on how these new programs should be used specifically to recruit mission-critical talent to government.

Mr. MCMANUS. Great. As I stated, the Partnership believes that student interns should be a vital component of all agencies' entry-level pipelines, getting to students early in the process and educating them about the opportunities that exist. I think Mike Kane from the Department of Energy talked about the value of the Student Ambassador Program in not only reaching faculty but also in reaching students. Interestingly enough, my colleague here from Teach for America said that last year they reached 32,000 potential applicants in their recruitment process. In the 2009–10 year, 29 Ambassadors reached more than 17,000 students across college campuses.

So, again, I think one way to attract mission-critical talent to government is by having peers who have actually served in an internship talk about their experience back on their campus and get people energized about the opportunities they have in government.

Clearly the Pathways Program, particularly the Internship Program, gives students a first taste of the Federal Government and begins to expose them not only to the work of the individual agency and the work of the individual office they are in, but government at large. That is a great first step. We need to capitalize on student internship programs to build talent pipelines. A key feature of the recent graduate program is the opportunity to develop professional. It is not simply a hiring process or a hiring authority. It is actually a way to bring people in and to provide on-the-job training for the job that they are going to take over.

Senator AKAKA. Thank you.

Ms. Mahle, as we have heard from a few of our witnesses today, it is important to have the right data to assist a recruitment program and adapt recruitment strategies accordingly. What type of data do you collect each year to help reassess your strategies? And how have you adapted your approach based on that data?

Ms. MAHLE. Thank you. We have a strong relationship with data on the recruitment team at Teach for America. We start out—it is a process, so we start out with basic demographic data. How many seniors are there in a class at each college and university that we recruit at? What is the demographic make-up of that student body based on race? And based on that information we set recruitment goals at the top schools we recruit at. We set goals at about 340 schools across the country.

This coming fall we will have 73 recruiters on the ground in the field, and we track data day in and day out: How many people they contact via e-mail, how many people they meet with one on one, in a group setting, and then what the conversion rates are from that meeting based on who starts an application and who completes it.

We are able to track on a weekly basis. We generate reports that are sent out to the team that track the percent of folks who started applications that we have engaged with, and then we look at where we are at as compared to the previous year at that point in time in terms of the number of applications started, and we break that out by our target areas in terms of both race, so African American, Latino, Asian American, Native American, as well as people who identify as receiving a Pell grant, which is the proxy that we use as someone coming from a low-income community.

We are lucky in that we have five application deadlines, so each deadline represents at benchmark at which point you can step back and reflect on the process and figure out where you need to adjust course.

So that is how we use data in the recruitment process, but I think another key component is the selection process because you have to identify the right people to recruit so that you have a high return. We use our student achievement data from our corps members to inform our selection process. So we look at our most effective teachers, what they are doing in the classroom, who has the greatest outcomes with their students. And then we look back 2 years or 1 year to see what they brought and what they demonstrated in the application process. And we feed all of that information together, and then we feed that back to our on-the-ground recruiters so that they are identifying the right folks on the front end to spend time and effort on so that they will be successful in the process.

Does that answer your question?

Senator AKAKA. Yes. Thank you very much.

Mr. Skwierczynski, as we have already discussed, I am pleased that the Federal Career Intern Program has been phased out. That program had been used as a broad direct hiring authority which I believe undermined veterans' preference and important Merit System principles.

What do you think needs to be done to make sure that the new Student Pathways Programs do not again become a substitute for the competitive hiring process?

Mr. SKWIERCZYNSKI. Well, I think one thing that we have learned from FCIP is that, as I testified, if individual managers are given full recruitment authority with no strings attached, you find abuses. Now, in Social Security, for instance, we have 1,500 hiring officials. There are 1,500 offices and each manager does their own hiring. So many of them recruit at universities where their offices are located, but many of them decided that since there were no strings attached and there were no rules under FCIP that they would hire daughters and sons and nieces and nephews of fellow managers or their friends, and that cannot continue under this new Pathways Program.

As I said, oversight is not enough. You need rules. You need to return to a competitive hiring system where everyone understands, the recruiter and the recruitee understand what the rules are, what the scoring system is, and that the best possible candidates will be selected for the vacancies that are open.

Open-ended hiring systems do not work. We have seen it certainly in Social Security. There are too many abuses, so we cannot return to that system.

Senator AKAKA. Ms. McFarland, you noted in your testimony that in recent years the competitive hiring system has not worked well for graduate students who have strong training and skills but may have little work experience, especially in the Federal Government. Why do you think this became more of a problem in recent years? And what can we do to make the competitive hiring process more accessible to recent graduates?

Ms. MCFARLAND. It is indeed true that in recent years grad students have been having a harder time than they used to have. I think you can trace it to a lot of things: An explosion in the number of applications as we developed online mechanisms; the lack of familiarity of graduate students with how the system works and real uncertainty how best to present themselves on USAJOBS.

How can we make it more accessible? The competitive hiring system should continue to be an avenue for graduate students to come into government, in addition to Pathways. I think for it to be more accessible, there would have to be better connections with internship programs so that students have more demonstrated work experience, coming into the competitive hiring system, so that they actually can document work experience and get some recognition for that. Some of the new resume-based applications that OPM has been introducing will be more familiar to students who are applying for other kinds of jobs besides Federal jobs that may help them.

But I continue to think that the Pathways Programs will be very important in addition to the competitive hiring system for grad students to have opportunities in Federal service.

Senator AKAKA. Ms. Mahle, would you please tell us more about how you use your alumni network to recruit on campus?

Ms. MAHLE. Certainly. We currently have about 20,000 alumni of Teach for America, and we work with them in a variety of ways. We have a number of alumni who are in graduate school, and so

we utilize them to both recruit their peers who are in graduate school, but also to recruit seniors and to work with underclassmen.

We also use alumni to engage in phone meetings, in various e-mail campaigns with individuals from their alma maters, be they graduate school or undergraduate, and also with peers in various career sectors. We have found that many of our alumni who entered Teach for America as professionals, having transitioned from a specific career sector are the most effective recruiters for individuals who are now contemplating that same kind of transition from, another sector whether it be finance or law or other business enterprises into teaching. They are in some ways the most effective individuals, and I think a number of people have spoken about this, and the Pathways Program speaks to it, too, that those individuals who have gone through a program have the experience, have the conviction, are incredibly important in terms of their candor, in terms of their passion for what they have done, and in terms of really creating that picture of what it looks like to serve and to have an impact and then to reflect on that, having gone through the entire process.

Almost all of our recruitment staff are alumni of Teach for America themselves, so they are able to tell those stories, too. But we find there is a greater authenticity at times coming straight from an alumnus, who is not paid by Teach for America to sit down and talk with you about the experience. Therefore, we do lots of tag-teaming between our recruitment team as well as our alumni working in conjunction with one another. As we grow to scale we have to figure out how to engage this force of alumni to an even greater extent. In this upcoming season, alumni will fully own recruitment efforts at a number of colleges and universities that we have not yet recruited at, and we are excited to see how that plays out.

Senator AKAKA. Well, I wanted to compliment you and your program because I have spoken to teachers out there in Hawaii who are part of your program, and they have worked in different areas where they have made a difference.

Ms. MAHLE. Well, thank you.

Senator AKAKA. And what I like and am surprised at that is many of them have come back, have continued to teach in those areas.

Ms. MAHLE. Yes.

Senator AKAKA. And they seem, as you said, so passionate and committed, and I am amazed at what they are doing. So your recruitment must be good, and I want to use the word "diverse," because your teachers have very diverse backgrounds, and that helps the educational process as well.

Ms. MAHLE. Thank you. We think it is incredibly important. It is incredibly important to the students and families that we serve, and frankly, it moves us forward as an organization to have as many diverse perspectives at the table when we make decisions. Thank you.

Senator AKAKA. Well, thank you so much for all of that.

My final question is to the panel, and I know that as you sit here you have other kinds of comments you would like to make, and so I am going to give you that opportunity to add any other comments or recommendations you may have for this Subcommittee.

I think the final thing we can do to help these situations and issues is legislation, so I would look at legislation as a final thing. But, we can make administrative changes, and so when you make your additional comments, suggest maybe what areas we can move in to move as quickly as we can to meet the challenge of the retirement wave.

Let me then call on Mr. McManus to begin.

Mr. MCMANUS. Thank you. I actually want to reiterate one of the points that I made in the oral statement. It is also addressed in the written testimony. It is critical that we not only collect data but also hold leaders accountable for recruitment and hiring. Leadership accountability is key.

As we look at the landscape of young people we actually do not see lack of interest in the Federal Government. The challenge is that many young people do not understand what opportunities exist. We have found that, particularly in mission-critical jobs, the more individuals with engineering and the highly scientific backgrounds find out about Federal opportunities, the more they are interested in them.

The real issue, though, is that Federal agencies need to be held more accountable for hiring reform. I am going to give a quick example of this. One of the key components of the hiring reform initiative and something that OPM is holding agencies accountable for is reducing time to hire. Time to hire in and of itself is not a good measure. We could hire very quickly and approve the hiring process overnight, but it does not mean that we have actually gotten the quality of applicant or the quality of hire that we actually need.

More importantly, if we begin to break down that time-to-hire data and look at time to hire for an internal candidate versus time to hire for an external candidate, I think we would be very surprised. I would surmise that the time it takes to hire somebody internally should be significantly lower than what it is to hire somebody externally.

If we are looking at an aggregate time to hire, we are fooling ourselves by saying that it takes us 80 days to hire someone when, in fact, it may take us 20 days to hire the internal candidate but it takes us 200 days to hire the external candidate.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development has recently launched an internal initiative to look at something they call HRStat. They are taking hiring data very seriously and are having Cabinet-level or Department-level conversations about how long it takes to hire a candidate, how long it takes to hire somebody internally versus externally and how long does it takes to hire a candidate in one office versus another.

Through this analysis they are able to uncover where the real problems and challenges within their hiring and recruitment process are, and are able to hold managers that are specifically responsible for those offices more accountable for their actions.

Again, as I said in my oral testimony, until we actually hold leaders accountable for recruitment and hiring, everything we tweak around the edges is actually just that—a tweak around the edge.

Thank you.

Senator AKAKA. Thank you very much, Mr. McManus. Ms. McFarland.

Ms. MCFARLAND. Yes, I would like to close by saying one of the things I found very interesting about this hearing was the issue of partnerships between universities and the Federal Government. The Pathways Programs raise a tremendous opportunity for those partnerships to take place. And I am not just talking about recruiting relationships, which we talked a bit about today. I am talking about the possibility of long-term partnerships between universities and organizations like NASPAA, and also professional organizations that have set professional competencies for entry-level professionals, to work together over the long term. We need to put flesh on the bone of the Recent Grads Programs in functional areas to create programs that really serve the critical needs of the Federal Government, where we are having a really hard time hiring really good people. I think there is a tremendous opportunity with the Recent Grads Program to ask for excellence and ask for very high standards and to create programs that serve that purpose through long-term developmental relationships between universities, accreditors, professional organizations, and the Federal Government.

Senator AKAKA. Thank you very much. Ms. Mahle.

Ms. MAHLE. I have two recommendations on the area of possible legislation.

First, Mr. McManus spoke about the availability of scholarships and fellowships for people who go into public service. One of the things that we have found to be the greatest barrier for people seeking to join Teach for America is the burden of Federal student loans, and this is particularly true for individuals from low-income backgrounds as well as individuals of color. We did a study about 3 years ago, and this was the No. 1 barrier. So the extent to which loan forgiveness could be made available for those individuals who seek to engage in public service, who seek to teach in low-income communities, that I think could be a key driver to increasing both the diversity of our teaching corps as well as the number of individuals from low-income backgrounds who are able to pursue that path.

Then, second, as you probably know, Teach for America's funding was deemed to be an earmark in this last go-round, and we lost it. We had nearly 50,000 people apply to Teach for America this year, and we will be placing 5,100 in classrooms in 43 regions across the country this fall. We want to grow and meet the growing demands of communities around this country who seek Teach for America corps members and the pipeline of leadership, the people who stay and serve as leaders in those communities, continues to grow. But our ability to meet those needs and desires of communities across this country is limited by our ability to fund and support them.

So I think those are two key areas where Congress could be particularly helpful, loan forgiveness and potential appropriations. Thank you.

Senator AKAKA. Thank you. Mr. Skwierczynski.

Mr. SKWIERCZYNSKI. Yes, I have actually three things.

One has to do with in order to have an effective and fair hiring system, you also have to have an effective and fair merit promotion system. The two go together. Without both, it creates many workplace problems when recruits, new hires are placed into positions that current employees have the expectation that should be open for merit promotion.

During recent years in Social Security, when we were hiring, once Obama was elected, under the stimulus package, there were about 7,000 hires in Social Security. Unfortunately, the agency decided to concentrate its efforts completely on hiring people rather than promoting people, and that caused a lot of internal resentment among incumbents within the agency who did not have the same opportunities for merit promotions as they did in the past. So I think it is extremely important that agencies do not concentrate on one aspect of filling vacancies to the exclusion of the other.

A second recommendation—and in the Clinton Administration we had a pilot program on this in Social Security—is to use current employees in the recruitment process. Oftentimes we find that when employees are hired, they are very surprised at actually the nature of the work and also the workplace environment, that they were not given a lot of information during their recruitment about the actual work life that they would be experiencing if they were hired, and this causes a lot of folks, after short periods of time, to leave because they are surprised when they get here about the working conditions.

So I would recommend that agencies consider using current employees in the recruitment practices while they are recruiting, in the interviewing, and interviewing recruits, who would be more free and be more able to answer questions and to alert new hires about the nature of the jobs that they are considering taking.

The third thing is, once hired, we have found that oftentimes new hires are given little information about their benefits options and oftentimes make choices without having sufficient information. Oftentimes agencies have training classes for folks that are close to retirement about their options with regards to investments and everything when they retire. Those kinds of classes should be done when people are hired so that they can make reasoned choices about their benefits at the beginning of their Federal service rather than at the end when it is too late.

Senator AKAKA. Well, thank you very much, and I want to thank all of our witnesses today for your thoughts and your recommendations. I encourage all of you to continue working together, and with this Subcommittee to build stronger relationships between the Federal agencies and our Nation's colleges and universities. It is critical that we recruit and retain the best and the brightest to take on the pressing challenges our country faces.

The hearing record will remain open for 1 week for Members to submit any additional statements or questions.

Again, I want to compliment you for your statements and tell you that what I have heard today will really help us in our work to try to help our Federal Government to bring this about. So thank you again, and I want to wish all of you well.

This hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 4:20 p.m, the Subcommittee was adjourned.]

APPENDIX



UNITED STATES OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

STATEMENT OF
THE HONORABLE
CHRISTINE GRIFFIN
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
U.S. OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

before the

SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT OF GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT, THE
FEDERAL WORKFORCE, AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
UNITED STATES SENATE

on

'INSPIRING STUDENTS TO FEDERAL SERVICE'

June 21, 2011

Mr. Chairman, Senator Johnson, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today regarding the Office of Personnel Management's (OPM's) efforts to improve the way the Federal government recruits and hires students. We are excited about what we have already accomplished through hiring reform, the launch of our Pathways Programs, and other measures we are taking at OPM as both an employer and as the Federal government's HR advisor.

Overview of Hiring Reform Initiative

More than two years ago, we embarked on a broad initiative to reform the Federal hiring process. Along the way, we have addressed systemic problems by overhauling the USAJOBS website to make it more efficient and user-friendly, reducing long job announcements, and shrinking the time it takes to fill mission-critical positions. We have created "USAJOBSRecruit" to serve as a one-stop recruiting site for Federal agencies. This new website provides information, tools, and guidance on recruitment; and encourages agency collaboration through the use of discussion forums and blogs. Agencies can find tools and resources for their day-to-day operations, as well as learn from their peers and experts in the field on how to recruit a world-class Federal workforce. We have also taken on targeted approaches to improving the recruitment and hiring of talented men and women. The intersection of these various reform initiatives is creating a new applicant-friendly environment that will allow us to compete with the private sector for a diverse and talented workforce, as well as honoring the service of our veterans.

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Hiring Reform has several major components, all of which, in one way or another, create opportunities to improve Federal employment options. Last year, the President issued a memorandum directing Federal agencies to take certain steps to make the process easier for talented candidates to apply for Federal employment. These include the elimination of essay-style questions as part of the initial application for a Federal job, allowing job-seekers to apply instead with just a resume and cover letter, and providing hiring managers with more choices through category rating. The memorandum also requires agencies to ensure that supervisors and managers are more involved in the hiring process – including workforce planning, recruitment, and interviewing – and that they are held accountable for the quality of their hires and for supporting the successful transition of new hires into the Federal service. Tremendous progress has been made on all of these fronts.

Additionally, I am proud of the work that OPM and other Federal agencies have done in implementing President Obama's Executive orders launching the Veterans Employment Initiative and creating greater employment opportunities for people with disabilities. We hired 2000 more veterans last year, despite a decrease in the overall number of Federal jobs. And agencies are making strides toward the President's goal of hiring 100,000 people with disabilities over the next five years. They are beginning aggressive efforts to tap into the tremendous talents of people with disabilities, a long neglected segment of our society with a lot to offer the Federal government.

Pathways Executive Order

The Pathways Programs are another major component of hiring reform. On December 27, 2010, President Obama signed Executive Order 13562, entitled "Recruiting and Hiring Students and Recent Graduates." This Executive order lays the groundwork for improving recruiting efforts; offers clear paths to Federal internships for students from high school through the post-graduate level and to careers for recent graduates; and provides for meaningful training and career development opportunities for individuals who are at the beginning of their Federal careers. The three programs included in the Pathways framework are: an Internship Program, a Recent Graduates Program, and a reinvigorated Presidential Management Fellows (PMF) Program.

The Pathways concept was the product of an inter-agency study spearheaded by OPM, which concluded that the Government was at a serious competitive disadvantage compared to the private sector in its ability to recruit and hire students and recent graduates. The inter-agency team recommended a consolidated pathways approach as a way to overcome this disadvantage. After receiving this recommendation, OPM undertook a comprehensive review of the issue that included a literature review, a day-long public hearing where three panels of experts presented testimony, and solicitation of public comments. OPM ultimately agreed that the Pathways concept was the appropriate way to proceed, and we designed a framework to implement that concept, reflected in the Executive order.

Although under the Executive order certain positions will be excepted from competitive hiring requirements, we view the Pathways framework as a supplement to the competitive hiring

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process, not a substitute for it. It will allow the Federal government to compete more effectively with the private sector for promising candidates who may be short on experience, but long on potential. And we think it will be a vehicle through which we can improve diversity of the Federal workforce through strategic outreach and recruiting strategies.

Under the new framework, the Internship Program will target students enrolled in institutions at all levels, ranging from high school to doctoral programs. It will replace the existing Student Career Experience Program (SCEP), and, through our implementing regulations, the Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP). Students and, frankly, even managers and HR practitioners, have found the old acronyms to be confusing and off-putting. Moreover, while there was meant to be a distinction in the level and rigor of the work assigned to STEPs and SCEPs, in practice, we found wide variation in the application of that standard in practice, and many STEPs weren't being afforded the eligibility to convert to a permanent position. Our new program is simple – we call participants Interns, which is what they think of themselves as anyway, and all Intern positions are eligible for conversion to permanent Federal service.

The Recent Graduates Program will be designed for recent graduates of trade and vocational schools, community colleges, and universities. Applicants who are accepted into the Recent Graduates Program will be placed in a two-year development program with a cohort of peers hired during timeframes aligned with academic calendars. To be eligible, applicants must apply within two years after completing their degree (except that veterans precluded from doing so due to their military service obligation will have up to six years after degree completion in which to apply). Those who successfully complete the program will be considered for placement into permanent jobs.

The PMF Program is an existing program that we are looking to reinvigorate. The PMF Program was designed to develop a cadre of prospective Government leaders. Though it has gone through many changes over the years, it remains the Federal Government's premier leadership development program for people with advanced degrees. The Pathways Executive order aims to strengthen the PMF Program by expanding the eligibility window for applicants to include those who have received an advanced degree within the preceding two years. It also directs OPM to set eligibility requirements and minimum qualification standards, and to make changes in order to make the PMF experience more robust and substantive for participants.

Under our administrative prerogative, we've already taken steps to reinvigorate the program. For the class that applied in the fall 2010, we restored the in-person assessment centers. For the last five years, we've selected candidates for a "Presidential" program solely on the basis of a multiple-choice test. Recognizing that there's got to be a human touch, we made this investment to elevate the cachet of the Program and to drive towards higher quality finalists.

This year's orientation session for nearly 600 PMFs from the Class of 2009 was held in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. Instead of teaching PMFs leadership through PowerPoint slides, we opted for an experiential program based on the Battle of Gettysburg.

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As directed by the President, OPM has been drafting the regulations that will establish these new pathways throughout the Federal Government. We expect to issue proposed regulations implementing this initiative in the near future.

OPM Specific Efforts on Interns and PMF

In addition to our efforts to spearhead the program paths included in the Pathways Programs framework, we are also working to enhance our internal Agency programs for student interns and PMFs. We have long recognized the value in investing in students and recent graduates as a pipeline for permanent career employment; on average, more than 90% of interns in our Student Career Experience Program are converted to a permanent appointment after successfully completing their degree and work-hour requirements. And this year, we have stepped up our efforts to recruit and hire PMFs, with plans to more than quadruple the number of PMFs hired within our Agency. Frankly, in these challenging budgetary times where agencies are sharing in the sacrifices being made by the American people by having their budgets reduced, we think it makes economic sense for agencies to look more to the PMF finalist pool, as we have done, because it is an excellent source of talented individuals who have already been recruited and rigorously assessed by OPM.

In addition, through our unique "Adopt-A-School" program with Theodore Roosevelt Senior High School in Washington, DC, we are tapping into the diverse talent in our local community by offering paid internship opportunities, ongoing engagement activities with the school, and a formal mentoring program where OPM employees can volunteer their personal time to support students who are at risk of dropping out and help them set and meet high expectations for high school and beyond.

Through our partnership with the Urban Alliance, a nonprofit organization that runs a competitive internship program, we also provide employment, mentoring, and developmental opportunities for bright and talented senior high school students. In addition to providing training sessions to our student interns on topics such as career opportunities in the Federal Government, résumé writing, and interviewing, we also arrange for unique enrichment opportunities. Past activities have included a visit to the U.S. Capitol where the students met their Congressional representatives; an opportunity for the students to be recognized at an Agencywide Town Hall meeting where they introduced themselves and their goals; and an opportunity for one of the students to introduce the Director at a local high school event where the Director spoke about his own career path and the opportunities and career options that lay ahead for students in the Federal workforce.

Outreach to Students and Educational Institutions

OPM conducts extensive outreach to students and educational institutions with a particular emphasis on enhancing diversity within the overall Federal workforce. For example, through the Call to Serve initiative, OPM works in collaboration with the Partnership for Public Service to educate a new generation of leaders about the importance and value of public service, help re-

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establish links between Federal agencies and college campuses, and provide students with information about Federal jobs. This network reaches more than 700 schools and more than 75 Federal agencies. We have also conducted joint training workshops at Federal Service Summits, showcasing best practices and other key resources in the area of Federal employment, while encouraging connections between Federal agencies and higher education staff and faculty.

The Student Program Office at OPM conducts outreach activities on college campuses and non-profit organizations with a strong focus on diverse populations. Informational sessions are held to attract students to the Federal Government and help them learn about employment opportunities and how to navigate the hiring process. The office also participates in the Hispanic Council on Federal Employment.

Recent efforts along these lines include OPM's participation in March in the "Heroes and Heritage Student Leadership Summit" at the University of Texas at San Antonio, where I discussed Federal service and the new Student Pathways Programs. OPM had a significant media presence there, including on local talk radio, the San Antonio Express-News, the San Antonio Business Journal, La Prensa (a bilingual publication), and Univision.

In the same month, the Los Angeles Federal Executive Board hosted an event that I attended to discuss opportunities for students and recent grads vis-a-vis the Pathways Programs Executive Order. The event was in a roundtable format, and the crowd was engaged and asked sophisticated, insightful questions. The group included local colleges and universities, some federal employees from the region, and members of the newly-formed LA chapter of Young Government Leaders. After hearing from the younger participants in the room, I left inspired by their energy and enthusiasm for public service.

We are also reaching out to diverse communities. For example, OPM attended a Career Day event at Haskell University, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), and other schools. Upcoming events include Federal Asian Pacific-American Conference Student Career Day in Bellevue, Washington, and the Deaf and Hard of Hearing in Government event at George Washington University.

In addition to our externally-focused activities, we are also focused on student outreach and hiring diverse talent within our own Agency. As part of our overall recruiting strategy, we have participated in dozens of career fairs and conferences at diverse educational institutions around the country, where we have provided information about student employment opportunities within our own Agency and conducted sessions on how to conduct a job search and apply for Federal jobs. These recruitment and outreach efforts have included a wide variety of institutions, including HBCUs, Hispanic-serving institutions and tribal colleges and universities such as Coppin State University, Howard University, Norfolk State University, Hampton University, Southwestern Indian Polytechnic University, New Mexico State University, University of New Mexico, Central New Mexico College, California State University, and others. We also periodically sponsor students from programs such as the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) National Internship Program, and the Conference on Asian Pacific

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American Leadership (CAPAL) Internship Program. We have also made a concerted effort to tap into the talent pool of students with disabilities, and over the past year we have hired a total of six student interns with disabilities from the Workforce Recruitment Program for College Students with Disabilities (WRP), and we have identified three additional students with disabilities from our relationship with the American Association of People with Disabilities whom we are in the process of hiring for internships.

I should make the point that while outreach and education are crucial, OPM has moved beyond simple outreach to these groups and has taken innovative steps to deepen community participation in our efforts.

Let me give you an example. As with any regulations, our proposed regulations to implement the President's Executive order will be published in the Federal Register to allow the public to offer comment. Unfortunately, if you are a student – or a parent – who lives outside the Washington Beltway, you probably don't know what the Federal Register is, let alone how you begin to offer comments.

We are writing regulations that will impact students across the country, so it is important to us to actually hear from the communities we will be serving. As a result, as OPM talks about these Pathways Programs, we have begun to educate students and communities about how they can review our proposed regulations once published in the Federal Register, and how they can offer their own viewpoints on how we should shape these regulations. Moreover, we have given them the promise that we will review and consider every comment submitted. We'll be using forums and social media to help individuals understand how they have the ability to shape our regulations once they are published. This helps demystify the process for enacting regulations, and secures deeper participation from those we are seeking to serve.

Supervisory Training and Mentorship Opportunities

It is hard to see how there can be any disagreement about the importance of providing managers and supervisors with the training they need to succeed. Numerous studies link the performance of supervisors and managers to workforce retention and organizational performance. Requiring agencies to provide such training sends a strong message that well-trained managers are critical to the success of an organization and that supervisors and managers are accountable for their performance. Emphasizing the importance of supervisory training also makes it clear that supervisory skills are valued in their own right and that the opportunity to become a supervisor or manager is not merely a reward for achievements unrelated to one's potential as a supervisor.

Mr. Chairman, we at OPM appreciate your efforts over the years to move the Government forward in its approach to supervisory training. More than a year ago, OPM published final regulations which specifically require supervisory training within one year of a new supervisor's appointment and retraining at least once every three years on options and strategies to:

- Mentor employees;

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- Improve employees' performance and productivity;
- Conduct performance appraisals; and
- Assist employees in addressing unacceptable performance

Agencies must also provide training to employees when they make significant transitions. This could include, for example, movement from a non-supervisory position to a management position, or from a management job to an executive post. OPM has developed guidance, which is included in a newly revised training policy handbook to assist agencies in implementing the final regulations.

In March, OPM launched the OPM Mentoring Pilot, pairing some of the agency's experienced leaders with more junior employees. By establishing these meaningful relationships, OPM hopes to enhance employee morale and organizational commitment; identify and close employee competency gaps to improve effectiveness; and develop a fully engaged and high-performing workforce within the agency. This will also be essential in OPM's succession planning. Director Berry and I both currently serve as mentors for the Pilot program.

Some larger agencies have established supervisory mentoring programs as part of their succession planning efforts. New supervisors can benefit from having mentors themselves, as well as from learning how to be mentors for their employees. Though we are seeing more of both kinds of mentoring, there is always more we can do to facilitate it.

Mentoring is critical and can happen in many ways -- through formal programs and through day-to-day interaction with one's supervisors and fellow employees. The Federal Workforce Flexibility Act requires agencies to provide training to managers and supervisors on mentoring their employees. Within the Federal Government, mentoring is often a component in developmental programs like the Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program (SESCDP), the PMF Program, or the USDA Graduate School Executive Leadership Program (ELP).

Many agencies run formal stand-alone mentoring programs to enhance personal and career development. Formal mentoring programs have structure, oversight, and clear and specific organizational goals. To assist agencies in the development of successful mentoring programs, OPM recently issued a publication on mentoring best practices and hosted a "Best Practices in Mentoring" forum where five agencies discussed their mentoring programs with the Federal learning and development community. Agencies need to ensure that employees who are interested in mentoring are provided that opportunity, to stimulate individual growth, provide career enhancement, and thereby strengthen the agencies' capacity to retain valued employees.

In addition, OPM has provided train-the-trainer sessions for agency human resources practitioners on developing a strategic "on-boarding" program to maximize employee productivity, engagement, and retention. On-boarding is not limited to orientation or mentoring; it is an ongoing process that includes welcoming, training, and acculturating a new hire. Many agencies reported providing formal and informal mentoring programs for their employees and

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interns. These mentoring programs provide supervisors and seasoned employees with an opportunity to share their knowledge, expertise, and experience with other employees interested in developing their skills and enhancing their careers.

Mentoring is also an integral part of developing and retaining a diverse workforce. Federal agencies need managers and supervisors with the skills to manage and mentor diverse populations. Managing diversity within the workplace means creating an environment where everyone is empowered to contribute to the work of the unit; it requires sensitivity to and awareness of the interactions among staff and between staff and leadership, and knowing how to articulate clear expectations. Effective mentoring in a multicultural setting involves understanding diverse learning styles and approaches to problem-solving, as well as other cultural differences, and appreciating how to use those differences to serve the organization's mission. Mentoring to diverse populations is crucial to meeting and exceeding organizational goals.

Conclusion

In conclusion, over the past two years, OPM has worked closely with the President and OMB to reform the Federal hiring process. We have paid special attention to the unique challenges faced by veterans, people with disabilities, and students and recent grads, in addition to our overall focus on creating a more diverse, effective, and efficient Federal workforce. The Pathways Programs will provide strong tools to improve our recruiting efforts and to provide a clear path for students and recent graduates to join Federal sector employment. As we work to bring those programs to fruition, we are also working on a parallel track to make immediate improvements in the areas of recruiting, training, and mentoring.

Thank you again, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to discuss this important work with you and the subcommittee. I will be happy to respond to any questions you may have.

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**Statement of
Michael C. Kane
Chief Human Capital Officer
U.S. Department of Energy**

Before the

**Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, the Federal Workforce, and the
District of Columbia
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
United States Senate**

June 21, 2011

“Inspiring Students to Federal Service”

Chairman Akaka, Ranking Member Johnson, Members of the Subcommittee, thank you very much for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am Michael Kane, Chief Human Capital Officer at the U.S. Department of Energy. We appreciate your invitation to discuss college recruitment, and most notably the Department of Energy's Student Ambassador Program.

In my statement, I will share the Department's corporate strategy in recruiting students, highlight some of the barriers and the practices the agency has implemented to address those challenges, and provide an overview and metrics on the DOE Student Ambassador Program.

Corporate Strategy

The Department of Energy (DOE) has eighteen (18) servicing human resources offices nationwide. Some of the locations are in remote parts of the country while others are in metropolitan areas. To determine how we can improve university recruitment and enhance partnership building, my Office conducted an internal assessment three (3) years ago. The results showed that our Offices have an effective regional presence at local colleges and universities. Recruiters are engaged with students and university staffs. For example, in Fiscal Year (FY) 2010, the Department attended 182 university and college events that included information sessions, job fairs, and on-campus interviews. Approximately 41% of these events were on the West coast, 23% were in the Midwest, and 27% in the Northeast. Sixty-seven percent (67%) of all these regional events were university job fairs and almost 20% were information sessions and discussions with student groups. All of these events were managed directly by our regional recruiters. Through our study, we discovered students and university staffs want agency representatives, who are easily accessible and readily available to attend campus events at any given time in their area.

To be effective and efficient, we needed to brand our jobs at the regional level while creating a corporate network with a single message. The piece that we were missing was a corporate strategy that drove our vision and employment values. Today, my Office collaborates and educates our recruiters on the job opportunities available nationwide and develops an annual talent acquisition strategy that highlights where we have attended events and from which schools we hired. We work with the regional recruiters to ensure they have an understanding of the corporate vision and employment values and have the skills needed to educate perspective applicants about energy jobs anywhere at any time regardless of the geographic location.

Students are mobile and want to learn about career opportunities not only in their local area, but also about jobs in different parts of the country. They are willing to relocate for that dream job, and they desire a career that complements their lifestyle. We seek to match their career aspirations to those geographic areas that match their particular lifestyle, whether it's in a rural setting or a metropolitan area. In February, we conducted a workshop at The Washington Center titled "*I Need a Job...Now! Tips on Landing a Federal Career and How to Navigate to the Top*". The session targeted college students and provided insights on our employment values and how to match their lifestyles with their careers. We discussed the corporate points that I mentioned earlier as well as gave tips on social media and career progression. Almost 50 students attend this one workshop alone. The fact is many students who are interested in a career at the Department of Energy are very passionate about our missions and are well versed in the

agency's accomplishments. The goal is not just to recruit but also to retain students, and to do so, we need to ensure that our jobs and geographic locations compliment student personal lifestyles and professional aspirations.

Barriers and Solutions

Many of our challenges relate to attitudes and perceptions. Although the Department of Energy has been successful in recruiting students, there is a difference among generational lines in terms of motivators, career attitudes, and the desire to make a difference. Students want a career, not a job. They want to make a difference and be given the opportunity to be part of something greater while contributing to the mission. As applicants' attitudes and needs shift, so has our strategy. Our recruiting approach and hiring techniques have become more fluid, so that we can succeed at hiring and retaining top talent. We've learned to adopt and have started to educate our recruiters on these very values and principles. For example, we are launching a "*How to Sell a Job*" training course for all of our human resources professionals. Since the student labor market has changed, so has our recruitment techniques and interpersonal skills must also change. Both recruiters and managers need to adapt to the changing environment in order to be competitive and to attract and to retain top talent.

We also use social media for recruiting purposes. We tweet about job openings, including senior executive positions. Since we have 18 servicing human resources offices nationwide, we are in the process of finalizing a Departmental social media strategy for human resources professionals. To be effective and to maximize student engagement, our social media recruitment tools are centralized and are integrated under a corporate framework which includes our central careers website the Energy Jobs One Portal. This approach allows us to accommodate our recruiters' needs while centralizing our job brand and message to students. It enables us to quickly get the information out to the public while ensuring accuracy and establishing a dialogue. Transparency and engagement are key if any agency wants to succeed at hiring students.

Department of Energy Student Ambassadors Program

Through a collaborative effort with the Partnership for Public Service, we established the Department of Energy Student Ambassadors Program in calendar year 2009. The program objective is to enhance the Department's brand recognition on targeted college campuses through peer-to-peer marketing. Our Student Ambassadors have diverse backgrounds from undergraduate and graduate programs in engineering, business, statistics, and international relations, to mention a few. They all previously worked at either a DOE field office or at a National Lab. As a result, they have first-hand knowledge of our diverse missions and can easily speak to other students about what we do and what it's like to work at DOE. Today's students want to hear from other students about their experiences and what they accomplished and how and where they fit at the Department of Energy. This identifier is one of the most influential job search resources.

We started the Student Ambassadors Program with six Student Ambassadors, half of which were located in the greater Washington, DC/Baltimore metropolitan area. The six were selected

through a competitive application and interview process that helped us identify the most passionate and best qualified students; with skills and abilities in communications, marketing and/or community organizing. We received over 80 applications the first year, and over 100 the second year representing 6% to 8%. The program was a great success on several fronts. First of all, we managed to brand our jobs on-campus directly to students. The Student Ambassadors were engaged with faculty, career services, university staffs, and most importantly, the student body. Within a seven month period, they collected contact information from 441 students interested in a career or internship at DOE; promoted 164 Energy jobs; created a network of 71 faculty and student leaders on their campuses; held 54 job information sessions; and generated about 81,885 gross impressions through print media, physical events, and online marketing.

Secondly, as a service, we provided technical and non-technical webinars to the Student Ambassadors, faculty, and student body. The technical sessions provided insight on renewable energy technology while the non-technical workshops focused on educating students about the various field offices, integrating DOE careers with geographic location and lifestyle expectations, and how to apply for a job at those locations.

For academic year 2010-2011, we expanded the program to eight Student Ambassadors and focused on greater diversity. Half of our Student Ambassadors are from a Historically Black College or University (HBCUs) or universities with a high concentration of minority students. They are geographically dispersed across the country and range from undergraduate to graduate studies. Like the previous academic year, this cohort of Student Ambassadors worked at a DOE office or Lab and has a diverse field of study from business and finance to nuclear engineering and international relations. So far, these Student Ambassadors have established a network of 1,718 students and faculty; promoted 24 jobs; held 50 promotional and informational events; and generated over 10,000 application visits from the web links they provided. These figures are preliminary since the program just concluded on April 29, 2011.

So far for this year, we have found that about 100 targeted applications resulted from 8 jobs that were promoted by the Ambassadors. We are still in the process of gathering the data and more importantly setting up the internal IT systems and processes necessary to seamlessly gather and analyze the data in the future. Just like other government agencies, our challenge has been to gather data across the recruitment and hiring lifecycle. From career fairs to on-boarding, this data is necessary in order to truly gauge our Recruitment and Hiring ROI and make adjustments in the right areas.

We are making progress in this area. This year we piloted the use of the Salesforce.com cloud solution to help address some of these metrics challenges. Salesforce also enhanced our candidate relations management (CRM), automated our day to day processing for Ambassador activities, and improved collaboration among Ambassadors and recruitment staff.

The DOE Student Ambassadors Program has exceeded our expectations. It is a cost-effective means to brand and market our jobs directly to students while sustaining a creditable and interactive presence on college campuses. Ambassadors cost the agency about \$5,000 each, which includes a \$3,000 stipend and a \$2,000 "recruitment/marketing" budget not including the management costs. We have found in our ROI analysis that it costs about \$5,000 each time we send a Federal recruiter to a one day career fair at some of these non-local Universities. This includes travel costs, registration fees, shipping of materials, etc. Having Ambassadors on these

campuses allows the agency to maximize efforts beyond just a one day visit, to a year round presence for nearly the same costs. The Ambassadors Program has also provided a critical resource for our regional human resources offices; giving them the ability to reach audiences they usually do not reach because of funding limitations.

The future of the program includes maintaining the current level of Ambassadors, exploring ways to continue to leverage Ambassadors on campuses and further refine ways to measure the effectiveness of the program.

To attract and to retain today's students, we have to be pro-active, be engaged and be innovative; otherwise, we can't inspire students to Federal service.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would be pleased to answer any questions that you or the Subcommittee members may have.

United States Government Accountability Office

GAO

Testimony

Before the Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, the Federal Workforce, and the District of Columbia, Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, U.S. Senate

For Release on Delivery
Expected at 2:30 p.m. EDT
Tuesday, June 21, 2011

**GAO HUMAN CAPITAL
MANAGEMENT**

**Efforts Taken to Ensure
Effective Campus
Recruitment**

Statement of Carolyn M. Taylor,
Chief Human Capital Officer



GAO-11-615T

Chairman Akaka, Ranking Member Johnson, and Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for the opportunity to be here today to discuss GAO's campus recruitment program. As an organization committed to having a high-performing, diverse workforce, we place great importance on attracting, hiring, training, and retaining employees with the skills needed to support GAO's mission to serve Congress and the American public. We have a multi-disciplinary workforce, with most staff having backgrounds in public policy, public administration, law, business, computer science, accounting, social sciences, or economics. While our current and future hiring will be shaped by today's constrained budget environment, over the past 5 years, on average, we have hired about 300 employees each year. The majority of these hires were for analyst and analyst-related positions at the entry level. We also have a robust paid student intern program each year. Many of these interns return as entry-level analysts.

Having a strong campus recruitment program has played a key role in attracting highly qualified candidates for our permanent and intern positions and building our workforce. In response to your request, I will focus my remarks on (1) the strong partnerships developed through our campus recruitment program, (2) recent actions we have taken to enhance the program and the positive outcomes we've experienced, and (3) the programs and policies we have in place to support new staff.

Our Campus Recruitment Program Has Led to Strong Partnerships with Schools

About a decade ago we implemented a campus recruitment program to increase GAO's visibility on campuses and help us attract highly-qualified and diverse candidates. The key elements of this program are (1) ongoing relationships with many colleges and universities and (2) the use of senior executives and other staff to develop and maintain those relationships. We supplement this program through additional activities designed to help others learn about GAO.

We have established ongoing relationships with many colleges and universities across the country. While we advertise all of our new positions publicly, currently we have relationships with about 70 colleges and universities, including private and public colleges and universities, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic-serving institutions, and other minority-serving institutions. These targeted schools have academic programs relevant to our skill needs (e.g., public policy, accounting, business or computer science) and that prepare students well for success at GAO. Our relationship-building over the years has been

based primarily on visiting many of these schools to participate in on-campus events.

We use senior executives and other staff from across the agency to develop and maintain these relationships. Serving as “recruiters,” these executives and staff help faculty, career placement officials, and students at the colleges and universities we visit understand the work we do and the skills required for that work. Senior executives, who serve as Campus Executives, have specific schools for which they are responsible. Other staff—often alumni of those schools—support the executives by setting up and participating in campus events, such as information sessions, class presentations, or career fairs. Our staff often seek opportunities to communicate about our mission and their experiences at GAO to interested parties, as they view recruitment opportunities as part of their institutional stewardship responsibility.

In addition to our targeted campus outreach, we conduct a variety of activities to help potential candidates and officials from colleges and universities learn about GAO or the type of work we do. For example, our analyst staff often works with students enrolled in masters' programs in public policy or administration on projects in which GAO acts as a “client.” Groups of students are assigned an issue or evaluation topic, then advised by our staff as they proceed with their research, which culminates in a report to us as the client. These projects provide students “real world” experience in conducting public policy analysis. We also address classes or groups of students and host visits from groups to hear about our work and GAO's impact. Since 2001, we have held a yearly Educators' Advisory Panel, which includes deans and professors from schools we visit as well as selected others. Through this panel, we have obtained advice and provided feedback about ways schools can refine and strengthen their curricula to make their graduates more successful.

Finally, we conduct outreach to professional organizations and groups. We attend and/or make presentations at various conferences or invite representatives of these groups to address GAO staff. The groups we have networked with in the past include those whose members have relevant backgrounds (e.g., the American Economic Association), as well as other groups with members that traditionally have been underrepresented in the federal workforce, including the American Association of Hispanic CPAs, the National Association of Black Accountants, or the Federal Asian Pacific American Council.

Our approach has been extremely effective in developing strong partnerships with many colleges and universities and professional organizations. Our brand recognition has grown tremendously on campuses and in the public policy arena. This, among other reasons, has contributed to our receiving thousands of high-quality applicants each year for our advertised positions.

**We Have Taken
Actions to Enhance
Our Campus
Recruitment Program**

As part of overall efforts to focus more attention on our strategic human capital management, we have taken proactive steps to improve our recruitment program. Specifically, we (1) established stronger linkages between our recruitment efforts and organizational workforce needs, (2) increased diversity of and enhanced supports for our staff serving as recruiters, and (3) instituted stronger program management and accountability processes. We have seen positive outcomes from these efforts.

**Established Stronger
Linkages between
Recruitment Efforts and
Workforce Needs**

Consistent with our recommendations to other agencies,¹ we have established stronger linkages between our recruitment efforts and our workforce needs identified through our annual workforce and strategic planning processes and in our annual Workforce Diversity Plans.² To accomplish this, we adopted a recruiting framework that has allowed us to better address our skill gaps and enhance the diversity of our workforce, such as hiring more Hispanics, individuals with disabilities, and veterans. This framework was particularly critical this year, as we needed to identify how to address our needs despite significant fiscal constraints. Using this framework, we made decisions to discontinue certain efforts or initiate new ones to meet our needs and better allocate our resources. For example, we customized our interactions with campuses so that we could devote the appropriate level and type of resources needed to meet our needs. While we continue to believe that developing and maintaining strong relationships

¹GAO, *Human Capital: Sustained Attention to Strategic Human Capital Management Needed*, GAO-09-632T (Washington, D.C.: Apr. 22, 2009).

²Each year we issue a Workforce Diversity Plan that assesses the representation of our workforce, evaluates the outcomes from our key human capital processes, and summarizes the views of our employees. Based on this information, we identify areas for improvement and action steps for the following year.

with college and university campuses is critical,³ on-site visits are less necessary given workforce and technological changes. As a result, based on an analysis of our workforce needs, school characteristics (e.g., student demographics, academic programs, and proximity of the campus to GAO offices), and our history with the campuses (e.g., number of applicants, applicant experience, and hires), our efforts now include a range of both on-site and virtual activities. The benefit of this approach is that we can adjust it at any time based on our needs.

We also made critical decisions about how to best supplement our campus outreach efforts to support our workforce needs in the most cost-effective manner. We considered our costs to participate in various events, results from past participation, and the anticipated future benefits in order to set our future priorities about what organizations and events we would centrally support.⁴ For example, we supported participation in the Careers and the disABLED Expo and the Association of Latinos in Public Finance and Accounting Conference to help enhance the diversity of our workforce as well as to attract candidates with needed skills. We also partnered with the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, as well as the Public Policy and International Affairs Fellowship Program, to hire 10 qualified student interns.⁵ We also determined how we could cost-efficiently use other approaches to meet our needs. As a result, we have advertised in those journals targeting individuals with disabilities, African-Americans, or critical skill areas (e.g., economists) to expand our outreach. We also utilized low-cost mechanisms such as electronically notifying hundreds of colleges and universities and relevant organizations about vacancies, revamping our external careers web site, and updating our recruitment materials to provide better information about GAO's worklife, programs, and values.⁶ These efforts are important ways to inform any interested candidate about GAO and available opportunities.

³In 2008, we reported that one of the major challenges for federal hiring was that agencies were often too passive in their recruitment efforts. See GAO, *Human Capital: Transforming Federal Recruiting and Hiring Efforts*, GAO-08-762T (Washington, D.C.: May 8, 2008).

⁴GAO staff attend a wide range of professional development conferences. However, these events are generally supported by individual units rather than centrally.

⁵These organizations were selected in part because they serve Hispanic students or others underrepresented in leadership positions in government and other organizations.

⁶We also use our Twitter™, YouTube™, and Flickr™ accounts as mechanisms to enhance our name recognition.

Increased Diversity of and Enhanced Supports for Recruiters

Given the important role our recruiters serve in our campus recruitment program, we have taken steps to have a recruitment cadre that is diverse and well-trained. We solicited recruiters from throughout GAO and asked representatives from our numerous employee groups to serve as recruiters. Our recruitment cadre is diverse—representing staff from various GAO offices, teams, locations, job levels and positions. We also required that each employee interested in becoming a recruiter obtain senior management approval and attend our training workshop to learn about GAO-wide workforce needs and improve his or her ability to provide accurate, consistent, and timely information about our operations, programs, worklife, and values. This training has helped to ensure that all recruiters understand their responsibilities.

We also have developed additional support for our recruiters to ensure consistent and timely dissemination of information. This support has included a slide presentation that describes GAO's core values, business operations, and impact; a tip sheet that helps recruiters understand how to work with prospective applicants who may need to be accommodated; and a listing of specific types of activities recruiters can undertake at targeted campuses. While we have not identified a single "best practice," some of our efforts that have proven successful include:

- sending recruitment brochures/supplies to campus contacts;
- researching and contacting appropriate campus-based groups that have a diverse membership, as well as professional associations and relevant academic programs;
- establishing strong relationships with career placement staff;
- conducting information sessions with appropriate audiences;
- participating in career fairs, when appropriate;
- making class presentations that illustrate the nature of our work;
- getting our work incorporated into program curricula; and
- serving on advisory boards or as adjunct faculty with colleges and universities.

To further assist our recruiters, we have provided real-time information and suggestions to help them better leverage their time. Specifically, we have kept recruiters apprised of the status of hiring announcements and

shared data on the number of individuals hired for different positions—including the names of individuals hired from their specific schools—so recruiters could see the results of their efforts. Given additional budget constraints, we have suggested ways for our recruiters to more cost-effectively maintain strong campus relationships such as

- asking various academic programs within the same college or university to schedule joint presentations or visits by GAO;
- asking recent interns/hires to serve as informal ambassadors; and
- using local GAO staff to attend events at various campuses.

Instituted Stronger Program Management and Accountability Processes

In order to be able to better manage our campus recruitment program and assess program outcomes, we instituted a number of structural and administrative changes over the last several years. We placed overall program responsibility in our Human Capital Office and created three senior-level advisory boards to provide insight on our program operations and results. To obtain more robust information on recruiter activity, as well as create more program accountability, we have developed a standardized template to document recruiters' strategies for working with individual schools and organizations. Through this template, recruiters must provide information on the members of the recruitment team, planned activities at the school or organization, and estimated costs. This strategy document must be completed by the recruiters, submitted to, and approved by Human Capital Office staff before funding is authorized and activities can begin. When an event is completed, recruiters report what occurred and assess the outcome. This information is summarized and subsequently shared with our recruiters in the form of best practices or lessons learned. The template also serves as the basis for data collection on agency-wide recruitment activity, including number of campuses and organizations visited, number and type of events conducted, costs associated with each event, and recruiters' views on the effectiveness of various events.

We also have instituted more rigorous data collection and analysis of applicant and hire information. For example, for fiscal year 2010 vacancies, we analyzed information on the background and diversity of our applicants and hires (e.g., degree level obtained, school attended, years of work experience, ethnicity, race, gender) and the information applicants provided on why they applied for the job. Through analysis of these data, we were able to gain insight on how our program activities

related to our hiring outcomes. For example, we identified the percentage of applicants and hires that came from the colleges and universities we targeted, or that applied because of an interaction with GAO. While not perfect, this analysis has helped us to learn what is working, or what changes we need to make to enhance our recruitment approach.

While we have made great strides in using data to inform and assess our campus recruitment program operations, we continue to explore how to judge the effectiveness of our recruitment efforts. For example, it is challenging to define a specific benchmark when assessing whether the number of applicants and hires from the schools or organizations we target is sufficient given our expenditures. Additionally, it is difficult to specifically identify those factors beyond our outreach—such as our mission, recognition as one of the best places to work, or informal communications—that affect an individual's decision to apply to GAO. To that end, we plan to gather more detailed information from our applicants about the role of factors beyond our outreach efforts that have influenced their decisions to apply to GAO. This information can inform our future recruitment efforts.

Achieved Positive Outcomes

Our efforts have led to positive outcomes. We have achieved the institutional focus we were seeking by ensuring that our recruitment efforts are both driven by and support organizational needs. We also have gained efficiencies by adopting approaches that allow us to be more agile in responding to changing workforce needs and budget constraints. We continue to be an employer of choice and we received thousands of applications for our open positions in fiscal year 2010. As an example, we received about 20 applications for each of our GAO Graduate Analyst Intern positions filled in fiscal year 2010. Even more, representation of African-Americans, Hispanics, and Asian-Americans in the pool of qualified applicants and hires for the intern and entry-level positions filled in fiscal year 2010 exceeded the established benchmarks.

Our Programs and Policies Help Support New Staff

Along with attracting and hiring high-quality, diverse staff, we have implemented programs and policies to support new staff once they arrive at GAO. The support for our entry-level staff comes predominantly through their participation in our highly regarded, 2-year, Professional Development Program (PDP). This program provides new employees with the foundations to be successful because it teaches them about our core values, how we do our work, and the standards by which we assess our performance. All entry-level analyst or analyst-related new hires are

assigned advisers to assist in their development and provide support, although staff are also strongly encouraged to take an active role in their own career development by crafting Individual Development Plans and assessing their own strengths and growth areas. Staff receive multiple assignments while in the program so they can gain firsthand experience with the wide range of our work. They also receive a rigorous regimen of classroom and on-the-job training to learn about our work processes and requirements. Staff in the PDP program also receive formal feedback every 3 months and twice-yearly performance appraisals that can result in salary increases.⁷

In addition, actions of our senior leaders as well as several policies and other programs help our new hires make a successful adjustment to GAO. For example, various agency leaders, including the Comptroller General; Chief Human Capital Officer; Managing Director, Office of Opportunity and Inclusiveness; General Counsel; and our Chief Learning Officer participate in new-hire orientation. In addition, the Comptroller General and others meet with new employees during their first few months to answer any questions about GAO or our relationship with Congress. Other senior managers, including Managing Directors and directors in each GAO team, are encouraged not only to meet with new staff but take an active role in their development and day-to-day work environment. We also have policies in place to foster an inclusive and supportive work environment and help all staff balance work and life. For example, we support flexible scheduling, including telework and part-time arrangements, as allowed, given work responsibilities. We also have a student loan repayment program to help eligible staff defray educational costs. PDP staff, as all staff at GAO, can take advantage of a mentoring program to assist staff in becoming effective leaders, managing their work environments, and developing their careers.

These programs and policies have helped make GAO a great place to work, as evidenced by our employees' decisions to stay with GAO and results from our employee feedback surveys. GAO's overall attrition rate has generally been below 10 percent for the last 5 years, and it was 6 percent in fiscal year 2010. About 90 percent of analyst and analyst-related staff hired in fiscal year 2008 are still with us. Feedback from newly hired staff show high levels of overall job satisfaction, as well as high levels of

⁷Staff in the intern program also receive training, formal expectations, and an end-of-internship assessment with performance feedback.

satisfaction regarding the on-the-job training they receive and staff development opportunities they are provided. Overall employee satisfaction levels contributed to GAO being named as the second best place to work in the federal government in both 2009 and 2010.

Chairman Akaka, Ranking Member Johnson, and Members of the Subcommittee, this concludes my prepared remarks. I will be happy to answer any questions you or other members of the Subcommittee may have.

**GAO Contact and
Staff
Acknowledgments**

For more information about this testimony, please contact Carolyn M. Taylor, Chief Human Capital Officer, at (202) 512-5811 or by e-mail at TaylorCM@gao.gov. Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this testimony. Individuals making key contributions to this testimony included Lori Rectanus, Assistant Director; Harriet Ganson, Assistant Director; Cady Panetta, Senior Analyst; and Susan Aschoff, Senior Communications Analyst.

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Please Print on Recycled Paper

Chairman Akaka, Ranking Member Johnson and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am Tim McManus, Vice President for Education and Outreach at the Partnership for Public Service, a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to revitalizing the federal civil service and transforming the way government works.

Today's hearing could not be more important. Our country relies on the hard work and dedication of our nation's civil servants, many of whom are performing highly-skilled, mission-critical functions, whether it is caring for our wounded veterans, conducting cutting edge cancer research, defending against a cyber-attack, or protecting our borders. Attracting the best and brightest to these hard-to-fill positions is absolutely critical. The task is great, especially since government and its employees are under scrutiny. Regardless of where one stands on the appropriate size of government, we can all agree that we want an effective government with a high performing workforce.

In our testimony we have identified five key barriers to recruiting mission-critical talent to government – shortage of needed talent, lack of knowledge and interest, absence of long-term recruiting strategy, cumbersome hiring process, and difficulty retaining talent. The Partnership is working on several fronts to address these challenges. We have also identified a number of efforts that agencies and universities have undertaken to attract critical talent to government. The focus of this hearing is on ways to attract students and entry-level mission-critical talent to government, but there are significant needs at the mid-career and executive levels, as well. Many of our recommendations regarding the hiring process can be applied throughout government.

The bottom line is that agency leadership must make recruiting and hiring a priority in order for success to be achieved. Candidates for and current members of the Senior Executive Service (SES) are evaluated against the Executive Core Qualification related to "Leading People." More importantly, Congress should ensure that executives are held accountable for recruiting, hiring and developing talent for their agencies as an ongoing critical performance expectation. The need for this type of accountability extends to all executives, regardless of technical expertise or level, since hiring and developing people is an essential component of all federal leadership positions.

We are encouraged to see that the Obama administration has made hiring reform a priority, issuing a Presidential Memorandum on *Improving the Federal Recruitment and Hiring Process*, as well as an Executive Order on *Recruiting and Hiring Students and Recent Graduates*. We continue to provide guidance and support to the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and the agencies as they seek to implement these reforms.

This subcommittee has also worked tirelessly over the years on efforts to improve the federal hiring process and deserves much of the credit for the progress made to date. We look forward to working with you in the future to implement legislative reforms and have outlined some recommendations for your consideration at the conclusion of the testimony.

Five Key Barriers to Recruiting Mission-Critical Talent

1. Shortage of Available Mission-Critical Talent

The Partnership's *Where the Jobs Are 2009* report estimates that the federal government will need to fill nearly 273,000 mission-critical jobs between October 1, 2009 and September 30, 2012, largely due to retirements and those leaving federal service for other reasons. The jobs involve numerous disciplines, are at locations throughout the country and overseas, and have been described by the federal agencies as essential to carrying out their services to the American people.

The majority of federal hires projected by agencies in the *Where the Jobs Are* report are in five broad professional fields, led by jobs in the medical and public health category. This includes an estimated 35,000 nurses and nearly 11,000 engineers. Clearly, the demand for talent is present. Unfortunately, the supply of qualified talent may not meet that demand.

According to the American Association of Colleges of Nursing's (AACN) report, *2010-2011 Enrollment and Graduations in Baccalaureate and Graduate Programs in Nursing*, U.S. nursing schools turned away 67,563 qualified applicants from baccalaureate and graduate nursing programs in 2010. Almost two-thirds of the nursing schools responding to the AACN survey pointed to faculty shortages as a reason for not accepting all qualified applicants into their programs.

The need for nurses will continue to grow as baby boomers enter their retirement years and their demand for care escalates. The current nursing workforce continues to age and new demands are emerging as healthcare reform is implemented. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) has identified Registered Nursing as the top profession in terms of projected growth through 2018.

Similarly, a report by the American Society for Engineering Education, *Engineering by the Numbers*, indicates that while only six percent of engineering bachelor's degrees in 2009 were awarded to foreign nationals, 44 percent of the 41,632 engineering master's degrees were awarded to foreign nationals. Since U.S. citizenship is required for most federal jobs, the availability of graduate-level engineering talent is in very tight supply.

Some agencies are working closely with universities to develop pipelines of mission-critical talent. The Scholarship for Service (SFS) program run by the Department of Homeland Security, OPM and the National Science Foundation (NSF), and the smaller Department of Defense (DOD) Information Assurance Scholarship Program (IASP) are two programs that are boosting the supply of qualified talent in cybersecurity. Commonly known as the "Cyber Corps," the SFS program now has about 225 students enrolled at several dozen colleges and universities designated as Centers for Academic Excellence in Information Assurance Education. Upon graduation, students complete their service commitment – one year for each year of scholarship support. While SFS is recognized as the government's most successful pipeline for cybersecurity talent, its roughly 120 annual graduates come nowhere near to meeting government's cybersecurity talent needs.

The Department of Defense has also sponsored national competitions for high school and college students that test their skills in attacking and defending digital targets, stealing data and tracing

how others have stolen it. These competitions help build awareness of the field and opportunities available in government. In May 2009, Forbes magazine reported that talented participants will be recruited for cybersecurity training camps run by the military and funded by private companies. Others participants could be offered internships at agencies including the National Security Agency and the Department of Energy.

Given the limited pools of nursing, engineering, cybersecurity and other mission-critical talent, government must think creatively about ways to effectively attract and retain top talent, including offering financial incentives when possible. Agencies should target scholarship and loan repayment programs towards individuals in mission-critical fields. Understanding that it may be difficult to dedicate additional resources to these programs in the current economic climate, we recommend that Congress issue a review of current federal scholarship and fellowship programs to better understand how resources are being used, to consolidate duplicative programs and infrastructure and to ensure that money is being used strategically to recruit critical talent to government. Along these same lines, we recommend that OPM develop specific mission-critical tracks in the existing Presidential Management Fellows (PMF) program.

In order for agencies to attract mission-critical talent, the federal government must offer salaries that are competitive with other sectors competing for the same limited talent pool. There is much debate these days about the federal compensation system. The Partnership believes federal pay should be driven by the market, taking into account differences in occupations, skill sets and geography. This will allow government to compete for top talent among sectors. We urge Congress to create a market-based pay system for the federal government.

2. Knowledge and Interest in Federal Service is Low Among Mission-Critical Talent

The Partnership's work with the more than 740 colleges and universities that make up the *Call to Serve* initiative continually reinforces that overall student interest in working for the federal government is relatively high. We have also found, however, that students with technical and scientific skills – those needed most by government – are less interested in government jobs than liberal arts majors. As highlighted in our 2009 report, *Great Expectations: What Students Want in an Employer and How Federal Agencies Can Deliver It*, 34 percent of liberal arts majors saw government as an ideal employer while only nine percent of engineering majors, 10 percent of business majors, 13 percent of IT majors and 16 percent of natural science majors viewed government service in the same light.

Given government's demand for employees with technical skills, including engineers, information technology specialists and medical professionals, agencies must work to generate broader interest in government service among students who have these backgrounds. Our research and work with *Call to Serve* universities suggests that this mountain might not be so hard to climb. A few examples of the Partnership's work to bridge the knowledge gap include:

- *Call to Serve*, a joint initiative between the Partnership and OPM, is the only group of colleges and universities dedicated exclusively to promoting federal opportunities to students and has grown to become a vibrant network of 740 institutions.
- *Call to Serve* Webinars focus on topics ranging from the new Pathways Programs to jobs for business majors in government. During the 2010-2011 academic year, the Webinars

reached more than 2,300 college and university faculty and staff members. More than 87 percent of participants said their knowledge of federal careers increased by participating in the Webinars.

- A *Speakers Bureau* comprised of dynamic, diverse federal employees from across government is ready to educate audiences about the federal workforce and inspire a new generation to serve. Speakers visit college campuses and other student venues, both live and virtually, to bring government work to life for students and alumni. Before attending a *Speakers Bureau* event only 40 percent of students planned to seek information about and/or apply for federal internship or job opportunities. This figure increased by 30 percent after the session.
- Makingthedifference.org is a comprehensive Web resource for individuals searching for federal employment. This Website guides jobseekers to determine their best federal fit, search for job opportunities and apply for federal positions. More than 62,000 people visit the site monthly.

Additionally, research has found that the most effective recruiters of college students are their peers. As a result, the Partnership created a *Student Ambassador* program, modeled after similar programs implemented by McKinsey, Teach for America, and other leading private and nonprofit sector organizations, to increase knowledge and interest in federal service across entire campus communities. The program identifies and trains outstanding federal interns to return to their university campuses to promote federal opportunities. Ambassadors raise awareness of the benefits of federal employment, give presentations across campus on government opportunities, and meet regularly with students, faculty and staff members to increase their understanding of federal jobs and internships. During the 2009-2010 academic year, 29 Ambassadors interacted with more than 17,000 students.

The Partnership is now working with the Departments of Energy (DOE) and Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to implement Ambassador programs to meet agency-specific talent needs. The Energy Ambassadors focus their efforts on disciplines related to specific DOE hiring needs, including engineering, science, technology, business and social sciences, while the HUD Ambassadors are focused primarily on diversity recruitment efforts.

Another example of an agency recognizing the need to do more to bridge the knowledge gap is the Bureau of Prisons (BOP) Federal Medical Center (FMC) Devens. FMC Devens realized that most job seekers do not understand the breadth of available employment opportunities in a prison, making it extremely challenging for them to attract entry-level medical professionals. To help educate students about their opportunities and break down stereotypes, FMC Devens will bring university staff and students to their facility this summer to “shadow” what it is like to work in a job or internship. By exposing students and their influencers to their work first-hand, FMC Devens hopes to generate greater awareness and understanding of their student trainee program and opportunities that exist at their facility.

While many agencies have recognized the need to educate students about federal opportunities, particularly in mission-critical fields, more can and should be done, especially with faculty and university staff. One opportunity that is not highly utilized by agencies is the Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPA), providing for the temporary assignment of personnel between the federal

government and state and local governments, colleges and universities, Indian tribal governments, federally funded research and development centers, and other eligible organizations. Assigning federal employees to universities or, possibly more importantly, assigning faculty to an agency, would help expose students to the work of government and build a long-term pipeline of potential talent. As OPM indicates in its April 2010 *Report to Congress on Nursing Faculty and the Intergovernmental Personnel Act Mobility Program*, under the IPA, “government nurses could work at schools of nursing to fill vacant or newly budgeted faculty positions and encourage new nurse graduates to join the government.”

Efforts of the Partnership and federal agencies prove that exposure to federal opportunities can raise awareness, improve perceptions and encourage action. They also demonstrate that it is possible to have an impact without investing significant financial resources. Too often agencies struggle or overthink trying to make certain that all their recruitment pieces are in place. Instead, agencies should see this as a learning process and take creative approaches to educating key talent pools.

3. Agencies Lack Long-term Strategies for Building Relationships

The private sector invests heavily in ensuring that they attract and retain the best talent and now, more than ever, government should be doing the same. Getting agencies to change their paradigm for recruiting and hiring, however, is a lot more like trying to turn an aircraft carrier than turning a jet ski. Too many government agencies remain passive when it comes to marketing, recruiting and hiring entry-level employees. Agencies are often content to post job announcements and wait to see who applies. Change requires developing and sustaining meaningful, in-depth relationships with colleges and universities that includes targeting key universities, departments, faculty and use of alumni.

Booz Allen Hamilton, for example, has taken several approaches to building relationships with universities. Leaders serve on industry advisory boards affiliated with key academic programs at universities that may serve as feeder pools for talent. They have also partnered with universities such as the University of Maryland, College Park, to co-teach courses including Reverse Engineering. Booz Allen Hamilton works hard to maintain ongoing contact with student leaders on campus in order to build their brand year-after-year. Now, more than ever, government should be taking a similar approach, targeting their recruitment and building lasting relationships.

In the current climate of budget uncertainty, agencies may be tempted to pull back on their campus recruiting because they do not have specific positions they are seeking to fill. This would be a mistake; indeed, it is actually more critical than ever that agencies continue to build and maintain these relationships with universities. If they pull back now and limit their campus engagement, history has shown that it will be very difficult for agencies to re-establish these relationships in the future when they have critical hiring needs. However, the onus should not be on the agencies alone. Universities should continue to invite agencies to participate in campus events so they have a sustained presence and continue to educate students about future opportunities in federal service.

Agencies, like private sector companies, should also view internship programs as a primary means for building sustained relationships with universities and long-term pipelines of entry-level talent. According to the National Association of Colleges and Employers' (NACE) *2011*

Internship & Co-op Survey, private sector employers converted 57.7 percent of their interns into full-time, permanent employees. This rate is an all-time high and more than doubles the rate at which federal agencies typically convert their Student Career Experience Program (SCEP) participants into permanent employees. Like the private sector, these programs can become an agency's main mechanism for entry-level hiring, and are a great screening and vetting tool to make sure the candidate is a good fit.

Building on the concept that focused recruiting yields the best results, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) has crafted an effective approach for working with universities. The approach builds name recognition and visibility with students in programs best meeting GAO's hiring needs. A cornerstone of this approach is developing in-depth relationships with specific departments or schools at universities that have the "right" curricula – for example, a public policy school or the IT department – and then actively nurturing and sustaining those relationships.

GAO identifies a Senior Executive Service member to be a part-time "Campus Executive" for each university/program, and that Campus Executive builds and maintains relationships with the school or department head and other key campus officials. The Campus Executive is usually supported by several less senior GAO employees, possibly located in a regional office close to the university, especially alumni of the school/program.

GAO also has an internship program that is a vital part of their entry-level hiring. Interns work at GAO on real projects with carefully selected supervisors. These programs both give the interns good exposure to the real work done at GAO and give their supervisors a clear picture of each intern's skills and capacity for GAO's work. Using this information, GAO typically offers entry-level jobs first to those interns who have performed best during their internships.

GAO carefully monitors the effectiveness of their university recruiting programs. Using a standard set of metrics, they check to see whether their campus-related activities result in applications for internships and permanent positions and the success of those who are selected. Through constant monitoring, they assure that their programs bring in diverse new hires with the skills needed to help the agency achieve its mission.

As a result of budget constraints and reduced hiring, GAO has modified their approach and established three tiers of contact with their targeted universities – virtual, a combination of virtual and in-person and highly personal. By doing so, they continue to nurture proven relationships that have taken time and money to develop, rather than sending the message to universities and their students that they are closed for business.

The Veterans Administration's Learning Opportunities Residency (VALOR) program is another example of a program that works. VALOR allows nursing, pharmacy and medical technology students who have completed their junior year in an accredited clinical program to gain experience at a VA facility. The Northern California VA Health Care System has engaged campuses for years through the VALOR program, hiring nursing students in baccalaureate programs. As an example, a few years ago they began working closely to develop a relationship with one of the Partnership's *Call to Serve* grant campuses, Sacramento State University. As part of that program, Sacramento State students work for the VA to gain hands-on experience. Kathleen Toms, the local VALOR coordinator, believes the program draws in students who

would otherwise not think about working in government, including a number of students who are making career transitions into nursing.

About half of the VALOR participants have been converted into full-time nursing positions. Most importantly, even if students do not want to work in Sacramento, the VALOR program is set up to help them find a position in another VA hospital or in the Navy, Army or Public Health Service. Because VALOR participants are already oriented to the VA and its practice requirements, many who take a position upon graduation are hired at salary levels above their other new graduate counterparts.

The recent Executive Order on *Recruiting and Hiring Students and Recent Graduates* recognizes the need to recruit new talent to government and establishes clear pathways for students and recent graduates. The Executive Order lays the groundwork to improve recruiting efforts, offers clear paths to internships for students from high school through post-graduate school and to careers for recent graduates, and provides meaningful training and career development opportunities for individuals who are at the beginning of their federal careers.

We urge Congress to pass legislation requiring agencies to collect data to better understand agencies' use of internship programs. The *Federal Internship Improvement Act*, H.R. 914, sponsored by Representatives Gerry Connolly (D-VA) and Brian Bilbray (R-CA), was included in the House-passed *National Defense Authorization Act* (NDAA). The bill would require agencies to collect metrics on the effectiveness of their internship programs – specifically data on how agencies recruit interns, the number of interns hired and ultimately converted to permanent positions and the quality of the internship experience as identified through exit surveys. We encourage the Senate to support this language and ensure it is retained in the final conference agreement. We also urge the Senate to promote language which would allow an internship to serve as the equivalent of a competitive examination for future employment in a federal agency.

4. Hiring Process Turns Away Top Talent

Increasing interest in government jobs is not enough to ensure the government has the right talent to tackle our country's challenges. Long a source of frustration for agencies and applicants alike, the federal hiring process was not designed with applicants in mind and discourages talent from pursuing federal service.

Since the President announced his hiring reform initiative on May 11, 2010, the Partnership has been working with OPM and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to ensure broad adoption of the reforms. We collaborated with OPM to develop and implement a series of hiring reform "boot camps" for senior hiring reform officials across government. We are also providing guidance and support to OMB on how to effectively measure agency progress.

In addition to reform efforts, the Partnership works directly with federal agencies through programs like *FedRecruit* to assist them in building their capacity to recruit, hire and retain top entry-level talent. Through a structured, short-term, hands-on engagement, agencies have the opportunity to make meaningful and lasting changes to their efforts to get the right talent into the right jobs.

As part of *FedRecruit*, and in light of the focus on manager engagement in hiring reform, we developed and released *What's My Role? A Step-by-Step Hiring Guide for Federal Managers*. The guide instantly captured the interest of federal managers across the country. In addition to other agency training programs, this resource serves as a cornerstone for a year-long series of workshops and webinars designed, in concert with OPM, to enhance HR and hiring manager collaboration.

FedRecruit also provides sustained, in-depth interactions with federal agencies. Four agencies – U.S. Air Force (USAF), Immigration & Customs Enforcement (ICE), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the Social Security Administration (SSA) – successfully completed Phase II of the program focused on IT. As a result, these agencies felt more prepared to attract and hire entry-level IT talent. They also were more willing to incorporate and adopt new policies around the use of internships and hiring. Through the pilot agencies' engagement, they learned what is possible to accomplish and, based on their feedback, are more likely to embrace changes long-term.

The Partnership applauds the efforts of the administration, OPM, federal agencies and Congress for their efforts to improve the hiring process. While progress is being made, the hiring process is still too cumbersome for today's fast-paced talent market. In a recent survey of *Call to Serve* university career advisors, 49 percent indicated that the federal hiring process has "stayed the same" or is "worse" than it was before the President's hiring reform initiative. Some of the perceptions around the process may be the result of budget uncertainty and hiring freezes but, with a government-wide average time to hire of 105 days, it is clear that more still needs to be done to streamline the process.

For real long-term change to occur, agencies need to be held accountable for continued improvements. The Partnership believes that three key sets of data will tell the story about whether change has fully taken root: (1) time to hire, disaggregated for internal and external hires, (2) manager satisfaction with the quality of applicants and new hires, and (3) applicant satisfaction with the process. We are very pleased to see that OPM recently issued a memo to agencies outlining a set of reporting requirements specifically on time to hire and look forward to similar guidance on applicant and manager satisfaction.

Mr. Chairman, you and Sen. Voinovich championed S. 736, the *Federal Hiring Process Improvement Act* in the 111th Congress, and we urge you to introduce this important piece of bipartisan legislation in the 112th Congress to codify the good work of the administration and hold agencies accountable for further improvement. This legislation should require that the data highlighted above be reported and made public, specific to each agency, on at least a quarterly basis. We also encourage you to include language that would allow agencies to limit public notice in certain circumstances – e.g., targeting specific universities or degree programs if agencies are looking for a particular type of mission-critical talent. Limiting public notice would also allow agencies to target recruiting for certain positions to current students or recent graduates.

We are also very pleased to see that the administration has also made student programs and entry-level hiring a priority in issuing an Executive Order on *Recruiting and Hiring Students and Recent Graduates*. The Executive Order recognizes government's need to be more competitive

in recruiting and hiring talented individuals who are in school or recently graduated, and develops clear pathways for them to enter federal service.

We are hopeful that OPM issues regulations in the very near future to allow agencies time to effectively implement the new Pathways Programs in the next year. We stand ready to assist OPM, as we did with hiring reform, in providing training necessary for agencies to implement the Executive Order.

We encourage this subcommittee to provide oversight during the implementation process, ensuring agencies have the necessary resources to effectively implement the Executive Order and holding them accountable for results. As previously mentioned, we urge Congress to mandate the frequent collection of data on the use of internship programs so agencies can make the best use of their programs, offering quality experiences and priming their own talent pipelines.

5. Difficulty Keeping Top Talent

While our federal government faces many challenges in attracting top talent in hard-to-fill occupations, recruitment and hiring is only half the battle. Federal agencies must also focus time, attention and resources on retaining key talent.

Employee attrition in the federal government historically has been quite low, leading many people to believe that it should not be a matter of concern or cause for serious attention. But overlooking the importance of employee turnover, and failing to understand exactly who is leaving federal employment and why they are leaving would be a mistake for government managers, workforce planners and human resources professionals. Employee attrition, depending on an individual's talents, experience and the type of job involved, can have a significant impact on how agencies implement policies and programs, deliver services and meet the needs of the American people. It also can have other significant consequences, both positive and negative.

On the plus side, attrition can create space in an agency for new talent and skills, remove workers who are not performing well and provide promotion opportunities for highly capable but less senior employees. Agencies may determine that a vacated position is no longer needed, or they can use attrition to help with a gradual reshaping of the workforce. On the negative side, the loss of experienced employees due to retirement or more promising opportunities can deal a serious blow to an agency's operational capacity and performance if the departing employees leave with institutional knowledge and organizational savvy that up-and-coming staffers have not yet developed or obtained. Too much attrition of recently hired employees or those with special skills also can have a significant adverse impact.

Attrition, moreover, is an important bellwether about the state of the workplace environment. High turnover is a useful indicator of employee dissatisfaction and can suggest a number of problems. For example, while attrition of recently hired employees means a loss of the considerable investment expended to bring them on board, it also can indicate weaknesses in the agency's recruiting, hiring and onboarding processes.

But in government, the consequences of a loss in talent may involve more than money. Attrition can potentially jeopardize an agency's ability to perform its core mission, whether that is a homeland security mission, the nation's ability to respond to a pandemic or the ability to monitor

the integrity of our financial markets. Losses like these can have impacts that far exceed financial costs.

With so much time and effort invested in improving agency hiring processes, and given the anticipated slowdown in federal hiring, retention of new mission-critical employees is more important than ever. In two recently released reports on attrition and retention – *Beneath the Surface: Understanding Attrition at Your Agency and Why it Matters* and *Keeping Talent: Strategies for Retaining Valued Federal Employees* – the Partnership recommends that agencies study and understand attrition and use that information to improve the workplace to help retain those in key positions.

Specifically, we further recommend that agencies and Congress look at attrition rates of three categories of employees: (1) those who are recently hired and have been with the agency two years or less; (2) those who are eligible to retire within the next five years; and (3) those in mission-critical occupations. We found in our report that about 24 percent of those hired in fiscal year 2006 had left their jobs within two years; about 48 percent of all federal employees will be eligible to retire by 2015, including 67 percent of federal supervisors; and, attrition rates of mission-critical employees in 2008 were as high as 30 percent in selected occupations. These numbers should convey the urgency of understanding why employees leave so we can take steps to keep the employees that we need the most.

The good news is that information on why employees are leaving or are thinking about leaving can provide the answers. Exit data, which must be collected by individual departments or agencies, provides vital insights into employee attrition. We urge Congress to require agencies to conduct exit surveys so more information is available to federal agencies. When supplemented by analysis of data already collected via the annual Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey, agencies can gain insight into gaps in employee satisfaction among key employee groups so they can proactively address problem areas and head off unwanted attrition.

Recommendations for Congress

In summary, we would like to offer the following recommendations for Congress:

- *Oversight* – It is critical that this subcommittee continue to ask agencies what is needed in order to effectively implement the Executive Order on *Recruiting and Hiring Students and Recent Graduates* and the administration’s mandate for hiring reform. Specifically, Congress should make sure agencies receive the necessary resources and training for effective implementation, and Congress should hold agencies accountable for results.
- *Hold Agency Leaders Accountable for Recruiting, Hiring and Developing Talent* – Candidates for and current member of the SES are currently evaluated against the Executive Core Qualification related to “Leading People.” Congress should ensure that executives are held accountable for the on-going recruiting, hiring and developing of talent for their agencies as a critical performance expectation. The need for this type of accountability extends to all executives, regardless of technical expertise or level, since hiring and developing people is an essential component of all federal leadership positions.

- *Require Agencies to Collect and Regularly Report on Metrics of Hiring Effectiveness* – Mr. Chairman, we know you championed better collection of metrics on hiring in S. 736, the *Federal Hiring Process Improvement Act*, in the 111th Congress. We urge you to introduce this legislation in the 112th Congress and require agencies to collect and publicly report data on (1) time to hire, disaggregated for internal and external hires, (2) manager satisfaction with the quality of applicants and (3) applicant satisfaction with the process.
- *Allow Agencies to Target their Recruiting Efforts* – Mr. Chairman, we encourage you to include language in your hiring reform bill, which would allow agencies to limit public notice in certain circumstances – e.g., targeting specific universities or degree programs if agencies are looking for a particular type of mission-critical talent. Limiting public notice would also allow agencies to target recruiting for certain positions to current students or recent graduates.
- *Request a Review of Current Government Scholarship Programs* – Congress should issue a review of current federal scholarship programs to better understand how resources are being used, to consolidate duplicative programs and infrastructure and ensure that money is being used strategically (e.g., invest in scholarships for mission-critical fields of study).
- *Pass the Federal Internship Improvement Act* – The *Federal Internship Improvement Act*, H.R. 914, introduced by Representatives Gerry Connolly (D-VA) and Brian Bilbray (R-CA), was recently attached to the House-passed *National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA)*. We encourage the Senate to support this language and ensure it is retained in the final conference agreement. The legislation would require agencies to collect metrics on the effectiveness of their internship programs – specifically data on how agencies recruit interns, the number of interns hired and ultimately converted to permanent positions, and the quality of the internship experience as identified through exit surveys. The bill requires OPM to centrally house information about internships in government, and provide a clear point of contact for student programs in federal agencies.

We also urge the Senate to promote language allowing internships to serve as the equivalent of a competitive examination to ascertain the fitness of an intern for a relevant position in the competitive service. This would help agencies hire their top-performing interns.

- *Create a Market-Based Pay System for the Federal Government* – Federal pay should be driven by the market, taking into account differences in occupations, skill sets and geography. For example, engineers in government should be paid comparable to engineers in the private sector. This will allow the federal government to compete for top talent, particularly in mission-critical fields.
- *Exit Surveys* – Congress should require agencies to conduct exit surveys when employees leave government to better understand the reasons for their departure and make continuous improvements. This will particularly help agencies identify challenges to retaining mission-critical talent and make real-time corrections.

Conclusion

Especially in today's very difficult budget climate, federal agencies must continue efforts to identify, recruit and retain new talent. We appreciate the subcommittee's ongoing commitment to ensuring that our government has a highly-skilled, highly-engaged workforce to perform at its best for the American people.

Mr. Chairman, Senator Johnson, we thank you and your colleagues for the opportunity to share our recommendations with you today and would be pleased to answer your questions.

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**STATEMENT BY
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**SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT OF GOVERNMENT
MANAGEMENT, THE FEDERAL WORKFORCE, AND THE DISTRICT
OF COLUMBIA
UNITED STATES SENATE**

**HEARING ON
“INSPIRING STUDENTS TO FEDERAL SERVICE”**

JUNE 21, 2011

My name is Laurel McFarland, and I serve as the Executive Director of the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA), which has been committed to inspiring students to federal service for decades.

NASPAA is the organization of 275 graduate schools of public administration, public policy, and public affairs. Our member schools annually confer over 10,000 Master of Public Administration (MPA), Master of Public Policy (MPP), and related degrees. For forty years, NASPAA has been the accreditor of graduate programs in these fields and a force for promoting quality in professional education for public service.

In 1977, working in partnership with federal agencies, NASPAA helped to create what has become the Presidential Management Fellowship (PMF) program, as a vehicle for the federal government to attract the top talent coming out of our nation's graduate schools. It was clear that graduates with advanced training in analytical, quantitative, and writing skills, who also demonstrated strong leadership skills, were desperately needed in federal service – which remains even truer today.

Students pursue graduate degrees in public service because they believe that with the skills they'll gain, they'll be able to change the world. Generations of PMFs and other graduates have validated this belief by applying their education to solve problems throughout distinguished federal careers. Compared to the total of annual new hires, the number of highly-trained recent graduates hired by the federal government may seem small, but they play a vital role. Thousands of graduates with advanced degrees in public policy, science and engineering, finance, and information technology enter federal service annually, filling "hard to fill" and critical mission positions. They represent the future leadership and management of the civil service. Moreover, the policy challenges that MPP and MPA graduates have been trained to address are growing ever-more complex and global, requiring increasing levels of cutting-edge knowledge and advanced skills.

Unfortunately, there is overwhelming evidence from recent years that the existing competitive hiring system simply does not work for graduate students, who have advanced training, but little full-time work experience, especially in federal service. The current competitive hiring process gives significant weight to years of government service, but considerably less to cutting-edge skills. Fortunately, the President and the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) recognize this, which they demonstrated by issuing December's "Pathways" Executive Order for Recruiting and Hiring Students and Recent Graduates. NASPAA applauds the President's and OPM's vision and courage.

But to make the Executive Order (EO) effective, and make it "stick," we will need:

- 1) A commitment from OPM to ensure that Pathways Programs meet the aspirations for high-performance government and effective recruitment as expressed in the EO.
- 2) Commitments from other federal agencies that they will use Pathways Programs to develop, not simply hire, skilled graduates.
- 3) Lasting and effective partnerships between federal agencies and universities.
- 4) Congressional oversight.

Two Roles for Congressional Oversight

Congress can do two critical things to ensure that the Pathways Programs are effectively used for hiring students into federal service. First, it can use its oversight to ensure that the Pathway Programs work for *students*, by creating pathways that are transparent and lead to further opportunities for federal service. While it is important to focus on the employer “demand” side, and to think strategically about how students, with their abundant skills and energy, can fill critical and hard-to-fill positions, it is just as important to look at the partnership from the student “supply” side, by creating programs that focus on drawing students into federal service, developing their talents, and retaining them.

Second, it can use oversight to ensure that both OPM and hiring agencies collect data and use it to produce meaningful analysis. Since good data and analysis are essential for program improvement, a good start would be to require annual reporting. In the longer term, Congress could also consider codifying some of OPM’s initiatives to ensure that future administrations can continue and be accountable for them. Strategic analysis of student hiring data will serve to hold all Pathways stakeholders – OPM, other agencies, universities – accountable for creating a truly “high performance” hiring process.

A Better PMF

Students and recent graduates are not looking merely for jobs; they are looking for opportunities to develop careers. Attracting the best of them to federal service rests on being able to assure them that federal jobs will offer them a developmental opportunity. The Presidential Management Fellowship is the federal government’s flagship talent recruitment program for graduate students. The PMF selection process is renowned for being rigorous and daunting, which we at NASPAA think is a good thing. This year, fewer than 10% of PMF applicants made it through a multi-step process and were selected as finalists. Even then, finalists still had to compete for a limited number of positions, and only around half may ultimately end up as PMFs.

As part of the new Pathways Programs, the PMF program must promise the best and most capable graduate students around the country that the federal government provides a challenging, competitive opportunity to develop the leadership and management skills needed at the top. As a program designed to produce future federal leaders, the PMF should select, match, and convert candidates and participants based on the Executive Core Qualifications (ECQ) developed for the Senior Executive Service. We should take the ECQ competencies, scale them back to the professional entry-level (e.g., GS-9 and GS-11) and then map them onto the knowledge, skills, and capacities we expect from PMFs.

We should be unabashed that the purpose of the PMF is to identify and develop future leaders and senior managers of the federal workforce. The adoption of a competency framework would provide the means to clearly demonstrate to students the intent of the program, and to hold the agencies accountable over time for the way they create PMF positions and develop the fellows within those positions. Agencies should be assessed on their progress toward these goals; those that perform should be provided with recognition and incentives to do even better.

There are metrics by which the PMF program can be assessed to ensure that it is serving the needs of participants and agencies, as well as overall federal talent planning: are PMF finalists being selected who match anticipated postings? What percentage of finalists are successfully

matched to open PMF positions? Are offers made in a timely fashion? Are the PMF positions posted by agencies consistent with the mission of the program?

The Recent Graduates Program

We also need a strong partnership between federal agencies and universities to give life to the Executive Order's "Recent Graduates" program. If we want this new program to be successful in drawing in recent graduates with the skills we need, just like the PMF, it must serve both agencies and students. The Recent Graduates program should be open to recipients of degrees along the spectrum of postsecondary education, up to and including doctorates. It must also be explicitly developmental for all its participants, providing professional and career-development opportunities, ideally identifying potential career paths for applicants.

Congress can provide effective oversight for this program by requiring that the agencies work with educators and professional associations to create Recent Graduates programs in specific functional areas that are linked to professional competency attainment. These areas should include hard-to-fill positions such as those in budgeting and financial management; public procurement and acquisition; IT and technical fields; and human resource management. The Recent Graduates program has great promise, but the promise will be squandered if we cannot work together to create something that benefits both graduates and agencies with critical skill needs.

A Partnership for Accountability

We need a university-federal partnership based on accountability and transparency, which Congress can help ensure is created and maintained. Congress should use its oversight to ensure that OPM and client federal agencies collect the data that enable us to assess their performance in attracting the best and most critically needed students to federal service: data about how we are doing in recruiting, selecting, matching, employing, developing, and retaining. The Federal Hiring Process Improvement Act, which was co-sponsored by Senator Akaka and passed the Senate last year, included provisions requiring data collection.¹ An updated bill is currently being drafted, and NASPAA fully supports its reintroduction in this session. Recently, the House passed the text of Rep. Gerald Connolly's Federal Internship Improvement Act (HR 914), which would require data collection and reporting for all internship programs.

Congress's oversight of the Pathways Programs is important. But it is just as critical that Congress monitor how the competitive hiring system treats student applicants. There is a substantial amount of anecdotal evidence on how abysmal graduate students' experience with

¹ S. 736 [111th]: SEC. 9. MEASURES OF FEDERAL HIRING EFFECTIVENESS. (a) In General- Each agency shall measure and collect information on indicators of hiring effectiveness with respect to the following: (1) RECRUITING AND HIRING-(A) Ability to reach and recruit highly qualified talent from diverse talent pools. (B) Use and impact of each hiring authority and flexibility to recruit most qualified applicants, including the use of student internships and scholarship programs as a talent pool for permanent hires. (C) Use and impact of special hiring authorities and flexibilities to recruit diverse candidates, including veteran, minority, and disabled candidates. (D) The age, educational level, and source of applicants. (E) Length of time between the time a position is advertised and the time a first offer of employment is made. (F) Length of time between the time a first offer of employment for a position is made and the time a new hire starts in that position. (G) Number of internal and external applicants for Federal positions. (H) Number of positions filled compared to the specific number in the annual workforce plan of the agency, with specific reference to mission-critical occupations or areas of critical shortage deficiencies. (I) Number of offers accepted compared to the number of offers made for permanent positions.

USAJobs.gov has been, in terms of feedback and communication to applicants as well as overall hiring success. Even our top-ranked member schools report that few, if any, of their graduates have ever been contacted for an interview based on an application submitted through USAJobs.gov. The vast majority of graduate students hired in recent years have entered federal service through excepted hiring. It would be helpful to know with greater certainty exactly how students fare in the competitive hiring system, and for that we need data. We need to find out if, and why, the federal government has failed to hire some of its best applicants.

Most importantly, it is absolutely critical to publish hiring data widely, so that the public, especially students and university career services professionals, can see it. The Administration's "open government initiative" should be used as a minimal standard. While the success of the Pathways Programs rests partially on their being seen as highly competitive, the pathways must also be clear and well-marked.

Conclusion

Partnerships between universities and federal agencies will be necessary in order to make federal student hiring efforts successful. Success will be defined both by the Pathways Programs' ability to serve the federal government's hiring needs *and* by their ability to provide federal opportunities for new professionals. These opportunities must offer real development opportunities connected to the skills needed for senior positions and leadership, as Pathways graduates advance in their careers. Ongoing working groups that bring federal agencies together with educators to establish the competency frameworks for various functional categories of government jobs will be required. As the primary organization concerned with professional education in public service, NASPAA is committed to working with federal and other partners to accomplish these important goals.

Ultimately, the Pathways Executive Order is not about the narrow task of hiring students and recent graduates. Federal hiring reform is about nothing less than ensuring the efficiency and effectiveness of the federal government in the years ahead, and our ability to tackle the complicated public problems and fiscal pressures we will face. Today's students, especially the most talented, can and will make a critical contribution to tomorrow's federal government and our nation.

Teach For America Testimony Before the Senate Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, the Federal Workforce, and the District of Columbia

Anne Mahle, Vice President, Recruitment at Teach For America
1992 Rio Grande Valley Corps Member

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony to the Senate Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, the Federal Workforce, and the District of Columbia for the hearing titled, *Inspiring Students to Federal Service*. Teach For America is honored to help our country's Congressional leadership think through the important question of how to meet the growing need for talented individuals to serve in mission-critical positions within our federal agencies.

Teach For America is the national corps of outstanding recent college graduates and professionals of all academic majors and career interests who commit two years to teach in urban and rural public schools and become leaders in the effort to expand educational opportunity.

Our mission is to build the movement to eliminate educational inequity by enlisting our nation's most promising future leaders in this effort. In the short run, Teach For America corps members teach in public schools in thirty-nine regions across the country. They work relentlessly to ensure that more students growing up today in our country's lowest-income communities are given the educational opportunities they deserve. In the long run, our alumni are a powerful force of leaders working from inside education and from every other sector to effect the fundamental changes needed to ensure that all children have an equal chance in life.

For twenty-one years we have sought to recruit our country's most promising young leaders to teach in low-income communities across the country and to become life-long leaders for educational equity. Each year, we seek to grow in both scale and diversity and to engage more leaders – from college/university campuses and professional sectors – in our work. Over these years, and in particular over the last five, we have learned a number of lessons that we are eager to share.

We recently wrapped up our 2011 recruitment and admissions season and we are proud to have received applications from nearly 48,000 college seniors and young professionals. These applicants come from over 1,500 colleges and universities across all fifty states, the District of Columbia, and two protectorates. As mentioned above, diversity of our corps is critical to our success. Applicants of color represented well over one-third of the total applicant pool, as did applicants from a low-income household. And representation of African Americans in our applicant pool more than tripled the representation of African Americans at our country's more selective 4-year colleges and universities.

A persistent need in the communities where we serve is in math and science education. Since Teach For America's early years we have focused a specific effort on recruiting

individuals with backgrounds in mathematics, the sciences, and engineering. In 2011, we received nearly 10,000 applications from individuals with backgrounds (i.e., majored and/or minored) in mathematics, one of the sciences, engineering, or finance. This represents just over 20% of the applicant pool and is a significant increase from 2004, when 16.5% of applicants had a background in these disciplines.

What is most encouraging to us as we seek to further diversify and grow our corps is the market share increases that we saw in the 2011 season at our country's public universities. For example: nearly 9% of the senior class at the University of Virginia applied, and more than 6% of the senior class at the following institutions applied: University of North Carolina Chapel Hill; University of Michigan, Ann Arbor; University of California, Santa Barbara; University of California, Berkeley; University of Washington – Seattle; and the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana. Of our top twenty grossing schools, seventeen are public universities.

In 2011, we continued our history of obtaining a significant market share at a number of colleges and universities across the country. For example, 27% of Spelman College's senior class applied, as did 18% of Harvard's class, and across all of the Ivy League nearly 12% of the senior class applied. But applicants from our country's elite colleges do not comprise the bulk of our applicant pool or our corps. Indeed, 57% of our applicant pool received (or will receive) their undergraduate degree from a public university.

This fall, we will place 5,200 corps members in classrooms, the largest corps in Teach For America's history. They will join 4,100 second year teachers. These 9,300 corps members will reach 600,000 students in 43 regions across 34 states and the District of Columbia, including new sites in the Appalachia region of Kentucky, Oklahoma City, Seattle, and the Pee Dee region of South Carolina.

Early Recruitment Strategies

In Teach For America's first decade, our recruitment strategies were relatively unsophisticated. We fielded a very small team of recruiters and support staff (usually between 7 and 20) who were responsible for covering large swaths of the country. We had one application deadline (in mid-February), a paper application, and one notification window in the mid- to late-spring. Our recruitment strategies relied upon word-of-mouth, limited on-campus presence, one-time, small scale on-campus events, and assistance from invested faculty and staff members on college campuses.

In 2000, we launched Teach For America's first growth plan. Through this plan we sought to double the size of our teaching corps. In order to do that we needed to start investing more significantly in our recruitment efforts and change up our on-campus presence. We did this by growing the size of our recruitment team, which enabled us to reach more campuses across the country, and increased our focus on marketing across these campuses. Towards the end of the growth plan (2003-2004) we began to explore the role that personal cultivation of top prospects might play in helping us grow our movement.

Evolution of On-Campus Recruitment 2005 – Present

In 2005, Teach For America began its second growth plan in which we again sought to double the size of the corps over a five-year period, moving from placing approximately 2,000 corps members across the country to placing nearly 5,000 by 2010. Again, in order to meet this goal we expanded the recruitment team and implemented an on-campus strategy that was driven by one-on-one personal cultivation of top, diverse prospects at selective colleges and universities across the country. Over the last five years – from 2006 through 2011, we have increased our applicant pool by 150%, from 18,968 applicants in 2006 to 47,911 applicants in 2011.

Through our work we realized that it was critically important to build an understanding of three concepts among college students:

- 1) the scope of the problem – a lack of access to excellent learning opportunities is limiting the life paths of millions of children living in poverty in the United States;
- 2) that this problem is solvable – there is ample evidence that when students are given the opportunity to learn at high levels, can they excel on an absolute scale; and
- 3) that they can be part of the solution to this problem – both in the short- and long-term through participating in Teach For America.

We sought to build this understanding by executing on three key strategies: personal cultivation; awareness-building activities; and engagement of individuals in our work.

Personal cultivation has generally consisted of one-on-one and group meetings with both prospects and key influencers on campus. These key influencers are typically faculty and staff members who interface directly with student leaders and outstanding academic achievers (including but not limited to career service offices, key student advisors, college and university administrators).

Complementing our personal cultivation activities is an increased focus on awareness building on college campuses. Awareness building takes multiple forms, including: targeted marketing (both print and through social media), presentations to classrooms and student organizations, and large-scale events (e.g., information sessions and speaker series). These activities allow us to drive awareness not only with graduating seniors but also with large numbers of underclassmen, the majority of whom are already contemplating their post-college employment.

Finally, we have learned that ongoing engagement and cultivation is important. The reality is that most of the individuals who join Teach For America's corps never intended to pursue teaching. It is only through our active intervention in their post-college planning that made this a viable and attractive option. In order to help college students – particularly student leaders and those with the most post-college options – see themselves as the future leader of a classroom it is important to take them on classroom visits, to have them speak directly with current corps members and alumni

about their classrooms and experiences, and to host other activities such as alternative spring break trips in our regions. When all three of these strategies – personal cultivation, awareness building, and ongoing engagement – have been implemented well, we have seen marked growth in both corps size and diversity.

In 2008, we recognized that in order to further increase our impact on campus and create a sustainable model that would allow us to grow the size and diversity of the corps without employing hundreds of recruiters across the country, we needed to revise our heavy reliance on one-on-one personal cultivation. While reaching out to specific students is still central to our on-campus recruitment efforts, we are also employing other strategies to increase our reach while operating more efficiently. These include: group meetings with top prospects; the implementation of a robust menu of webinars that students can sign up for online; the creation of an underclassmen initiative to help us build a pipeline of interested and engaged students before their senior year; engaging our network of over 20,000 Teach For America alumni in our recruitment efforts; and continuing to build and strengthen our on-campus relationships with faculty and staff.

Tactical Supports

In addition to these strategic choices, there are some tactical decisions that we believe have positively impacted our ability to increase the number of top, diverse college seniors and graduate students who choose to apply to our movement. They are:

- Multiple application deadlines, allowing for quick turn-around in notification of progression in the admissions process.
- Streamlined application process. For example, we ask people to submit letters of recommendation and complete an online problem solving activity only after they have moved along in the process and we eliminated an essay because data demonstrated that it didn't provide actionable information that we couldn't get through other parts of the application process.

Finally, we're often asked what lies at the root of our success. I think that the answer is simple: the hard, purposeful work of our recruitment team and the tight management that we exert around many aspects of our recruitment campaigns. At the end of the day, it's not particularly fancy or flashy, but it does make a difference. The members of the recruitment team believe deeply in our mission and in the potential of the students and families in the communities that we serve. This belief drives them and inspires them in their work, and it is through their relentless efforts on campus that we are able to engage more and more college students in our work.

Barriers to Growth

Despite our success, we encounter some significant barriers to attracting the top, diverse talent on college campuses to our movement. The most common barriers that we confront across the country are:

- Top students, in particular top students of color (African American, Latino, Native American, and Native Hawaiian) as well as students with backgrounds in math, science, and engineering, have made decisions regarding their career paths very

early in their collegiate experience and may be initially closed off to joining Teach For America. Early identification and engagement with these students is critical, as is engaging them in the problem and its solvability – through visits to Teach For America regions, tutoring in corps member classrooms, and other on-campus activities to engage them in our work and provide them with leadership development opportunities.

- Many students, in particular students from low-income communities and students of color, have significant financial concerns about joining Teach For America. As the *New York Times* reported on April 11, 2011, in 2008 two-thirds of college graduates graduated with debt as compared to less than half in 1993. The average student graduates with a debt of \$24,000. Teaching in public schools, like working for the federal government, is typically not a financially lucrative career choice. Therefore, additional financial support like AmeriCorps education awards and loan forgiveness for those who choose to teach in low-income communities are important programs to help diversify the teacher workforce.

What We've Learned

One of the most important truths we have learned over the last twenty-one years is that students and professionals want to serve. As they seek out their professional paths, they are looking for opportunities to positively impact their community and their country.

The mission and the impact matter. While young Americans want to serve, they do not want to serve simply for the sake of service. They want to understand that their work has a real, on-the-ground impact. They are savvy consumers who are looking for the most effective and direct ways to make an impact. It is critical, therefore, that students are presented with a compelling value proposition for public service. They need to understand what problem they are seeking to solve, how they can play a role in solving it, and have a belief that they are entering a program or a system that will embrace their talent, nurture them in their development, and help them engage deeply and meaningfully with the world around them.

The public image of public service is important. College graduates, to a remarkable degree, want to make a positive impact in their work. They also want to know that their peers, their parents, their community, and their nation consider their work to be important – and esteemed. Throughout our history, Teach For America has worked to create an understanding that: 1) excellent teaching is grounded in excellent leadership and 2) students in low-income communities are capable of high levels of academic achievement, and when challenged academically, they can excel on an absolute scale. I believe that the messages that we communicate through our recruitment efforts mark the starting point of how we shape public perception. We have primarily accomplished this by working with our recruiters (nearly all of whom are alumni of Teach For America) to help them effectively tell their stories through a variety of venues. By sharing our experiences in the classroom and the communities in which we work, we deftly illustrate the problems and challenges our corps members face. We believe that our ability to

communicate the value – and the difficulty – of our work is essential to our recruiting efforts, and it helps us attract strong applicants.

High-performing, diverse talent drives impact. Teach For America's selectivity and diversity are central to our success.

Our selectivity is critical because the success of our program relies on the effectiveness of our teachers in the classroom and in their leadership throughout their two-year Teach For America commitment and after the corps. We recognize that our particular training and support model is not effective for all individuals who are interested in teaching. Selectivity is also important because it sends a clear message that this is hard work – that not everyone is cut out for it and that we're truly seeking the most talented and dedicated among a generation to take this on.

Diversity is central to our success because we believe that maximizing the diversity of our organization will allow us to benefit from the talent and energy of all those who can contribute to our effort, and also to increase the opportunity for engagement in the circles of influence in our tremendously diverse society. Moreover, we seek to be diverse because we aspire to serve as a model of the fairness and equality of opportunity we envision for our nation.

At the same time that we value each individual who commits to our cause, we also place a particular focus on attracting and fostering the leadership of individuals who share the racial and/or socioeconomic backgrounds of the students underserved by public schools. In terms of race, we place the most significant focus nationally on pursuing the representation of African American and Latino individuals, given that more than 90 percent of the students we reach share these backgrounds. At the same time, we also seek to recruit Native American, Native Hawaiian, and Asian-American corps members and staff members given that we reach many students of these backgrounds in certain Teach For America regions. We emphasize racial, ethnic, and economic diversity to enhance our impact.

Conclusion

Through dedication, passion, and the relentless pursuit of results, we have significantly improved the size, diversity, and quality of our corps. Yet hard work and innovative strategies do not account for all our results. A key element of Teach For America's recruitment is the value we place on teaching, leading, and the power of transformational change in our nation's schools and communities. Our applicants and corps members are drawn not only to challenges and opportunities of impacting the lives of children, but to the honor and prestige they associate with their work. Much like the military, joining Teach For America means joining a mission that is greater than the sum of its parts.

In order to significantly increase the quality and quantity of applicants for federal positions, I firmly believe that elected officials and their constituents must take an active role in promoting respect and appreciation for government service. Those who portray

government work as unimportant, or government workers as ineffective, diminish the prestige and appeal of the federal workforce; this creates inevitable challenges to recruitment. Those who identify federal workers as valuable and patriotic, help provide an environment to promote successful recruitment. I hope you will all take this opportunity and challenge upon yourselves.

Thank you for this opportunity and honor to share our experiences with you.



AFGE Congressional Testimony

STATEMENT BY

WITOLD SKWIERCZYNSKI
PRESIDENT
NATIONAL COUNCIL OF SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION
FIELD OPERATIONS LOCALS
AMERICAN FEDERATION OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES, AFL-CIO

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT OF GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT,
THE FEDERAL WORKFORCE, AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

ON

INSPIRING STUDENTS TO FEDERAL SERVICE

JUNE 21, 2011

American Federation of Government Employees, AFL-CIO
80 F Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20001 * (202) 737-8700 * www.afge.org



Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

My name is Witold Skwierczynski. I am President of the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) Council of Social Security Administration Field Operations Locals. On behalf of AFGE, which represents 625,000 federal employees in 65 agencies throughout the nation, I thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the subject of inspiring students to federal service. AFGE is proud to represent federal government workers because they are the vital threads of the fabric of American life. AFGE members inspect the food we eat and the places we work. They protect us from environmental dangers, and develop treatments and cures for our illnesses and diseases. They protect us from the flow of illicit drugs, maintain the safety of our nation's borders, and protect our communities by incarcerating dangerous felons. They keep our airways and homeland secure from terrorism and our warfighters prepared for any danger. They care for our nation's veterans, serve as a vital link to Social Security recipients, and make the dream of homeownership a reality for millions of Americans.

Hiring the next generation of federal employees is a serious undertaking. Those charged with the task have both a legal and social responsibility to conduct federal hiring in the most open, fair, and competitive way possible, and the plain fact is that openness, fairness, and competition take time. Federal agencies have a legal and moral responsibility to honor veterans' preference. Internal candidates who were selected into career ladder positions must be given the opportunities they have been promised. Background checks must be conducted. Information regarding education and prior employment must be verified. Working for a federal agency is not the same as working at a private firm, and it takes time to make sure an applicant meets the standards and requirements our society expects the federal government to uphold.

AFGE applauds President Obama's Executive Order 13562 (issued December 27, 2010), which repealed the Federal Career Intern Program (FCIP), a widely discredited hiring system that made a mockery of the Merit System and its promise of open competition for federal jobs, as well as veterans' preference.

In addition, the Executive Order created the Pathways Programs, three programs tailored to recruit, train and retain well-qualified candidates:

- the Internship Program for current students,
- the Recent Graduates Program, which will place successful applicants in a two-year development program prior to achieving conversion to career jobs, and
- the Presidential Management Fellows (PMF) Program, which is tailored to advanced degree candidates.

Because the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) regulations for implementation of the three Pathways Programs are still in development, it is, of course, too early to tell what these programs will look like in final form and whether they will avoid the pitfalls that plagued the

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FCIP. AFGE, however, continues to urge that the regulations ensure that the programs use appropriate merit-based procedures for recruitment, provide for equal employment opportunity, apply veterans' preference procedures, and comply with all applicable laws. AFGE understands the need for qualified students, recent college graduates, and advanced degree graduates to move into the federal workforce. But this should not be done at the expense of qualified veterans and current federal employees, many of whom are ideal candidates for hiring or promotion. This is why AFGE wants to ensure that these new programs will not reduce the opportunities for promotion of the current workforce and are also directed at appropriate numbers and types of vacancies.

Political Climate for Federal Employees and Retirees

OPM Director John Berry has noted several times the desire of the Obama Administration to make government service "cool" again. We strongly agree that it is important to support in concrete ways our nation's public servants, and to educate the public about the value of their service to America. If we do this, it will certainly be easier to attract the best and the brightest to federal service.

Unfortunately, however, the current political climate for all public employees, including federal employees, is harsh. Efforts are underway throughout the country to eliminate pensions, severely curtail health insurance benefits, cut or freeze pay levels, contract out government work, and eliminate longstanding collective bargaining rights. In particular for federal employees, the two-year pay freeze proposed by the President and enacted by the Congress is effective this year and next, but there are those who advocate a five-year pay freeze, including freezing all performance-based step increases and bonuses.

Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (FEHBP)

One of the proposals included in the Simpson-Bowles deficit reduction plan advocated turning the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (FEHBP) into a voucher system, with astonishing cuts to the government's contribution to premiums. Based on AFGE's conservative calculations, if that proposal were to become law, by the year 2030, federal employees and retirees would be forced to pay 63% of the premium for Blue Cross/Blue Shield's standard option (the most popular plan in FEHBP), rather than the 33% they pay today.

In addition, the Simpson-Bowles proposal recommended reducing the government's share of health insurance premiums for federal retirees. This proposal is presented as an effort to follow the private sector in the race to the bottom. While it is true that many private firms have broken promises to employees to provide health insurance support in retirement, that is behavior that a Presidential commission should deplore, not seek to emulate.

There are good ways to save money by reforming the FEHBP without taking away benefits from federal retirees, all of whom were promised that the government's share of their health insurance costs in retirement would continue on par with those still in the federal workforce.

FEHBP is an inefficient and poorly structured program with high overhead costs, and high profits guaranteed to the health insurance plans that participate. OPM has also refused to take advantage of rebates for prescription drug costs available to employers that provide such coverage to their retirees. If the true goal of Simpson-Bowles is budget savings, that can be achieved without reducing health insurance benefits or shifting costs onto employees and retirees.

Federal Retirement

Further, the Simpson-Bowles report recommended numerous cuts to federal retirement, including:

- changing the benefit formula from a high-3 basis to a high-5 basis, which we estimate will cut retirees' annuities by three to five percent;
- vastly increasing the amount that employees enrolled in the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) would be required to pay for these reduced annuities;
- reducing cost of living adjustments for FERS and Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) retirees; and
- raising the retirement age for Social Security.

According to the most recent Congressional Research Service (CRS) report, while CSRS can be described as having an unfunded liability of \$674 billion, FERS has a deficit of just \$0.9 billion. Even these "deficits" are irrelevant, according to CRS, as the trust fund out of which benefits are paid "is not in danger of becoming insolvent." None of the proposed cuts to FERS or CSRS is necessary to close a funding gap because both systems are on sound financial footing. The CRS report quotes OPM on the ability of the retirement trust fund to cover all benefits under promised current law: "the total assets of the CSRDF, including both CSRS and FERS, continue to grow throughout the term of the projection, and ultimately reach a level of about 4.1 times payroll, or about 19 times the level of annual benefit outlays."¹ Because these systems face no financial problem or risks, there is no reason to cut benefits or change the financing formula.

High 3 to High 5

The proposed change from "high 3" to "high 5" as a basis for calculating annuities would mean a cut in retirement benefits of anywhere from 3 to 5 percent a year, depending on length of service. Combined with the impact of the two-year pay freeze – threatened by some to be

¹ Civil Service Retirement and Disability Fund, Annual Report of the Board of Actuaries, Civil Service Retirement and Disability Fund, Fiscal Year Ended September 30, 2009, p.18.

extended to five years, this proposal represents a significant lifetime cut in compensation that will only drag down morale, recruitment, and retention for an entire generation.

Increasing Employee Contributions to Retirement

When the 1983 Social Security amendments mandated inclusion of federal employees into the system, Congress and President Reagan replaced CSRS with FERS. FERS was designed to be less costly to the government and to require a greater contribution from employees if they aimed for a retirement benefit equivalent to CSRS. Employees pay 0.8% of salary for their annuity, another 6.2% of salary for Social Security, and 5% of salary in order to obtain the government's full match to the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP). CSRS employees do not pay into Social Security, but pay a total of 7% of salary for their defined benefit pension. Thus, under current law, FERS employees must pay 12% of salary to get a benefit as good as CSRS.

The draconian proposal suggested first by The Third Way, a conservative Democratic think tank, would force FERS employees to contribute approximately 7% more to the defined benefit pension. If enacted, FERS employees would thus have to pay over 18% of salary toward retirement. Most AFGE members would be unable to afford this. In order to make ends meet for their living expenses and responsibilities to their families, they would have to eliminate their contributions to the TSP. The result of that, of course, if that they would lose investment earnings from their own contributions as well as the government match.

If this proposal becomes law, FERS employees, who now constitute 88% of the federal workforce, will be brought down to the level of many irresponsible private employers. Providing inadequate or no retirement benefits in the private sector should not become normative for public sector employers. The fact is that the FERS three-component plan, with Social Security, a defined benefit annuity, and a 401(k)-style savings plan is just like the responsible private sector standard, and the federal government should not aim to match what the worst employers in the private sector get away with. (It should be noted that recent legislation introduced in the Senate would eliminate completely the modest defined benefit for FERS employees.)

"Chained" CPI

AFGE also strongly opposes the Simpson-Bowles' recommendation to substitute a new, inferior measure of inflation called the "chained" Consumer Price Index (CPI) in order to lower COLAs for federal retirees. This proposal would hit FERS retirees twice, because the measure would reduce COLAs for both federal annuitants and Social Security recipients. The so-called "chained CPI" is a highly controversial method for lowering the official measure of inflation. The current CPI measures increases in the prices of the goods and services the typical household buys. The "chained" CPI says if the price of something goes up, instead of counting that increase, substitute the price of another good or service whose price either stayed the same or went up by less. For example, if the price of beef went up, the "chained" CPI would not include that price increase in its calculation. Instead, it would assume that people would be just as well off

if they substituted a lower-priced animal protein in their market basket. The chained CPI literally takes the inflation out of the formula for measuring inflation. This method “cooks the books” to pretend inflation is lower than it is, thereby depriving annuitants and other retirees of the inflation protection that cost of living adjustments are meant to provide.

Social Security Retirement Age

The Simpson-Bowles proposal also suggested gradually raising the age for eligibility for full Social Security benefits in retirement from 67 to 69. The age for early eligibility with reduced benefits would rise from 62 to 64. This cut in Social Security benefits would disproportionately affect minorities and those in jobs that are physically demanding. Today, 25% of all workers age 60 and 61 report a health condition that limits their ability to work, yet this proposal would require them to work almost a decade beyond this age for full benefit eligibility. Although the Commission says it would support a “hardship” exemption for some workers in particularly physically-demanding occupations, it would not cover all workers with health problems that limit their ability to continue working into old age.

Further, the increases in life expectancy that the Simpson-Bowles proposal uses for justification are hugely correlated with income. According to data from the Social Security Administration, the life expectancy of men in the bottom half of the income distribution has risen by just 1.1 years between 1982 and 2006, while those in the top half experienced a 6 year increase in longevity. During this period, the age for eligibility for all workers has risen by 8 months, but the Simpson-Bowles proposal wants to make this problem worse. A hardship exemption will not apply to half of all workers, and half of all workers will have already had their increase in life expectancy accounted for when the full benefit eligibility age rises to 67 by 2027.

Contracting Out Federal Government Work

Finally, federal workers in the Department of Defense (DoD) are under attack because of Secretary Robert Gates’ controversial “Efficiency Initiative.” It’s not that there shouldn’t be an “Efficiency Initiative”—of course, DoD should always be striving to become more efficient. It’s not that civilian employees shouldn’t be asked to sacrifice if the department’s budget is rationalized. However, it is clearly wrong for the Pentagon to insist that civilian employees make additional sacrifices because service contractors aren’t actually being asked to make any meaningful sacrifices.

The failure to include service contractors reveals the “Efficiency Initiative” to be a sham. At a time of budget stringency, it makes no sense not to closely scrutinize the hundreds of billions of dollars DoD service contractors bill to the American people. The Pentagon’s failure to even account for service contractor costs, let alone control and reduce those costs, means that actual savings can never be realized. It also likely means that non-DoD departments will be asked to make even greater sacrifices to make up for the savings DoD cannot achieve because of its stubborn over-reliance on expensive service contractors.

Under the “Efficiency Initiative,” the department’s civilian workforce is capped at FY10 levels. Pentagon officials have misleadingly referred to this as a “freeze.” In fact, an FY10 cap will actually require tens of thousands of civilian positions to be eliminated. There is talk that the Army alone will have to reduce its workforce by 33,000 civilians over the next several years. Moreover, the cap is onerously applied. In Secretary Gates’ words, only “very limited exceptions” are to be allowed. As a practical matter, secretarial approval will be required before a manager or a commander can add in-house staff.

Although Pentagon officials talk about 10% cuts in service contracts, they are not talking about DoD service contracts generally, which cost taxpayers at least \$150 billion annually; rather, they actually mean that the costs of a narrow subcategory of service contracts will be reduced by 10%—which, according to Secretary Gates, will result in less than \$6 billion in savings over three years. I’ve heard more than one incredulous observer remark that such savings are “a drop in the bucket.” In fact, given the amount of taxpayer dollars spent on service contracts over that period, such savings actually constitute a microbe in a drop in the bucket. Needless to say, there is no special approval required before the department may undertake new contracts or expansions of existing contracts. Indeed, according to the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense, the Administration’s FY12 budget request would significantly increase service contracting costs.

What does this mean in practical terms? New work and expansions to existing work will be automatically contracted out—even if we can do the work more efficiently or the work is inherently governmental. Although DoD concedes that insourcing has been “highly successful,” it is obviously difficult for any meaningful insourcing to occur if no new civilian employees can be added—even if civilian employees can do the work more efficiently or the work is inherently governmental. The Pentagon, despite protestations to the contrary, has erected a series of bureaucratic roadblocks in order to prevent even inherently governmental acquisition work from being insourced. In other words, DoD is deliberately allowing contractors to continue to award contracts and oversee other contractors. In fact, activities that insourced successfully are being punished because now they must eliminate a comparable number of positions in order to get back down to FY10 levels. And because the civilian workforce is being reduced to achieve an arbitrary target, work that we are currently performing will likely have to be contracted out—even if we can do the work more efficiently or the work is inherently governmental.

Why won’t the Pentagon allow the civilian workforce to be managed by budgets and workloads instead of by arbitrary constraints? If an activity has funding and workload, why can’t it use civilian employees or contractors—depending on the usual criteria of cost, policy, risk, and the law? Why must those activities sometimes be forced to use contractors—even if civilian employees can do the work more efficiently or the work is inherently governmental? In a time of budget stringency, why does the department insist on tying the hands of its managers and its commanders and forbid them from using civilian employees in certain situations? Obviously, the “Efficiency Initiative” undermines the interests of warfighters and taxpayers alike; and it is completely contrary to the Administration’s ostensible attempt to control defense spending.

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It's also contrary to the law. The department is forbidden from applying arbitrary constraints on the size of its civilian workforce, from not using the more efficient workforce (consistent with military needs), and from failing to give "special consideration" to insourcing certain functions. In fact, AFGE counts the department as acting in defiance of eleven different sourcing and workforce management laws. Congressional experts insist that is merely the short-list.

DoD's "Efficiency Initiative" has put the civilian workforce back into a death spiral. With no new work, no new staff, and no new promotional opportunities, in-house workforces can't help but become less productive and thus become vulnerable to even the most outrageous privatization schemes. Beginning in 2007, the Congress undertook a bipartisan effort to make the sourcing process more accountable to taxpayers and less unfair to civilian employees. The "Efficiency Initiative" threatens to undo all of that work. Last summer, Secretary Gates told *The Washington Post* that "federal workers cost the government 25 percent less than contractors." That the department is poised to repeat so soon the utterly discredited and ruinous downsizing-driven privatization policies of the 1990's is a sad testament to Secretary Gates' failure to heed his own well-reasoned analysis.

Conclusion

To say the very least, Mr. Chairman, unless these efforts to destroy the image and middle-class status of federal employees are not halted, it will not make a bit of difference if the Obama Administration creates the best possible recruitment programs for student interns, and recent undergraduate and graduate students. A candidate with any sense at all would be reluctant to join a workforce which is constantly being maligned and financially undermined for political purposes.

That concludes my testimony. I will be happy to respond to any questions.

**Post-Hearing Questions for the Record
Submitted to the Honorable Christine Griffin
From Senator Daniel K. Akaka**

**“Inspiring Students to Federal Service”
June 21, 2011**

1. In his testimony before the Subcommittee, Mr. McManus suggested that data on the amount of time to hire may be skewed because agencies are not separating the data for jobs filled by an internal candidate and those filled by an external candidate.

Does the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) have data on the time it takes agencies to hire both internal and external candidates available separately? If not, will OPM require agencies to provide that information so OPM and Congress can better understand and hold agencies accountable for reducing the time it takes to hire both internal and external candidates?

The U.S. Office of Personnel Management issued guidance on time-to-hire reporting to Chief Human Capital Officers on April 19, 2011. The guidance was designed to ensure agencies were reporting similar data relating to their internal and external hires:

- In FY 2011, agencies will report time-to-hire information for Delegated Examining (DE) hires, and, if available, report time-to-hire information for all hires where the Job Opportunity Announcement (JOA) was posted on USAJOBS;
- In FY 2012, agencies will report on both DE hires and all hires where the JOA was posted on USAJOBS; and
- In FY 2013, agencies will report solely on all hires where the JOA was posted on USAJOBS, which includes all DE hires.

The first submissions from agencies were due to OPM by July 2011, covering October-December 2010; and January-March 2011. OPM is currently reviewing this information and validating it with agencies. For more information regarding the guidance for reporting time to hire, please access:

<http://chcoc.gov/transmittals/TransmittalDetails.aspx?TransmittalID=3751>

2. The Presidential Hiring Memo included many aspects of my hiring reform legislation from last Congress. I applaud the Administration’s efforts on this initiative and I intend to continue to advocate for additional reforms this Congress.

What additional reforms do you believe still need to be made to improve the Federal hiring system, and is legislative action needed to implement any of these reforms?

OPM has identified additional steps that agencies need to take to improve their hiring reform efforts. To partner with agencies in implementing hiring reform, OPM meets with

CHCO agencies on a quarterly basis to review their progress on action plans to address the President's initiative. Agencies discuss with OPM and OMB successes, challenges and innovative approaches to address their particular agency areas of focus. Additionally, agencies are asked how OPM and OMB can collaborate with them to achieve their goals. Approximately half of the CHCO agencies participate in a review twice a year which provides time between meetings to implement reforms and gauge progress.

To spread the word about OPM's hiring reform efforts, OPM has established a website for Federal human resource professionals and hiring managers to provide these professionals with information, news, and resources. The website can be accessed here: <http://www.opm.gov/HiringReform/>

At this website, Federal human resource professionals and hiring managers can find information and guidance on: Pathways for Students and Recent Graduates; eliminating written essays (KSAs); increasing the use of resumes and cover letters in the Federal hiring process; improving category rating; increasing manager accountability and involvement; improving the quality and speed of hiring; and improving applicant notification so applicants remain informed of where they are in the Federal hiring process.

The website is being continually updated in order to provide human resource professionals and hiring managers with the most current information possible and to address any concerns raised as human resource professionals and hiring managers use the website.

We have also conducted Nationwide Hiring Reform Training Sessions, which have included:

- 17,300 trained (HR professional and hiring managers)
- 351 workshops
- 31 states
- 66 cities
- 55+ agencies/organizations
- 21 Federal Executive Board locations

Additionally, in order to continue to make progress, executive departments and agencies collaborated to enhance the Federal employment search portal, USAJOBS. The latest iteration -- USAJOBS 3.0, is planned for implementation in October 2011. Different from the current version, USAJOBS 3.0 has an increased capacity to provide applicants, hiring managers, and human resource professionals with information to improve the recruitment and hiring process. We are also using social media to stay connected. Our USAJobs Facebook page has over 8,000 "fans"; our "Feds Hire Vets" Facebook page has nearly 5,000 "fans"; our "Hiring Reform" Facebook page has over 1,600 "fans"; and our USAJobs Twitter page has nearly 2,000 followers.

OPM also submitted a legislative proposal to Congress on September 2, 2010, designed to further enhance and streamline the Federal hiring process. The legislative proposal sought to accomplish the following objectives:

- Facilitate faster hiring and sharing of top talent across the Government by permitting agencies to share resumes and select from among candidates who have competed for similar positions at another agency, were assessed, and were determined by the other agency to be among the best qualified candidates for the job. By allowing agencies to make selections from among the thousands of best qualified applicants readily available, applicants will have to apply only once for an occupation, and agencies will be able to eliminate 30-90 days from the hiring timeline.
- Give hiring managers a bigger talent pool from which to choose by eliminating the “rule of three” (which requires numerical ranking and selection from among the top three candidates) and replacing it with an approach in which agencies may establish a mechanism such as a cut-off score to refer candidates for selection.
- Improve our ability to address short-term hiring surges without relying on costly contractors by providing an 18-month noncompetitive appointment – without the ability to convert to a permanent, competitive service position – to meet the urgent needs of agencies.
- Enhance the student loan repayment authority by making it a more flexible and effective recruitment and retention tool.
- Improve our capacity to retain and share institutional knowledge by providing employees the opportunity, subject to certain limitations, to work part-time at the end of their careers and also receive a partial annuity.

We welcome the opportunity to continue working with the Subcommittee on hiring reform legislation.

BACKGROUND
INSPIRING STUDENTS TO FEDERAL SERVICE
JUNE 21, 2011

Background

A large number and percentage of Federal employees are, or soon will be, eligible to retire. In light of the large number of impending retirements, developing a new generation of Federal workers is vital. Federal agencies need to recruit and train new employees, especially for certain hard to fill, mission critical positions. Relationships between agencies and universities can help foster academic programs that prepare students for difficult to fill positions and maximize recruitment efforts to address critical hiring needs. Additionally, internships can be valuable tools for reaching students considering employment with the Federal government.

The first panel of Federal government witnesses will testify on their student and university-based recruitment strategies, including which strategies have proved to be the most successful, barriers they have encountered to successfully recruiting students, and how their experiences can help inform student recruitment strategies across the Federal agencies. In addition, OPM will provide information on the implementation of both the Administration's hiring reform efforts and Executive Order 13562, which is discussed in the next section.

The second panel will provide an academic and private sector perspective on student recruitment. Testimony will include a discussion of how colleges and universities are working to prepare students for Federal service, how they feel the Federal government could better work with colleges and universities, and how public service and academic organizations can assist in this effort. In addition, the Subcommittee will hear testimony from Teach for America on its recruitment strategies and how its experiences could inform student recruitment in the Federal government.

Federal Programs and Initiatives

Executive Order 13562

On December 27, 2010, President Obama issued Executive Order 13562 regarding recruiting and hiring students and recent graduates.¹ This Executive Order eliminates the Federal Career Intern Program and directs OPM to consolidate student and recent graduate programs into three clear program paths. These three programs, the Internship Program, the Recent Graduates Program, and the Presidential Management Fellows Program, are tailored to recruit, train and retain well-qualified candidates.

¹ Executive Order 13562, available at: <http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2010/pdf/2010-33169.pdf>

Hiring Reform

As noted in the Executive Order, the structure and complicity of the Federal hiring process creates a barrier to student recruiting. This Subcommittee has held three hearings on the broken Federal hiring process since 2008 and has continued to encourage OPM and other Federal agencies to improve, streamline, and make the hiring process more candidate-friendly.

In March 2009, Senator Akaka introduced the Federal Hiring Process Improvement Act (S. 736) to modernize government hiring by reducing inefficiencies and simplifying the application process. This bill would have required Federal agencies to develop strategic workforce plans in consultation with OPM, reduce hiring times, post job announcements in plain writing, require timely notification to applicants of their application status, no longer require lengthy essays with initial applications, and make certain other improvements. The Senate passed the bill on May 18, 2010, but the House did not act on this legislation by the end of the 111th Congress. Senator Akaka plans to introduce an updated version of this bill this summer.

On May 11, 2010, President Barack Obama issued a Presidential Hiring Memorandum entitled "Improving the Federal Recruitment and Hiring Process,"² which incorporated many aspects of S. 736. The memorandum directs the Federal agencies and OPM to streamline the application process for Federal jobs and orders a broad reform of the government's recruitment and hiring program, including a reduction in the time to hire, acceptance of resumes, simplification of online forms, and elimination of the written essays with initial applications.

Individual Agency Initiatives

A number of Federal agencies are already making efforts to improve their student recruitment and create relationships with universities. Two such agencies, the Department of Energy and the Government Accountability Office, will be testifying about their efforts at the hearing, but there are others that are also making great strides in this area, including the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, the Secret Service, and the Internal Revenue Service.

Collaboration with Universities and the Private Sector*Inspiring Federal Service Roundtable*

On October 28, 2009, the Harvard Kennedy School and the University of Maryland School of Public Policy hosted a roundtable in collaboration with the OPM to discuss how the Federal government could improve its recruiting and hiring. Participants in the roundtable were a diverse group of senior representatives from the public, private and non-profit worlds, including

²Presidential Memorandum, *Improving the Federal Hiring Process*, May 11, 2010, available at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/presidential-memorandum-improving-federal-recruitment-and-hiring-process>

heads of Federal agencies, Members of Congress, leaders of government employee organizations, senior leaders of private companies and non-profit organizations.

Several key themes ran through the discussions at the roundtable including the need for senior leaders and individual managers to closely focus on recruiting and hiring needs, “branding” to get potential workers excited about the agency or organization, and building continuing relationships with education institutions and other sources of future workers. In addition, participants felt that many innovations to make recruiting and hiring systems more effective can be accomplished with a shared sense of urgency and focused attention from top leadership.³

The Partnership for Public Service

The Partnership for Public Service is a non-profit nonpartisan organization with the goal of revitalizing our Federal government by working to transform the way government works and inspire a new generation to public service. The Partnership is a resource for Federal agencies and assists agencies in developing and implementing custom solutions to address their human capital needs. Through the *Call to Serve* program, the Partnership has partnered with more than 720 schools and 75 Federal agencies to inspire and educate a new generation about Federal service and improve agencies’ ability to recruit and hire the talent our Federal government needs.⁴

The National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration

The National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA) is an institutional membership organization that strives to ensure excellence in public service education and promote the ideal of public service. Members of NASPAA are U.S. universities (or academic units within them) with programs in public affairs, public policy, public administration and nonprofit management.

NASPAA has been involved with government student programs since the establishment of the Presidential Management Fellowship program over 30 years ago. NASPAA is working with its members not only to promote high quality education, but also to help ensure that students coming out of the member institutions have job opportunities available to them. To that end, it is working with its members and Federal agencies to create competency-based educational programs that provide graduates the skills they need to fill agency hiring needs.⁵

³ Information provided to the Subcommittee in a written summary of the roundtable discussion (available upon request)

⁴ Information about the Partnership for Public Service is available at www.ourpublicservice.org

⁵ Information about NASPAA is available at: www.naspaa.org

A Private Sector Success Story: Teach For America

Teach For America (TFA) was established in 1990 and is a national corps of recent college graduates who commit to teach for two years in urban and rural public schools. Its mission is to eliminate educational inequity by enlisting our nation's most promising future leaders in the effort. During TFA's first year in 1990, 500 men and women began teaching in six low-income communities. This year, more than 8,200 men and women teach over 500,000 students in 39 urban and rural regions throughout the country.

This rapid growth required strategic recruiting efforts to target the best and brightest students in our nation's colleges and universities. TFA's recruitment team has developed an aggressive recruitment strategy, which led to its largest number of applicants yet in 2010, with 46,366 college graduates applying for approximately 4,500 positions in the program.⁶

⁶ Information about TFA is available at www.teachforamerica.org



Written Testimony of David T. Ellwood
Dean, John F. Kennedy School of Government
Harvard University

Prepared for

Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management

Hearing Entitled,
"Inspiring Students to Federal Service"

June 21, 2011

Chairman Akaka, Ranking Member Johnson and Members of the Subcommittee:

I am honored to be here before you today. My name is David Ellwood. I am the Dean of the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. The Harvard Kennedy School is a graduate school educating students of many ages for public service.

Today our nation is understandably focused on the large fiscal deficit of our federal government. My message is simple: We face an even greater potential peril from a government people deficit.

The challenges facing this nation are indeed daunting. The budget, terrorism, the economy, health care, the rising political and economic competition from other nations, pandemics, and a dozen other concerns all require governmental leadership, often in close collaboration with business and civil society. Meeting those challenges, and taking advantage of new opportunities created by technology and innovation requires an exceptional cadre of people in government—people of integrity, insight, capacity, and creativity who are committed to serving the needs and desires of the American people and making the world a better place. And at precisely this time of unique peril and complexity and limited resources, many of the best civil servants, those who responded to President Kennedy's iconic call to service, are reaching retirement age.

The good news is that sensational people of all ages stand ready and willing to serve. I see them every day at colleges and universities across this nation. People of all ages have again been seized by a patriotic idealism and a desire to give back. At the Kennedy School, we have hundreds of masters and doctoral students eager to make a difference.

The bad news is that our system of federal government hiring will drive most of them away and is unlikely to find and select the most able among them. Any sizable private business that hired employees in the way the federal government does would have gone out of business long ago.

One Student, Two Employers

Sayce Falk is graduating from the Kennedy School this year. Before coming to the School, he served in the Marines as a platoon commander and company executive officer, and was twice deployed in Iraq.

In October each year, McKinsey & Co, a private management consulting firm, brings a team which includes senior leaders and recently hired graduates to the Kennedy School to interview students selected from initial applications submitted a few weeks earlier. They push the applicants hard. They talk about real projects they have worked on, conveying the excitement and the demands of the work. They flatter and challenge the most promising candidates. Then they make lucrative job offers in early November. The entire process takes seven weeks. Sayce Falk received such an offer.

In October, Falk also applied to work in the federal government under the Presidential Management Fellows (PMF) program. The PMF is billed as the “flagship leadership development program at the professional level” which is designed to develop “a cadre of professional government leaders”. To make a very long, and often frustrating, story short, on March 31st he finally heard he was one of the lucky applicants selected to be a PMF. That meant that federal agencies could hire him with limited red tape, but he still had to find and be offered a specific job. Indeed PMF finalists are given another year to find a job. Falk attended a PMF job fair in late April, was interviewed by the Department of Veterans Affairs, and has a second interview scheduled for early May. Seven months and still counting—for the flagship program. Falk, a top student and former Marine, reported, “I’ve worked twice as hard to find a government job as I did to find one in the private sector; if I weren’t so dedicated to the ideals of public service I would have given up already” – and he is one of the lucky ones.

Unlike the timeframe of weeks it takes for many private employers to extend job offers, our students commonly report that it takes a year to get a job with the federal government – 18 months to 2 years for the diplomatic service. Students who apply through USAJOBS have to do lots of work, but rarely hear anything substantive after they submit their electronic application. The onus is usually on the student to find the job openings, seek out some link to the agency, and fight through the system. They typically go months with no idea where they are in the process. Most give up. Our midcareer students find the system even more frustrating. Many are highly accomplished in fields outside of government, but lack the government experience often required for entry at that stage. Here is another example of a veteran who sought to work in government.

Sloan Gibson graduated West Point, earning both Airborne and Ranger qualifications, and served as an infantry officer in the U.S. Army. He went on to a highly successful career in banking, becoming vice-chairman and chief financial officer at AmSouth Bancorporation. He was deeply involved in his community. Then he came to the Harvard Kennedy School to get a masters degree in 2007 because he wanted to serve his country in government. After graduating, he spent a year trying to get in the door. Eventually, he gave up. Then a recruiter found him. Since September 2008, he has been President of the USO. He was good enough to lead the USO, but he could not find his way into our government.

The nation’s largest employer is also one of the most passive, opaque, detached, and exhausting.

In October 2009, I helped convene an “Inspiring Federal Service” roundtable in Washington D.C. It included senior administration officials, the presidents of the major government employee organizations, members of Congress and their staff, leading scholars, and vitally, the leaders in human resources or recruiting from successful organizations like Google and General Electric and IBM and Teach For America (TFA). The message of the private sector firms and TFA was simple. *They treat recruiting like their future depends on it.* A few key lessons from that day:

- Top managers from the CEO on down, not just HR folks, focus on recruitment. One leader reported that the most senior people at the firm spend 4-8 hours on hiring per week.
- What attracts great people is other great people. People who do the real work of the organization share the excitement and the realities much better than personnel professionals ever could. Often the best talent finders are existing employees. And great companies also make sure their contact with applicants is personal and professional—never bureaucratic.
- Top organizations look for multiple ways to recruit. They form long term relationships with universities, they use internships, they sponsor projects, and they go out of their way to make their organization visible on campus.
- The organizations also emphasized that they looked just as hard for talent from within their organization as from without. People need to know that effective workers inside the organization will be rewarded just as much as talented outsiders are.

Why can't the United States Government treat hiring like the nation's future literally depends on it?

No one from our government really helps students understand the variety of activities that exist in government or how to navigate options and roadblocks they face. Few federal agencies even send out recruiters to college and university campuses. A tiny handful have ongoing relationships with colleges and universities. Fewer still send senior officials who really can describe what it is like to work at that agency. In some respects, it is a testament to the idealism and perseverance of so many Americans that government has the quality of people that it does.

A few agencies have broken through and are finding ways to find attract the very best. The FBI and CIA have established increasingly close relationships at a number of schools including my own. The Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Department of Veterans Affairs have become leaders and dramatically shortened the time between the posting of jobs and their being filled, and have transformed their hiring and recruiting process. So too has the Government Accountability Office. In every case of real change, leadership at the top, including political leadership, has been central. The Director of the Secret Service makes a recruiting visit to my school every year, though sadly he is the only one of such seniority who comes regularly. Our roundtable concluded that the real impediment to getting superb people into government was not rules caused by legislation or demanded by unions nor was it limited resources. It was a lack of leadership.

To their credit, the Obama administration and the Office of Personnel Management have worked hard to improve the federal hiring system. A 2010 Presidential Memorandum to all executive

departments and agencies included some welcome reductions in the paperwork burden on applicants, a somewhat less restrictive selections system, expectations that managers and supervisors be more involved in the hiring process, and the collection of data on the speed of the hiring process with a goal toward increasing it. The December 2010 executive order establishing the internship program and the recent graduates program holds promise as well, though much depends on the shape of the final regulations under the order.

Still, my message to this committee is that the most important answers will not come from redesigned internship programs or special programs for recent graduates—though these are potentially helpful and important.

- First, our leaders in departments and agencies, in the White House, in unions and in the Congress must take government hiring just as seriously as the finest organizations in the private and non-profit sector do. It may be hard to ask an inherently time-limited political appointee to worry about the quality of the permanent employees that his or her successors will inherit, but there may be no more important legacy.
- Second, the federal government must move from a passive bureaucratic hiring model to one that is active, forming relationships with schools in multiple ways, telling students about the variety of opportunities in the government, sending people who do the compelling work in the agency to excite and to help screen applicants, offering jobs on the same cycle as private firms, streamlining the endless sign-offs, creating models where applicants understand the process and the best feel energized, engaged, and excited by it. We need to train those who do the hiring to think very differently.
- Finally, to make these things happen, we must find ways to hold senior leaders along with managers and supervisors accountable for their human resources performance, from the time it takes to hire people, to the quality of people selected, to the quality of the experience of applicants and staff members. We need reliable and mandatory measures of hiring and recruitment effectiveness. We should celebrate the successes, share best practices, encourage collaboration in hiring, and challenge those who fail to act.

Many will fear that these things are too hard or that they will be expensive. Nonsense. An effective and efficient hiring process will not only give the taxpayers better value and save money in the long run; it may actually save in the short run, as we replace layer upon layer of forms and sign offs with streamlined systems favored by our most efficient employers.

Much of the work can and must be done in the executive branch. But the Congress can and must also play a role.

First this committee and agency oversight committees should ask agencies to develop energetic new hiring strategies that are state of the art. Moreover, the Congress can insist that senior government officials collect clear and consistent data on hiring processes, from the time it takes to the number of people involved, to the types of candidates hired, and even the impressions of applicants. Ideally one would engage leaders from the best agencies and the leading organizations in the private and non-profit sectors to help derive and highlight effective practices and to develop proven accountability measures.

Then this committee and others should use this information as well as the hearing and oversight process to stimulate real change. As a former Assistant Secretary, few things got my attention quicker than a request from the Congress to discuss how my agency was performing on some matter. But be careful: we need to use the oversight process to stimulate innovation not stifle it. I encourage you to periodically call upon private as well as public leaders to discuss how well the system is working.

Finally, Congress can work collaboratively with the administration and the various departments when they come forward with new strategies that require legislative changes or exceptions. Be willing to allow agencies to shift resources, and in unique cases to temporarily expand them to get new state of the art hiring processes in place.

I believe the nation is on something of a knife edge. If we continue to fail to replace those leaving government with our most talented citizens, the government will weaken, fewer will want to serve, crises will grow, and a vicious circle of decline can set in. Or we can take advantage of the best America has to offer, finding a way, as we have so often in the past, to create a government of solutions and innovation and collaboration who will help us craft a future worthy of this nation.

I thank you for your time.

