

**Department of Defense
Information Assurance Scholarship Program**

Sponsored by the

DoD Chief Information Officer

SOLICITATION FOR PROPOSALS

From

Universities Designated by the
National Security Agency (NSA) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS)

as

National Centers of Academic Excellence in Cyber Defense Education
and

National Centers of Academic Excellence – Research,
(herein after referred to as CAEs)

and

Universities Designated by the
National Security Agency

as

National Centers of Academic Excellence – Cyber Operations

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

Proposal Submission: 31 May 2017

SUBJECT TO AVAILABILITY OF FUNDS

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

I. INTRODUCTION

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

Regionally and nationally accredited U.S. institutions of higher education, designated by the National Security Agency (NSA) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) as National Centers of Academic Excellence in Cyber Defense Education or National Centers of Academic Excellence in Cyber Defense Research and designed by the National Security Agency (NSA) as National Centers of Academic Excellence – Cyber Operations (hereinafter referred to as CAEs) are invited to submit proposals for developing and managing a full-time, institution-based, grant-funded scholarship program in the disciplines underpinning cybersecurity for Academic Year 2017-2018. CAEs may propose collaboration with other accredited institutions, and are encouraged to include accredited post-secondary minority institutions.

Consistent with 10 U.S.C. 2200b, CAE proposals to this solicitation may also request modest collateral support for purposes of institutional capacity building to include faculty development, laboratory improvements, and/or curriculum development, in cybersecurity related to providing a strong foundation for a Information Assurance Scholarship Program. [Special note: Requirements for proposing modest capacity building support are detailed in ANNEX II.

To continue the development of a strong foundation for the scholarship program during the Academic Year 2017-2018, competition will be limited to full-time students entering their third or fourth years of undergraduate education; students in their first or second year of a master's degree program; students pursuing doctoral degrees.

II. TERMINOLOGY

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

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

- Computer forensics
- Defensive information operations
- Critical information infrastructure assurance

Relevant academic disciplines, with concentrations in cybersecurity, would include, but are not limited to:

- i. Biometrics
- ii. Business:
 1. Management
 2. Administration
 3. Process Analysis
- iii. Computer:
 1. Crime Investigations
 2. Engineering
 3. Forensics
 4. Information Science
 5. Information Systems
 6. Programming
 7. Science
 8. Systems Analysis
- iv. Critical Information Infrastructure Assurance
- v. Cyber:
 1. Operations
 2. Security
 3. Policy
- vi. Cryptography
- vii. Database Administration
- viii. Data Management
- ix. Digital and Multimedia Forensics
- x. Electrical Engineering
- xi. Electronics Engineering
- i. Information Assurance:
 1. Systems and Product Acquisition
 2. Training, Education and Management
- xii. Information Security (Assurance)
- xiii. Information Systems
- xiv. Information Technology:
 1. Acquisition
 2. Program/Project Management
- xv. Mathematics
- xvi. Network Administration and Operations
- xvii. Network Management
- xviii. Operation of Computer Emergency Response Teams
- xix. Software Engineering
- xx. Systems Security Engineering
 - ii. Threat and Vulnerability Assessment, to include Risk Management
- iii. Web Security
- iv. And other similar disciplines as approved by the DoD Chief Information Office (DoD CIO).

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

III. OVERVIEW OF PROGRAM SCOPE

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

A. Academic Year 2017-2018 The DoD estimates awarding scholarships (via grant awards) for a period of one year (beginning with the fall 2017 semester) to designated CAEs, operating independently or in collaboration with other accredited institutions, including accredited post-secondary minority institutions. The purpose is to lay a sound foundation for the development of a robust information assurance program for undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in the CAE or its collaborating institutions' degree and graduate certificate information assurance programs. To this end, institutions receiving grants will be required to conduct a self-evaluation to identify improvements in program design and management for implementation in future years. In addition to proposing establishment of an Cyber scholarship program within the university, CAEs may also request funds for capacity building activities. Grant awards are contingent upon availability of funds.

B. Capacity Building: This particular area is subject to the availability of funds. In accordance with 10 U.S.C. 2200b, CAEs may request modest support for building the institution's capacity for research and education in cybersecurity in addition to the scholarship proposals. The DoD has determined focus areas for this opportunity. Proposals submitted should reflect student engagement: opportunities for the CAE students to participate and gain additional understanding of cybersecurity as it relates to the extended community and DoD.

The two focus areas are DoD Partnerships and Outreach to Technical Colleges, Community Colleges, and/or Minority Institutions. Activities that may support these topics may include but are not limited to: **1) Faculty development, 2) Facility/Lab/Technology development and/or, 3) Curriculum development.**

Details for all activities will be described in ANNEX II. CAE requests for capacity building support should be part of the overall institutional submission, but identified in it's how section of the submission. Narratives for the scholarship and capacity building portions should be severable from each other

D. Proposal Formats: At a minimum and to be eligible to submit a capacity building proposal, the submission must respond to the establishment of a Information Assurance Scholarship Program (Basic / recruitment).

E. The DoD IASP Application Due Dates: CAEs electing to submit a proposal to establish a scholarship program must ensure that they establish a due date for student scholarship applications that will allow them sufficient time to evaluate the student applicants and prepare their recommendations of student candidates for postmarking or emailing on/before **Wednesday 31 May 2017**, These dates are critical in order to ensure grant awards as close to August 1, 2017 as possible. See Section XII, "Deadline for Submission", for dates and Attachment A "Proposal Preparation Instructions and Certifications" for details on submission requirements.

F. The DoD Role: While CAEs are required to provide the DoD an assessment of each applicant, the actual selection of student scholars will be made by DoD evaluators. Students selected as Information Assurance Scholars will receive the full cost of tuition, books (from the institution/degree specific required book list, not books which are optional for the class), required fees (including health care), and a stipend to cover room and board. The stipend levels are \$22,500 for undergraduate students and \$30,000 for graduate (Master's/PhD) students. Awards will be made via a grant to the CAE. Selecting agencies will also provide sponsors who will maintain contact with the student during the scholarship period, and who will facilitate the student's entry into internships, if applicable, and eventually DoD employment. The DoD IASP Program Office will contact CAEs submitting successful proposals to develop agreements governing the character, scheduling, and periodic assessment of student internships.

G. Future Opportunities for Returning Students: Contingent on adequate funding appropriations, it is anticipated that current CAE grantees and successful scholarship recipients will receive follow-on support to complete their degree program. Returning students will be required to re-apply each year by submitting the entire student application, one copy of their official transcripts, reflecting maintenance of the required grade point average and an endorsement/recommendation letter from the Principal Investigator.

IV. STUDENT OBLIGATIONS

Students selected to participate in the DoD IASP will be required to sign a written agreement obligating them to work for the DoD, as a civilian employee for one calendar year for each year of scholarship assistance. However, should a student apply for only one semester (or six months) of scholarship, the student must still agree to work for the DoD for one year. This agreement is provided to the selecting agency for their records to ensure compliance with the service commitment. Students will also be required to serve in internship positions, if timing permits, with the DoD organizations during the time they are receiving scholarship support until they complete the course of study provided for by the scholarship. These internships will be arranged by the DoD to occur during the summer or other breaks between school terms, as appropriate to the individual's circumstances and the institution's calendar. The internship does not count toward satisfying the period of obligated service incurred by accepting the scholarship. Students will be required to formally accept or decline the scholarship within 15 days of notification. Non-acceptance by this date will mean the scholarship will be offered to the next available student.

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

[†] If a student is applying for only one half of a school year (or graduates 1 semester early), that student shall only receive half the stipend amount. The stipend is based upon an annual full-time attendance at the CAE. Students planning to graduate in December 2017, must be clearly identified (for placement purposes).

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

Undergraduate scholarship recipients will be required to maintain a 3.2 out of 4.0 grade point average or the equivalent; graduate students will be required to maintain an overall 3.5 out of a 4.0 grade point average, or equivalent. Failure to maintain satisfactory academic progress will constitute grounds for termination of financial assistance and termination of internship and/or employment appointment. Additionally, students who fail to complete the degree program satisfactorily or to fulfill the service commitment upon graduation shall be required to reimburse the United States, in whole or in part, the cost of the financial (scholarship) assistance provided to them. CAEs will be responsible for monitoring student progress and will notify the DoD IASP Program Manager should any student scholar fail to attain minimum academic standards required for continuing scholarship support.

Except for small achievement awards, not to exceed \$5,000 in any academic year, a student may not accept simultaneous remuneration from another scholarship or fellowship.

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

V. CONDITIONS OF THE GRANT COMPETITION

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

VI. CAE ROLE IN RECRUITING AND ASSESSING SCHOLARSHIP CANDIDATES

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

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

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

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

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

C. Submitting Student Scholarship Applications and CAE Review and Endorsement: CAEs that propose to support the scholarship program are required to receive and submit all applications in response to the announcement and to evaluate the applicants as described in detail above. See instructions on requirements and submissions in the Attachment A, Proposal Preparation Instructions. All applications, including those not recommend must be included in the submission.

VII. TECHNICAL PROPOSALS

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

VIII. COST PROPOSALS

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

IX. GRANT PROPOSAL EVALUATION CRITERIA AND SELECTION PROCESS

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

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

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

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

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

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

F. The realism and reasonableness of the cost proposal.

X. AWARDS

Scholarship notifications for students will be announced to the CAEs in the June 2017 time frame. The grants for Scholarships (Basic) and ANNEX II will be awarded in the July/August 2017 timeframe. Awards will be made for one year only. The DoD may award a lower level of funding than that proposed.

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

However, as in the case of the capacity grants described above, the institution's technical proposal must demonstrate exceptional merit and potential for full implementation in succeeding phases of student recruitment and selection.

XI. OTHER ITEMS

Individuals supported by a grant awarded as a result of this solicitation must be U.S. Citizens, or permanent residents admitted to the U.S. for permanent residence prior to award. To be eligible for an award, an organization must submit a certificate of Assurance or Compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and be constantly in compliance with the Act.

As indicated in Executive Order 12549, "...Executive departments and agencies shall participate in a government wide system for non-procurement debarment and suspension. A person who is debarred or suspended shall be excluded from Federal financial and non-financial assistance benefits under Federal programs and activities. Debarment or suspension of a participant in a program by one agency shall have a government wide effect."

XII. SYSTEM OF AWARD MANAGEMENT (SAM)

SAM is the primary Government repository for prospective federal awardee information and the centralized Government system for certain contracting, grants, and other assistance related processes. All contractors must be registered in the SAM to receive solicitations, awards, or payments. To register in the SAM, you may use any one of the following methods: (1) telephone: 1-866-606-8220; (2) input directly to the SAM through the internet at: <https://www.acquisition.gov>. Processing time for registration of an application submitting an application may take up to five (5) business days. Should you need additional information, visit their home page at: <http://www.sam.gov>.

XIII. SYSTEM OF AWARD MANAGEMENT (SAM)

"Acquisition Resource Center (ARC) Business Registry means the primary Maryland Procurement Office (MPO) repository for contractor information required for the conduct of business with MPO.

"Registered in the ARC Business Registry" means that all mandatory information is included in the ARC Business Registry. By submission of an offer, the offeror acknowledges the requirement that a prospective awardee must be registered in the ARC Business Registry prior to award, during performance, and through payment of any contract resulting from this solicitation. Lack of registration in the ARC Business Registry shall make an offeror ineligible for award. MPO established a goal of registering all contractors in the ARC Business Registry to provide a market research tool and to facilitate communication between the MPO and the contractor community. Offerors that are not already registered in the ARC should apply for registration immediately upon receipt of this solution. The Contractor is responsible for the accuracy and completeness of the data within the ARC, and of any liability resulting from the Government's reliance on inaccurate or incomplete data. The Contractor agrees to periodically update information when previously provided information changes. To remain registered in the ARC Business Registry after the initial registration, the Contractor is required to confirm annually on or before the anniversary of the initial registration that the information is accurate and complete. Offerors that are not already registered in the ARC Business Registry shall register via the internet at: <http://www.nsaarc.net/>

XIV. DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION

See the proposal preparation instructions for details on the submission of proposals. Institutionally approved, signed, completed proposals which include all items listed above and all student applications must be **postmarked or emailed on/before Wednesday, 31 May 2017.**

XV. LATE SUBMISSIONS

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

Proposals or student materials that are postmarked after the deadline of 31 MAY 2017, are "late" and will not be considered for an award or scholarship.

XVI. INCOMPLETE PROPOSALS

Proposals or student materials submitted in the wrong format, using wrong forms, or missing items will be deemed incomplete and will not be considered for an award of scholarship program selection.

XVII. CONTACT INFORMATION

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

DoD IASP	
National Security Agency	
9800 Savage Road	e-mail: askiasp@nsa.gov
Fort George G. Meade, MD 20755-6804	410-854-6206