

NOAA OFFICE OF EDUCATION

How to Host an Undergraduate Scholar

Guidance for Mentors



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HOW TO HOST AN UNDERGRADUATE SCHOLAR

Background

Annually in September, the NOAA Office of Education (OED) issues a broadcast message to NOAA offices and programs nationwide to host undergraduate scholarship recipients in the Jose E. Serrano Educational Partnership Program with Minority Serving Institutions (EPP/MSI) and the Ernest F. Hollings Scholarship Program. Undergraduate scholars are full-time undergraduate students majoring in NOAA mission-related disciplines, including, but not limited to, oceanic, environmental, and atmospheric sciences, mathematics, engineering, remote sensing technology, physical and social sciences including, geography, physics, and hydrology.

Approximately 140 scholarship recipients are selected annually in April. Hollings and EPP/MSI Scholarship recipients receive an OED-funded award that includes: academic assistance; a 10-week paid internship in NOAA mission-related research, technological, policy, and management; housing assistance; conference travel; and round-trip travel to the internship site. EPP/MSI undergraduate scholarship recipients participate in an additional 10-week paid internship during the second year of their scholarship.

Program Objectives

The NOAA Hollings and EPP/MSI Undergraduate Scholarship Programs are designed to meet the following objectives.

1. The NOAA Hollings and EPP/MSI Undergraduate Scholarship Programs will enhance the pipeline of high quality, diverse students in fields of science, engineering, mathematics, and technology for the future U.S. workforce. The programs will recruit highly qualified students from throughout the United States and its Territories.
2. More specifically, the NOAA Undergraduate Scholarship Programs will enhance the number and diversity of students who graduate with degrees and experiences in NOAA mission critical sciences. The program will provide opportunities for the scholars to: become familiar with NOAA's various offices and sites and with NOAA scientific and technological programs; enhance their professional development in science, technology, engineering, mathematics and areas related to NOAA's mission; continue their education in a NOAA-related field of study; and become trained as STEM professionals for potential employment in fields that support the NOAA mission enterprise. A unique aspect of this program is that it will challenge students to expand beyond the broad academic foundation provided by their institution and focus on research or operational issues consistent with NOAA's mission.
3. The NOAA Undergraduate Scholarship internships will also promote collaboration between NOAA and the academic community. These collaborations will encourage linkages between the NOAA scientific community and the academic community and enhance the educational base for NOAA mission-critical fields of study. By supporting scholars in these programs, NOAA will increase the number of undergraduate students actively engaged in NOAA mission critical science,



management, and policy, which will enhance the educational programs in these areas offered by academic institutions.

Submitting an Internship Opportunity

1. The OED Undergraduate scholars are required to participate in a project directly related to the NOAA-mission critical science, management, and policy. Hollings scholars majoring in science teacher education may participate in projects involving outreach. EPP/MSI scholars may only participate in projects involving research, resource management or operational issues consistent with NOAA’s mission. Host offices are required to identify a discrete project that the undergraduate scholar may complete within a 9-week timeframe.
2. The mentor and co-mentor must have a professional, science, management, or policy, background, and be able to provide guidance to the scholar on the research/science project.
3. The mentor and/or co-mentor will be required to take mentor training if they have not had training within the last two years (see section on Mentor Training below).
4. **Internship Opportunity (IO) positions may only be submitted by NOAA employees.** To serve as a mentor for the OED Student Scholarship Programs, an IO position must be described and submitted in the online **Student Scholarship Internship Opportunity (SSIO) System** for review and approval. All projects must be substantive, with a hypothesis or objective(s) and planned outcome(s). Past and potential mentors are encouraged to submit Internship Opportunities before October 1, but opportunities may be submitted through March 31.
5. **If the proposed Mentor is not a NOAA Employee:** A non-NOAA scientist may serve as a co-mentor. Co-mentors who are not NOAA employees may participate and even lead the scholar’s project under the endorsement and guidance of a NOAA scientist. The co-mentor must work at the facility where the project tasks are being conducted. NOAA employees may submit an IO on behalf of a non-NOAA scientist. The non-NOAA scientist must be identified on the IO entry form.
6. **If you are contacted directly by an EPP or Hollings Scholar:** The mentor and co-mentor must have a professional, scientific background, and be able to provide guidance to the scholar on the research/science project. **All Internship Opportunities must be submitted through the online SSIO system and approved.**

Accessing the SSIO Online System

To access the SSIO online system, go to: <https://oedwebdbapps.iso.noaa.gov/SSIO/>. Please read the “Mentor Instructions” for creating a user account using your NOAA e-mail, and submitting an internship opportunity.



Review and Approval of Submitted Internship Opportunity

- a. Once the NOAA Student Scholarship Programs Team reviews the Internship Opportunity, the status will change from Pending to Approved/Disapproved. The Mentor will receive e-mail notification within 2 business days with the status of their Internship Opportunity. An Internship Opportunity that is Disapproved will have comments attached explaining why it was not accepted. Internship opportunities are not approved if they do not describe a project. Hollings and EPP/MSI intern's summer project should not involve conference/workshop planning. Only students majoring in science teacher education or policy will be able to participate in internships that involve public outreach or developing coursework.
- b. Students will review only the Internship Opportunities that have been approved in the system. Students will be allowed to search the opportunities starting October 1 through March 31. Scholars must select an internship by March 31.

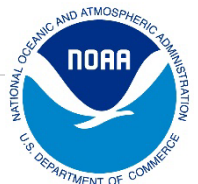
Interviewing Scholars

Scholars will begin exploring internships in the SSIO system in October. Once an Internship Opportunity is posted as available, students will begin contacting mentors to discuss their interest in the project. Mentors may receive inquiries from several scholars about their Internship Opportunity. Mentors are encouraged to interview more than one scholar to determine which student is best suited for their project. Scholars are also encouraged to contact more than one mentor about internship opportunities of interest to them. Mentors are advised to inform the scholars that they are interviewing other scholars. Mentors and scholars are encouraged to follow-up with each other concerning a decision to host and conduct an internship.

Note: Many scholars secure their internship by the end of November/early December in order to conduct a site visit to the NOAA facility hosting them during their winter academic break.

Selecting a Scholar

1. Once the mentor has decided on a scholar for their project, the scholar must email EPP.USP@noaa.gov (EPP/MSI) or StudentScholarshipPrograms@noaa.gov (Hollings) to inform OED that a match has been made and copy the mentor on the email. The scholar's name and the title of the internship should be listed. The OED Scholarship programs staff will review the selection and e-mail the mentor and the student approval/disapproval within 48 hours of submission to OED. The email will also include instructions and a Travel Request Form for the



site visit. Once an internship opportunity match has been approved, it will no longer be available in the SSIO system.

1. If approved, OED will recommend the mentor and scholar decide on a time for the scholar to visit the NOAA facility after the scholar receives the approval email from the Hollings or EPP/MSI Scholarship staff. The scholar is required to complete and submit a Travel Request Form to the relevant program Scholarship staff to request travel for the site visit. The NOAA scholar is required to e-mail the NOAA mentor their resume prior to an approved site visit. The scholar and mentor are not to purchase airline, bus, or train tickets. Tickets purchased outside the approved process will not be reimbursed.

Site Visit

The site visit provides the student with the opportunity to meet with the NOAA scientist/mentor and other staff, discuss the project in greater detail, explore housing options, and assess local transportation requirements. OED recommends the scholar travel during the winter or spring semester break to an approved NOAA site to finalize their summer internship.

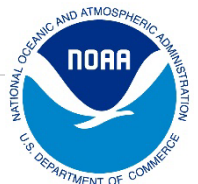
Scholars will be permitted 3 days and 2 nights for the site visit. Travel may be scheduled for departure Sunday through Thursday.

Personal funds or funds from the host office should not be committed to site visit travel arrangements. OED WILL MAKE ALL TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS through a support contractor. Scholars will only be permitted ONE site visit. All site visits must be approved and scheduled by March 31. Travel to the NOAA internship site must be completed by mid-April.

Summer Internship

It is a program requirement for all Hollings and EPP/MSI scholarship recipients to participate in a summer internship prior to the start of their senior year. EPP/MSI scholarship recipients conduct two summer internships—the first immediately following their sophomore year, and the second is conducted the summer prior to the start of their senior year. Scholarship recipients are required to select an internship at a NOAA office or facility during the defined 9-week summer period. All students are required to participate in a project that can be completed within 9 weeks. The 10th week is spent at NOAA headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland, at the end of the summer where they present the results of their summer internship project to NOAA and other scholarship recipients. Students will receive a bi-weekly stipend payment from NOAA OED for a maximum of 10 weeks. Students who report to their internship early or stay past 9 weeks will not receive a bi-weekly stipend payment beyond the 10-week time period.

- The scholars are not considered to be performing work or a job, rendering advisory or personal services, or providing expert advice. There is no commitment to future employment by the host



organization or NOAA. Scholars are participating in the NOAA Undergraduate Scholarship Programs primarily for the experience and educational benefits derived from conducting research in the NOAA mission sciences. Office of Education Hollings and EPP/MSI scholarship recipients are not Federal employees or contractors. The scholars are administratively associated with NOAA and are regarded as student interns during the 10-week internship period.

Host Office: The host office does not enter into an employee/employer relationship with the undergraduate scholars. There is no cost associated with hosting an OED scholarship recipient. The Hollings and EPP/MSI undergraduate scholars are seeking a summer project and NOAA scientists to provide mentorship and guide them through a discrete science project. The internship should not be a series of small project and/or tasks or conference/workshop planning.

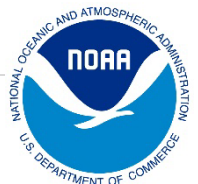
Annually, the official start date for summer internships is the last week in May (Tuesday following the Memorial Day holiday). Students on the semester system start their internship by the official start date. Exceptions are granted for scholars attending colleges and universities on the quarter system, who begin internships mid-June and end by mid-August. Scholars may begin their summer internship before or after the last week in May, if the mentor approves the start date. Upon approval by the mentor, the scholar must send an email with the new internship start date to epp.usp@noaa.gov (EPP/MSI) or StudentScholarshipPrograms@noaa.gov (Hollings).

The scholar must be in residence at the approved NOAA facility during the entire period of the internship appointment. The scholar's internship participation must be conducted in a manner, and in accordance with, a time schedule that meets the overall requirements of the host office. The interns are expected to be at the host facility during normal, or agreed upon working hours and at all times observe and conform to all applicable rules, regulations, and requirements of the facility including, but not limited to, those respecting environment, safety, and health (ES&H) and ES&H training requirements, security, operating and health physics procedures, drug free workplace notification requirements, and conduct.

NOAA will not approve or pay the cost for students who rent cars during the summer internship. NOAA recommends that students select a summer internship site where there is accessible public transportation if they do not have access to personal vehicles during the summer internship. **OED Scholars are not permitted to drive a government vehicle.**

Internship Travel

Hollings and EPP/MSI scholars do not have a travel budget during the summer internship. If a mentor requires the scholar to visit another office or research site, the mentor is responsible for arranging travel and providing funds to cover the expenses using invitational travel. The OED does not budget funds for additional travel activities. However, OED will make all arrangements and provide transportation to and from the summer internship site and to Silver Spring, MD, for the Science and Education Symposium.



Science and Education Symposium

The program requires all scholars to make an oral or poster presentation of their summer project at NOAA Headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland, nine weeks from the start of the official internship start (Tuesday following the Memorial Day holiday), which concludes the 10-week summer internship. Scholars (quarter system students) starting their summer internships late (by mid-June) will return to their NOAA facility to complete the remaining weeks of their internship, pending the availability of funds. Guidance for the symposium and oral/poster presentations will be provided to scholars and mentors at the start of the summer internship.

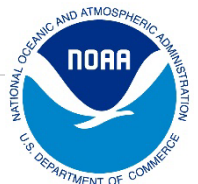
Mentor's Roles and Responsibilities

During the summer internship the scholar will need a workspace, computer, internet access, printer, and telephone.

NOAA employees selected as mentors are required to complete Mentor Training if they have not completed mentor training within the past two years.

Program guidelines require that mentors provide day-to-day, technical and/or research guidance to the interns. During the internship period:

1. Students and mentors are required to discuss and **complete and sign a Project Plan** (Hollings, [click here](#)) or **Research Project Plan** (EPP/MSI, [click here](#)) **during the first two weeks of the summer internship.** Email the signed copy to the NOAA Student Scholarship Programs staff at: EPP.USP@noaa.gov (EPP/MSI) or StudentScholarshipPrograms@noaa.gov (Hollings);
2. **Bi-weekly Project Training Records** are to be submitted to the NOAA Student Scholarship Programs staff throughout the duration of the summer internship. NOAA mentors are required to verify the scholar's Project Training Record and related tasks every two weeks. Mentors will receive an email from EPP.USP@noaa.gov (EPP/MSI) or StudentScholarshipPrograms@noaa.gov (Hollings) that contains a link to verify the scholar's Project Training Record. Training record periods and instructions for completing the Project Training Record will be emailed to mentors prior to the start of the summer internship.
3. **NOAA mentors are required to conduct a mid-term assessment** with the scholar during the fourth week of the internship, and provide constructive feedback/comments to the scholar and the Office of Education (online survey). The mid-term assessment (online survey) will be sent to mentors in mid-June; and
4. **NOAA mentors are required to complete a final evaluation** (online survey) at the end of the summer internship. Final evaluation survey will be emailed to mentors at the end of August.



Mentor Training

NOAA employees selected as mentors are required to complete online mentor training recommended by the Office of Education if they have not completed mentor training in the past two years. Potential mentors in need of mentor training may visit the Commerce Learning Center (CLC) at: <https://doc.csod.com/client/doc/default.aspx> . The CLC has web-based courses available. Program recommends: “*Fostering Mentoring Relationships*” or other available CLC mentoring/coaching courses. Upon completion, mentors should email their certificate to: EPP.USP@noaa.gov (EPP/MSI) or StudentScholarshipPrograms@noaa.gov (Hollings).

Scholar's Roles and Responsibilities

Internship Requirement: The **Hollings scholar’s** summer internship is intended to provide “hands-on” multi-disciplinary educational experience in NOAA mission critical scientific, research, technological, policy, management, and education activities. The scholar will select a specific defined project with a beginning and an end under the guidance of a mentor. The mentor must have a professional, scientific background, and will be responsible for guiding and assisting the scholar during the internship, interacting with the scholar prior to and after the internship to link the professional and academic experience.

The **EPP/MSI scholar’s** summer internships are intended to provide “hands-on” research experiences in NOAA mission critical scientific, research, and technological activities. The mentor must have a professional, scientific background, and provide guidance to the scholar on the research project. The EPP/MSI scholar will select a defined scientific research project with a beginning and an end under the guidance of a trained mentor. The mentor will be responsible for guiding and assisting the scholar during the internship, interacting with the scholar prior to and after the internship to link the professional and academic experience.



Frequently Asked Questions

NOAA Mentors and potential NOAA Mentors

What is the role of the NOAA mentor?

The NOAA mentor selected by the scholar is responsible for providing the scholar with: a NOAA-related project in support of the scholar's academic field of study that can be completed in 10-weeks; day-to-day guidance as needed; workspace; a computer; internet access, telephone, and fax. NOAA mentors will provide guidance on the research, science, operations, outreach, or policy topic, as well as assist the scholar in the selection of appropriate coursework related to NOAA's mission for the duration of the scholar's participation in the program. The NOAA mentor will assess the scholar's progress during a mid-term and final evaluation; and provide constructive feedback.

Within the first two weeks of the summer internship, the NOAA mentor and scholar must complete and sign a Project Plan ([Hollings Program](#)) or Research Project Plan ([EPP/MSI Program](#)) and e-mail the signed plan to the scholarship programs staff at: StudentScholarshipPrograms@noaa.gov (if hosting a Hollings scholar) and EPP.USP@noaa.gov (if hosting an EPP/MSI scholar).

The NOAA mentor is responsible for:

- Completing Mentor training (*if not completed within past two years*) at Commerce Learning Center (CLC), <https://doc.csod.com/client/doc/default.aspx>. The CLC has online courses available. Program recommends: “*Fostering Mentoring Relationships*” or other available CLC mentoring/coaching courses. Upon completion, mentors should email their certificate to: EPP.USP@noaa.gov (EPP/MSI) or StudentScholarshipPrograms@noaa.gov (Hollings);
- Signing the scholar's Project/Research Training Report every two weeks;
- Providing guidance on technology, science, outreach, policy, operations, education, and/or research activities;
- Conducting a mid-term assessment (online survey will be provided to mentors mid-June) and providing the scholar and Student Scholarships program staff with your comments;
- Supporting the scholar's presentation during the 10th week of the internship; and
- Completing an evaluation (online survey will be provided to mentors end of August) with the scholar upon completion of the internship.

How do scholars select a NOAA mentor?

Scholars are provided a list of nationwide NOAA internship opportunities during the early-fall. Scholars contact the prospective NOAA mentor to discuss the project further to determine their interest. If a mutual agreement is reached, the student must e-mail the Scholarship programs staff, and copy the mentor, that a match has been made along with the mentor's name and contact information, as well as the title of the project selected for the 10-week summer period. The OED scholarship programs staff will review the selection and email the mentor and student approval/disapproval within 48 hours of submission to OED. If approved, OED will recommend the mentor and scholar decide on a date and time (not to exceed three days) for the scholar to visit the NOAA facility. The scholar is required to complete and submit a completed Travel Request Form to the Scholarship programs staff to request travel for the site visit. The NOAA scholar is required to e-mail the NOAA mentor their resume prior to



an approved site visit. The scholar and mentor are not to purchase airline, bus, or train tickets as they will not be reimbursed.

As a potential mentor with a single opportunity and several inquiries, how do I determine which scholar is best suited for the position?

The selection process is like a job interview. Potential scholars are asked questions about their skills; their academic, scientific, and research interests; and their overall success in courses relevant to the NOAA mentor's project, etc. The mentor should be mindful of the information exchange with the potential scholar because the scholars are contacting several potential mentors, and must also agree to the selection.

Is training available for NOAA mentors?

Yes. NOAA employees selected as mentors are required to complete online mentor training recommended by the Office of Education if they have not completed mentor training in the past two years. Potential mentors in need of mentor training may visit the Commerce Learning Center (CLC) at: <https://doc.csod.com/client/doc/default.aspx>. The CLC has online courses available. Program recommends: “*Fostering Mentoring Relationships*” or other available mentoring/coaching courses. Upon completion, mentors should email their certificate to: EPP.USP@noaa.gov (EPP/MSI) or StudentScholarshipPrograms@noaa.gov (Hollings).

Can NOAA mentors have more than one scholar?

Yes. NOAA mentors may host more than one scholar per summer provided each scholar has a discreet project assigned to them; hence, scholars may not share a NOAA project.

Do NOAA mentors provide a NOAA Badge?

No. NOAA badges are obtained for scholars by the Office of Education upon completion of a low-risk background investigation/FBI fingerprint check and mailed to mentors prior to the start of the summer internship.

Will the NOAA mentor create a NOAA e-mail account for the scholar?

No. NOAA OED creates and maintains NOAA e-mail accounts for all scholars for their two-year appointment in the scholarship program. The scholars are fully supported (academic stipend, summer internship bi-weekly stipend, housing allowance) by NOAA OED. The scholars are part of and supported by NOAA OED for the 10 weeks spent at NOAA operating units. The scholars' email accounts will be maintained by the OFA Mail Admin Group and will not be transferred to the operating units during their scholarship appointment.

Can the NOAA mentor change the summer project?

In the event a NOAA mentor changes the summer project, the NOAA mentor can request a change to the project with the scholar and in coordination with the OED. Project changes must be agreed upon by the NOAA mentor, scholar and the OED. If the new project is found to be unsuitable for the scholar, the scholar is required to select another NOAA mentor and project for the remainder of the summer internship.



Can the NOAA mentor assign multiple projects to the scholar?

No. Each scholar must have one project which can be completed in 9-weeks. At the end of the 9 weeks, the scholar must present the results of that project to the NOAA community in Silver Spring, Maryland.

Can the NOAA mentor pay for the scholar's travel to NOAA field sites and/or conferences during the internship?

Yes. If funds are available, NOAA mentors, using invitational travel, may travel their scholar to NOAA field sites, conferences and meetings that would enhance the scholar's summer internship experience and add value to their project. The Hollings Scholarship has funds to support the travel for the scholar to present their NOAA work at two conferences during their term in the scholarship program. NOAA mentors are encouraged to work with their scholar to submit an abstract to a professional conference where the scholar presents the results of their summer internship project.

Can the NOAA mentor attend the final presentations? Will the Office of Education pay for the NOAA mentor's travel?

The Office of Education is unable to provide any travel support to Silver Spring, Maryland, for the NOAA mentor to attend the final week of presentations. However, NOAA mentors are encouraged to attend the final presentations both to support their scholar and to evaluate oral and poster presentations during the symposium.

What is the NOAA program evaluation process?

At the midpoint and end of the summer internship, NOAA mentors will receive an evaluation survey from the Office of Education. NOAA mentors are asked to evaluate the scholar's preparedness, contribution, and performance during the summer internship. Scholars are also provided a separate evaluation at the end of the internship to provide feedback on their experience with the project and the NOAA mentor.



Virtual Internships

While in-person internships are a program requirement, virtual alternatives may be considered under extenuating circumstances, such as during the COVID-19 crisis. The following section presents some information for mentors who plan to host a scholar virtually.

Equipment and IT (Virtual Internships)

In instances when virtual internships are determined by the Office of Education (Hollings and EPP/MSI Undergraduate Scholarship programs), the programs may provide an allotment (up to \$1,000), reimbursable to the scholar, for the purchase of supplies needed to complete the internship virtually. Original receipts must be presented by the scholar to the scholarship program managers for approval and reimbursement for approved project-related costs.

Scholars approved to conduct a virtual internship are required to have an identified workspace, internet connection, a telephone, and, if required for their project, printer/fax capability. Be sure that the scholar is not accruing costs related to this access that exceed the reimbursement allotted for scholars. If access or cost is an issue, contact the appropriate scholarship team via email at EPP.USP@noaa.gov (EPP/MSI) or StudentScholarshipPrograms@noaa.gov (Hollings).

Additional Costs for Virtual Internships

In addition to basic requirements, any equipment (printer, scanner, headset, etc.), software, or other items the scholar may need to successfully complete their virtual internship, please contact the EPP/MSI or Hollings Scholarship Team as soon as possible.

Virtual Internship Best Practices

These are special considerations for a virtual mentorship. Please ensure you have taken mentor training, see [Mentor Training](#).

Adapted from the Virtual Student Federal Service (VSFS)

These suggested best practices have been developed from the Virtual Student Federal Service (VSFS) mentor handbook as a guide to create a successful virtual internship experience for both the mentor and scholar.

It's important for mentors to get to know their interns before the internship begins

- Since this is a virtual experience and the student won't see you regularly in person, be sure to make a plan with your scholar about the best way to communicate throughout the day (e.g. chat, email, etc.).
- Consider setting up a "Get to know you" meeting on the first day of the internship, similar to how you would normally introduce the scholar to your office.



During the internship

- Consider using video calls as often as possible during meetings to connect with your scholar virtually.
- Use the Google Suite to create a collaborative space to share documents.
- Make sure to include your scholar in relevant meetings or virtual lunches and consider welcoming them via social media. Here's an example of a post the Office of Education shared to introduce their virtual scholar:



NOAA Education ✓ @NOAAeducation · Sep 23, 2019

Meet **Molly** Wozniak, Office of Education's new @VSFSatState student intern! **Molly** is a junior at Lake Superior State in Sault Ste Marie, MI, where she studies fisheries and wildlife management. She'll be working with us on science education and social media. Welcome, **Molly**!



Virtual Student FS and US Fish and Wildlife

Successful ways to work with your scholar virtually

Students want to contribute. The happiest virtual scholars are those who are busy and who feel part of a team.

- Since your scholar will not be working side-by-side with you in the office, create smaller benchmarks within the deadlines that you and your scholar have set to provide additional structure.
- When leading up to a firm deadline, check-in to make sure your scholar is on track.
- Do offer constructive critiques of student work, but be sure to offer compliments along with critiques. The virtual internship may introduce a steeper learning curve than an in-person internship would for students who are still learning how to interact with mentors.

Things Happen!

Again, it is important to maintain regularly-scheduled check-ins with your scholar to ensure progress is being made. However, if you have made several attempts to contact your student by phone, email, or video conference and have no response within a reasonable timeframe, please advise the respective Scholarship Team as soon as possible. The Scholarship Team will follow up with you and your scholar to resolve the situation.