

Lead. Solve. Change.



SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

University of Colorado Denver

www.spa.ucdenver.edu

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN FEDERAL EMPLOYMENT?

If so, it is important to pursue opportunities as a graduate student, rather than waiting until after graduation, as there are specific programs and fellowships that you may apply for **ONLY** as a graduate student – and many of these opportunities allow you to bypass the USA Jobs process.

The federal government is in the process of revamping its student employment programs under the umbrella of a Pathways program. Details and specific policies are still being determined, but the following information is available:

- STEP and SCEP positions are still available and positions will continue until the new Pathways program is implemented.
- The FCIP program has been disbanded.
- The Presidential Management Fellows program is expected to expand to allow alumni (within 2 years of graduation) to apply, as well as current students.

See below for information on federal programs as well as tips on successfully navigating the process. For more information on student federal employment visit the U.S. Office of Personnel Management website at <http://www.opm.gov/employ/students/>.

PROGRAMS TO CONSIDER WHILE A GRADUATE STUDENT:

Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP)

The STEP, a temporary internship with a federal agency, is a great way for students to be exposed to the government. STEP positions are paid positions that can range from a summer job to a position that lasts as long as the student is in school. It is not necessary for the work to be related to the student's academic major, which allows the student to gain experience in a variety of fields. Students enrolled in high school, a two-year or four-year college or university, a technical or vocational school, or a graduate program, are eligible to apply. The program requires that the student be a U.S. citizen.

Continued....

Student Career Experience Program (SCEP)

SCEP positions, which are for undergraduate and graduate students, are substantive internships in federal agencies. The work must be related to the student's area of study and requires the agency to have a formal commitment with the student's institution. Most positions are paid, and the student may also receive academic credit. If the student successfully completes 640 hours of work, he or she can be appointed to a permanent position without going through the traditional hiring process. This program requires its students to be U.S. citizens.

Presidential Management Fellows Program (PMF)

The highly competitive PMF program is an excellent way to launch a career in the federal government upon completion of a graduate program. These are two-year positions in which fellows have the opportunity to complete rotational assignments and receive extensive training. The application deadline is in early fall of the final year of graduate school, and students must be nominated by their school. www.pmf.opm.gov

WEB RESOURCES:

State Department Internships for Graduate Students (for experience in the US and abroad) http://careers.state.gov/students/gpg_students.html

A Listing of Internship Programs at the Federal Level

<http://makingthedifference.org/federalinternships/directory>

TIPS:

- Be ready at a moment's notice! Application timelines are often very short. Be sure you are subscribed to the SPA Job Portal and regularly read through emails from SPA to ensure you don't miss a deadline.
- Make a copy of the position announcement and all information related to the job. Often, these descriptions and the contact people associated with the job are unavailable after the closing date.
- Keep a copy of all of the essay questions you answer for use on future job applications.... No need to start from scratch every time!
- Be sure to follow the application instructions EXACTLY! Incomplete or incorrect applications will not make it far in the process.
- Save all of your documents as a "doc" rather than the newer "docx" – many federal offices do not yet have the newer software and if they can't open your documents, they can't evaluate you for the position.
- For USA Job applications – be thorough! Many agencies still initially evaluate applicants on their KSA's – Knowledge, Skills and Abilities. Where a resume for a nonprofit and many other public sector jobs might be best when you are succinct, the USA Jobs process favors those who are detailed and verbose on their professional experiences and knowledge.

- Don't forget to include academic projects when completing your application. Your experience with policy analysis, research, and management from SPA classes may be included and counted towards the experience required or requested for the position.
- Make sure to have a **professional email address** – surferdude@gmail.com does not lend itself to a favorable first impression. If necessary, set up a second email that includes some element of your first and last name; you can always have that email address forwarded to another account that you regularly check.
- When listing your graduation date on your resume or application, be specific. Some federal programs mandate that you complete a particular number of hours while still a current student so listing "August 2011" as your graduation date is more helpful than simply saying "2011."
- List both email addresses and phone numbers for references to allow hiring managers options for a quicker connection.
- Whenever possible apply EARLY in the application period to ensure you receive full consideration for the position.
- Be sure to proofread resumes and ALL correspondence, including email. Typos in cover letters or "casual" emails to employers can get you excluded from future consideration. Do not assume a conversational tone or use slang or shorthand in email; keep all communication professional, use "Mr." or "Ms." as appropriate.
- Agencies are not required to post internships to USA Jobs so it may be helpful to send a resume and letter of inquiry stating your interest in a particular agency and the type of experience you are looking for along with the timeframe of your internship availability.
- Check Campus Job Fairs, often federal agencies have representatives in attendance.
- Be sure to send a thank you note or email as soon as possible if you receive an interview.
- Know that not all agencies or departments will inform applicants not selected for an interview due to high volume of applications so be sensitive to their position if you inquire about whether you were selected or not.
- If you are informed that you were not chosen for a position after participating in the interview process be gracious and offer your gratitude for having had a chance to interview and if applicable, mention that you would like to be considered for future positions should that be possible.