

**Forest Service Handbook
National Headquarters - Washington Office
Washington, DC**

**Forest Service Handbook 6109.12 – Employment and Benefits Handbook
Chapter 50 - Student Educational Employment Program**

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Digest: Following is an explanation of the changes throughout the directive by section.

50: This amendment to chapter 50 substantially revises and reorganizes the direction on the Student Educational Employment Program previously issued in interim directive 6109.12-94-1, which has expired.

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This chapter provides direction on the Student Educational Employment Program, which contains two components:

1. Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP) and
2. Student Career Experience Program (SCEP).

Both programs provide opportunities for Forest Service units to employ students pursuing a high school diploma or General Equivalency Diploma; vocational/technical certificate; or degrees at the associate, baccalaureate, graduate, or professional level.

50.1 - Authority

Title 5, Code of Federal Regulations, section 213.3202 (5 CFR 213.3202) authorizes Federal student employment programs in the excepted service. The student educational program has two appointment authorities under Schedule B of 5 CFR 213.3202 (a) and (b).

50.2 - Objectives

1. To provide for maximum flexibility and opportunities for the Forest Service to hire students and provide them with practical work experience and training.
2. To meet employment needs of both the agency and the students and to assist the Forest Service in its progress towards a workforce representative of the nation's diversity.

50.3 - Policy

1. Comply with Office of Personnel Management (OPM) regulations and other requirements regarding student employment (sec. 50.1); ensure the equitable treatment of student employees; and ensure that student appointment authorities are used appropriately.
2. Ensure that the student employment applicant pool reflects the nation's diversity.

50.4 - Responsibility

50.41 - Washington Office

The Director of Human Resources Management, Washington Office, is responsible for providing the overall management and administration of the Student Educational Employment Program and for designating the program coordinator responsible for the day-to-day operation of the Student Educational Employment Program.

50.42 - Field Units

The Regional Foresters, Station Directors, Area Director, and Institute Director are responsible for:

1. Designating the unit's key contact for the Student Educational Employment Program.
2. Notifying the Washington Office coordinator for the Student Educational Employment Program of the name and phone number of the unit's key contact for the program.

50.5 - Definitions

Several of the following definitions are excerpted from 5 CFR 213.3202.

Half-Time. Student enrollment status as defined by the school in which the student is enrolled. Students need not be in actual physical attendance, so long as all the other requirements are met. An individual who needs to complete less than the equivalent of half an academic, vocational, or technical course load in the class enrollment period immediately prior to graduation is still considered a student for purposes of the Student Educational Employment Program (5 CFR 213.3202).

Service-Wide Multicultural Workforce Strategic Initiatives. Initiatives aimed at meeting the staffing needs of the Forest Service as a whole and providing an important source for diversifying the agency's student workforce. Information regarding the various initiative programs and contacts can be found on the Washington Office, Human Resources Management Staff Intranet/FSWeb site.

Student. An individual who has been accepted for enrollment, or who is enrolled, as a degree-seeking (diploma, certificate, and so on) student in an accredited high school, technical or vocational school, 2-year or 4-year college or university, or graduate or professional school. If the student is enrolled, the student must be taking at least a half-time academic, vocational, or technical course load, as defined in 5 CFR 213.3202.

Student Career Experience Program (SCEP). A student employment program combining academic studies with on-the-job experience related to the student's academic major. This program may lead to a career or career-conditional appointment. A SCEP student may be appointed to a career-conditional position without competition if SCEP program requirements are met and an appropriate position is available.

Student Educational Employment Program (SEEP). A program for employment of students, which consists of two components and appointing authorities:

- a. Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP) (Schedule B; 5 CFR 213.3202 (a)).
- b. Student Career Experience Program (SCEP) (Schedule B; 5 CFR 213.3202 (b)).

Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP). A student temporary employment program providing work experience to students in any occupational field, whether or not related to the student's academic major. This program does not provide for conversion to a career or career-conditional appointment. However, a STEP student may be appointed to a SCEP position

without further competition if requirements of that program are met and an appropriate position is available.

51 - Eligibility, Recruitment, and Selection

51.1 - Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible for the Student Educational Employment Program student applicants must meet requirements set out in 5 CFR 213.3202.

51.11 - Academic Standing

51.11a - Student Temporary Employment Program

To participate in STEP, all students must be in good academic standing, as defined by the institution they are attending. Students should not be on academic suspension or probation.

51.11b - Student Career Experience Program

To participate in SCEP, all students must be in good standing as defined by the college or university they are attending. Students should not be on academic suspension or probation.

51.12 - Age and Employment of Minors

Participation in the Student Educational Employment Program must be in conformance with Federal, State, or local laws and standards governing the employment of minors. Typically, students must be at least 16 years of age at the time of their appointment. Check with the State employment office for information on any hazardous occupation restrictions for employees under 18.

51.13 - Citizenship

Non-citizens may be appointed to Student Educational Employment Program positions (in accordance with the requirements in sec. 59, ex. 01) provided that:

1. The student is lawfully admitted to the United States as a permanent resident or is otherwise authorized to be employed; and
2. The agency is authorized to pay certain aliens as provided in the annual appropriations act and any agency-specific enabling and appropriation statutes (5 CFR 213.3202).

SCEP students must be U.S. citizens at the time of conversion to career or career-conditional employment in the competitive service.

51.14 - Driver's License

Students who drive a Forest Service vehicle must have a valid State issued driver's license. Students authorized to operate a Forest Service vehicle or other equipment must have in their possession a Form OF-346 (United States Government Motor Vehicle Operator's Identification Card), or a Forest Service issued identification card indicating the type of vehicle or equipment the holder is authorized to drive or operate (FSM 7134.1.).

51.15 - Drug and Alcohol Testing

Executive Order 12564 of 1986 established the goal of a drug-free Federal workplace and makes it a condition of employment for all Federal employees to refrain from using illegal drugs on or off-duty. This Executive Order also contains the criteria for identifying testing-designated positions.

Under the Omnibus Transportation Employee Testing Act of 1991 (49 U.S.C. 2717), employees whose work requires them to have a commercial driver's license must be included in a drug and alcohol testing program. Additional Departmental requirements are in the Department Personnel Manual Supplement 792-3, Drug-free Workplace Program (FSH 6109.41 - DPM 792-3).

In compliance with the Federal and Department requirements, Forest Service employees who are paid by the National Finance Center and who either are in a testing designated position or have a job-related commercial driver's license are subject to random drug and/or alcohol testing requirements of each program. Any prospective employee meeting these criteria must also be drug tested, and the test must produce negative results before the applicant may be hired.

In compliance with the U.S. Department of Agriculture Drug-Free Workplace Program authorities, all Forest Service employees are subject to drug testing based on reasonable suspicion and in post-accident situations. Only the Human Resources Management Directors or their acting at the Region, Station, Area, and Institute level have the authority to make findings of reasonable suspicion of drug use for employees in their Regions, Stations, Area, or Institute.

51.16 - Employment of Relatives

A student may work with a relative when there is no direct reporting relationship and the relative is not in a position to influence or control the student's appointment, employment, promotion, or advancement within the agency (5 CFR 213.3202(a) (b)(7); 5 CFR 310, subpart A; sec. 21.1 of this Handbook).

51.17 - Physical Fitness

Tentative job offers may be made contingent upon an individual's passing any physical fitness test established for the position (5 CFR 339, subpart C). Requirements must be clearly documented in the student's position description (5 CFR 339.203). Failure to meet the physical requirements for the position means that the individual is not qualified for the position unless a waiver or reasonable accommodation is indicated (5 CFR 339.102; FSM 6133; and sec. 21.3 of

this Handbook). When there are physical fitness requirements for SCEP positions, the requirements and consequences for failing to meet them during the appointment should be addressed in the agreement.

51.2 - Recruitment

51.21 - General Recruitment Requirements

Planning responsibility for the Student Educational Employment Program is at the Region, Station, Area, and Institute level. The Service-Wide Multicultural Workforce Strategic Initiative (SMWSI) should be considered when filling student positions in order to meet workforce diversity goals.

The Region, Station, Area, and Institute may recruit for students from colleges and universities using the full range of available recruitment options. Units should consider workforce diversity goals during the recruitment process.

51.22 - Recruitment Bonuses

In accordance with 5 CFR part 575, recruitment bonuses may be utilized for hard-to-fill positions.

51.23 - Pre-Employment Interviews

Pre-employment interviews may be utilized in the recruitment process. Travel expenses for pre-employment interviews may be paid in accordance with the Federal Travel Regulation (FSH 6509.33 - FTR 301-1, subpart C).

51.3 - Selections

51.31 - General Selection Criteria

51.31a - Qualifications

Students are evaluated in accordance with Office of Personnel Management (OPM) qualification standards for the position for which they would be appointed. An alternative qualification standard for grades GS-1 through GS-4 is included in section 59, exhibit 02, which shall be utilized when the qualification standard for the target position does not cover the grade occupied by the student.

51.31b - Financial Need

There is no requirement for students to meet any specific economic or income criteria to be eligible for STEP and SCEP.

51.31c - Ranking and Rating

Schedule B positions are exempt from competitive examining procedures and also are exempt from the rating and ranking requirements under the excepted service.

51.31d - Suitability Determinations

Students must meet suitability requirements. When issues of suitability and security arise, they should be addressed by employment officers (FSH6109.12, sec. 62.6; 5 CFR part 731, subpart B; and FSM 6174.3).

51.31e - Veteran's Preference

Veteran's preference applies in the STEP and SCEP selection process (5 CFR 302.101 (a) and (c)).

51.31f - Written Tests

There are no written test requirements for entry into the Student Educational Employment Program or for initial appointment and conversion to career or career-conditional positions.

51.4 - Conversion

51.41 - From Student Temporary Employment Program Appointment to Student Career Experience Program Appointment

Students may be noncompetitively converted to SCEP appointments whenever they meet the requirements of that program and the agency has an appropriate position.

51.42 - From Student Career Experience Program Appointment to Career or Career-Conditional Appointment

1. Agency Policy on Conversion.

a. The Forest Service shall noncompetitively convert all students to either permanent career or career-conditional appointments within 120 days upon satisfactory completion of the students' academic training and career-related work experience requirements, except in rare cases that may involve reasons related to budget restrictions or the students' conduct, performance, personal illness, or hardship.

b. When a field unit is unable to place a student, such as for budgetary reasons, the field unit shall be responsible for exploring other placement opportunities with other field units or Federal agencies at least 90 days prior to the end of the student's 120-day eligibility conversion period. The decision not to convert a student in rare cases, as stated in the preceding paragraph 1a, is delegated to Deputy Chiefs, Regional Foresters, Station Directors, and equivalent positions, and may not be further redelegated.

2. Time Limits on Conversion. Noncompetitive conversion must take place within 120 days after the date a student has satisfactorily completed the academic training and career-related work experience requirements, under the provisions of Executive Order 12015 (as amended by E.O. 13024).

3. Standards for Conversion. The Forest Service shall noncompetitively convert all students to either permanent career or career-conditional appointments related to the students' academic training and career-related work experience. The noncompetitive conversion must be to a permanent position and may be at any location within the Forest Service. The student must meet the qualification standards for the targeted position to which the student is appointed.

4. Payment of Student's Tuition and Related College Expenses.

a. When the Forest Service pays a student's tuition and related college expenses, such as in the agency's Multicultural Workforce Strategic Initiatives, the student must sign an agreement to commit to work for a specified period of time as per the agreement. Upon satisfactory completion of the student's academic training and career-related work experience requirements, the Forest Service shall offer the student either a permanent career or a career-conditional appointment in order to meet Government Education and Training Act requirements.

b. If a student is unwilling to accept the offer of either a permanent career or a career-conditional appointment, the student shall be responsible for repayment of all tuition and related college expenses received as per the agreement.

(1) If the student was funded by one of the Multicultural Workforce Strategic Initiatives, the decision to waive the repayment of tuition and related college expenses in rare cases, as stated in the preceding paragraph 1a, requires the approval of the Deputy Chief for Business Operations.

(2) If the student was funded by the field unit, the decision to waive the repayment of tuition and related college expenses in rare cases, as stated in the preceding paragraph 1a, is delegated to Deputy Chiefs, Regional Foresters, Station Directors, and equivalent positions.

5. SCEP Work Experience. The student must have completed at least 640 hours of career-related work experience before completion of, or concurrently with, the academic training requirements. For conversion purposes, the work experience related to the student's academic program and career goals, gained while under STEP, may be credited towards the required 640 hours of career-related work experience necessary for the student to be noncompetitively converted to either a permanent career or a career-conditional appointment.

6. Student Conduct and Performance Issues During Program. Immediate supervisors are fully responsible for dealing with and/or terminating students in cases where the students' conduct and/or performance are at issue prior to their completion of the program.

52 - Appointments, Classification, and Pay Advances

52.1 - Appointments

52.11 - Equal Employment Opportunity

Appointments are subject to all laws, regulations, and policies governing equal employment opportunity (FSM 1700, FSH 1709.11).

52.12 - Appointment Authority

Follow procedures for coding personnel actions in the Office of Personnel Management's Guide to Processing Personnel Actions (FSM 6106.12).

There is no limit on the number of times a student may be appointed to a position as long as the student meets eligibility requirements for the appointment (Schedule B; 5 CFR 213.3202 (a)(10) and 213.3203 (b)(10)).

52.2 - Classification and Pay Advances

52.21 - Classification

Classification of the position is based on the occupational series for which the student is hired. The grade level is set according to criteria in the appropriate General Schedule or Federal Wage System classification standard.

52.21a - Student Temporary Employment Program

Positions for STEP students are classified in the appropriate GS or FWS series.

52.21b - Student Career Experience Program

Positions for SCEP students are classified in the appropriate student trainee "-99" General Schedule series or "-01" Federal Wage System series.

52.3 - Pay Advances

The Federal Employees Pay Comparability Act of 1990 permits advance payment of basic pay for up to two pay periods to any individual who is newly appointed to a position (FSH 6109.41-DPM, Bulletin 550-97; see sec. 59, ex. 03 for further instructions).

53 - Orientation, Service Agreements, Work Agreements, Statement of Understanding, and Work Schedules

53.1 - Orientation

It is the unit's responsibility to ensure that each student is provided orientation. The agency's Employee Orientation Program provides information on employee benefit, ethics, conduct, and so on. This comprehensive orientation program is available electronically from the Washington Office, Human Resources Management Staff Intranet/FSWeb site. The SCEP students should be provided additional orientation in accordance with the checklist in section 59, exhibit 04.

53.2 - Service Agreements (SCEP)

Service agreements must be completed and signed by the student for each school term that the student receives financial assistance from the Forest Service. See section 59, exhibit 05 for a sample service agreement (5 CFR 410.309).

53.3 - Work Agreements (SCEP)

A work agreement between the agency, educational institution the student is attending, and the student is required for all employees in the SCEP. The work agreement must set out, at a minimum:

1. Nature of work assignments;
2. Schedule of work assignments and class attendance;
3. Evaluation procedures; and
4. Requirements for continuation and successful completion of the program.

See section 59, exhibit 06, for a sample SCEP work agreement.

53.4 - Statement of Understanding (SCEP)

A statement of understanding must be signed by the student upon receipt of a work agreement. See section 59, exhibit 07, for a sample statement of understanding.

53.5 - Work Schedules

53.51 - Student Temporary Employment Program

Under STEP, students may work full-time or part-time schedules at any time during the year, but the student's work schedule should not interfere with the student's academic schedule.

An intermittent schedule is not appropriate for STEP students.

53.52 - Student Career Experience Program

The Forest Service unit, student's educational institution, and the student should agree on a formally arranged work schedule under SCEP. Students may work full-time or part-time schedules. The student's work schedule should not interfere with the student's academic schedule.

An intermittent schedule is not appropriate for SCEP students. Students who are attending school full-time and are not working should be placed in non-pay status.

53.53 - Feedback on Program

Students and supervisors are highly encouraged to provide feedback information to be used to make improvements to the Student Educational Employment Program. See section 59, exhibits 08 and 09 for sample formats for supervisors and students to complete in providing feedback on the program.

54 - Benefits

54.1 - Student Temporary Employment Program

Students in the STEP are eligible for:

1. Annual and sick leave when in pay status. The amount of leave earned is the same as for permanent employees. Students must be employed for a period of 90 days of continuous service to be eligible to earn annual leave (5 U.S.C. 6303).
2. Coverage under the Federal Employees' Health Benefits (FEHB) Program. After they have been continuously employed for a year without a break in service of more than 5 days, STEP students may enroll in the FEHB program, but they are required to pay 100 percent of the premium (that is, both the Government's and the employee's shares).

54.2 - Student Career Experience Program

Students in the SCEP are eligible for:

1. Annual and sick leave when in pay status. The amount of leave earned is the same as for permanent employees.
2. Promotion, demotion, detail, or reassignment to other positions. These actions may be taken as the agency determines as appropriate.
3. Within-grade pay increases when they perform at the successful level. The waiting periods are the same as for permanent employees.

4. Coverage under the Federal Employees' Health Benefits (FEHB) and Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance (FGLI) programs. Coverage is available to students with regular schedules of six months or more per year.

5. Participation in the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP). Students in SCEP generally are covered under the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS).

54.3 - Tuition and Other Financial Assistance

The agency may pay all or part of the student's training expenses directly related to the student's official duties (5 CFR 213.3202). Local unit policy must be documented in the Directive System and shall be consistently applied with regard to training expenses for all eligible students on the unit. When the unit policy conflicts with a national initiative policy, the national initiative policy takes precedence.

54.31 - Authorization for Payment of Training

If a student receives financial assistance, the employing unit must complete a Form SF-182, Request, Authorization, Agreement and Certification of Training, to document the training and funds expended.

55 - Payment of Travel, Transportation, and Housing Expenses for Eligible Student Employees

In order to ensure students who travel from distant locations report for duty and have safe and affordable housing, units may utilize the authority in section 922 of the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 (20 U.S.C. 1141) to pay for lodging, subsistence, and transportation expenses. The Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 1993 also authorizes payment of certain travel and housing expenses for eligible students.

55.1 - Travel and Transportation Expenses

Travel expenses may be authorized for eligible students traveling to and from their official duty station. Such payments or reimbursements are limited to those authorized in the Federal Travel Regulation, chapter 301 (FSH 6509.33 - FTR 301), according to the direction set out for STEP students in section 55.11 and SCEP students in section 55.12. Units should work with their fiscal officers to ensure that all travel forms are completed prior to travel.

55.11 - Student Temporary Employment Program

1. Authorizing officials may pay for transportation and per diem expenses for students traveling from their college or university to their official duty station and for the return travel. Local unit policy must be documented in the Directive System and shall be consistently applied with regard to travel expenses for all eligible students on the unit.

2. When travel expenses are authorized and two or more students travel together in the same privately owned vehicle (POV), the employing unit shall reimburse the driver and owner of

the POV at the rate authorized in FSH 6509.33 - FTR 301-10.305 as most advantageous to the Government.

3. Employing units shall not reimburse expenses incurred by family members or other individuals who accompany students traveling between school and their duty station.

55.12 - Student Career Experience Program

Payment for a student's initial travel expenses to the first duty station is considered part of the transfer of station expenses under FSH 6509.33 - FTR 301-1, subpart A, and may not be duplicated. Payment for initial travel and transfer of station costs may be paid either separately or at the same time, as long as there is no duplication of payment. The servicing Human Resources Management office must inform students that they can elect to receive payment for their travel expenses at the time of appointment or at the time of conversion.

For example, if a student receives reimbursement for travel to the first duty station, that individual may not be reimbursed for travel expenses to the student's assignment upon conversion. The individual may receive authorized transfer of station expenses, such as transportation of household goods, as long as the students was not paid at the time of the initial appointment.

Travel and transportation expenses related to training, such as travel and transportation between duty station and school, for participants only, may be paid by the agency (5 CFR 3202 (b) (18)). Local unit policy must be documented in the Directive System and shall be consistently applied with regard to travel expenses for all eligible students on the unit. When the unit policy conflicts with a national initiative policy, the national initiative policy takes precedence.

55.2 - Housing Expenses

1. Authorizing Officials should provide students with assistance in locating safe and suitable housing prior to a student's arrival for duty. This housing may be in Government-owned housing, Government-leased housing, or privately owned housing.

2. In most cases, students are responsible for paying all of the quarters deductions calculated for Government-owned or -leased housing, or for paying all of the rent payments for privately owned housing. In limited cases, students may receive a quarters allowance to assist with paying housing expenses as set out in section 55.21; however, quarters allowances are not considered a student entitlement.

55.21 - Payment of Housing Subsidies for Eligible Students

1. Eligibility. Students hired under SCEP and STEP are eligible for a quarters allowance, unless the duty station is within commuting distance of the student's home or university.

2. Amount of Quarters Allowance. No student may be provided free housing under the authorities cited in section 55.

Authorizing officials may partially subsidize lodging for eligible students in Government-provided quarters, including Government-leased or -owned properties, or privately owned housing, as follows:

- a. The maximum amount of the Government quarters allowance cannot exceed 20 percent of a GS-4, step 1 monthly salary for that geographic area. Housing costs exceeding the GS-4, step 1 salary are the student's responsibility.
 - b. Students are responsible for paying at least 20 percent of their monthly salary towards the costs of housing.
 - c. The quarters allowance is considered income and, therefore, it is subject to taxes.
 - d. The student is responsible for making the rent payment and submitting requests for reimbursement through the servicing Human Resources Management office with submittal of receipts, rental agreement, and other documentation. The servicing Human Resources Management office completes the Form AD-343, Payroll Action Request, to reimburse the student and submits it to the National Finance Center for processing. (See sec. 59, ex. 10, for an example of calculations of a quarters allowance for the Form AD-343.)
 - e. The normal quarters deduction for lodging in Government-provided (owned or leased) quarters is determined under the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A-45. If the quarters deduction exceeds 20 percent of the student's expected gross monthly income, the authorizing official may reimburse the student for such excess expenses, subject to the limits in this section.
3. Unit Policy. Authorized officers must establish a unit policy in the Directive System for subsidizing housing for eligible students and shall apply the policy consistently on the unit for all eligible students. When the unit policy conflicts with a National Initiative policy, the National Initiative policy takes precedence.

56 - Performance Management

56.1 - Awards

Students are eligible for awards and recognition in compliance with the USDA Guide for Employee Recognition (FSM 6144; FSH 6109.13, ch. 30).

56.2 - Performance Appraisal

Supervisors shall establish performance standards and conduct performance evaluations for student employees in accordance with FSH 6109.13, ch. 10 in order to:

1. Document what the student is expected to do; and
2. Advise the student as to how well the student is performing.

For all student appointments over 90 days, standards must be established and agreed to within 30 days of employment. Before a performance rating may be prepared, the minimum period of performance under established standards that must be completed in 90 days.

56.21 - Student Temporary Employment Program

Managers have the option of using student and supervisor feedback formats provided in section 59, exhibits 08 and 09, for STEP students, in lieu of the standard employee performance evaluations.

56.22 - Student Career Experience Program

Those SCEP students who are expected to serve 90 days in a consecutive 12-month period must have a written performance plan and must be appraised on their performance. Standards and elements must be developed and signed and a comprehensive training plan must be developed (FSM 6141; FSH 6109.13, ch. 20). Performance appraisals should document both positive and negative consequences of the student's performance.

56.3 - Promotions and Within-Grade Increases

Students are eligible for noncompetitive promotions upon meeting appropriate qualification standards. Time-in-grade restrictions apply only to competitive service positions. Document promotions as a conversion to another excepted appointment; cite the same authority as was used for the original appointment and maintain the original not-to-exceed date. It is Forest Service policy to promote SCEPs to the highest grade:

1. For which they are qualified,
2. When they are qualified, and
3. When all performance requirements are met.

56.31 - Student Temporary Employment Program

1. STEP students are eligible for promotions. Promotions are processed as conversions to new appointments.

2. STEP students in the General Schedule pay system are not eligible for within-grade increases. STEP students in the wage grade pay system are eligible for within-grade increases.

56.32 - Student Career Experience Program

1. SCEP students are eligible for promotion.
2. SCEP students are eligible for within-grade increases.

56.4 - Separation for Performance or Conduct

Work supervisors should contact the servicing Human Resources Management office immediately for advice and assistance if performance or conduct problems occur with student employees. Whenever a student is discharged due to poor conduct or performance, officials must prepare adequate documentation outlining the facts leading to discharge and all counseling efforts made prior to discharge. If the issue is a performance issue, the unit is encouraged to utilize a performance improvement period prior to removal of the student, particularly for students in SCEP appointments. Students may also be separated if they are not in good standing with their educational institution or are placed on academic suspension or probation.

If they are separated due to poor performance or conduct, students employed under the Student Education Employment Program generally have no procedural or appeal rights; however, there are two exceptions:

1. Students who are preference eligible and who have completed one year of current continuous service in the same or similar position(s) are entitled to procedural rights under 5 CFR part 432 (unacceptable performance) or 5 CFR part 752 (misconduct). Such students covered under a bargaining unit are subject to applicable provisions of their negotiated collective bargaining agreements. In addition, they have the right to appeal to the Merit Systems Protection Board.

2. Non-preference eligible students who have completed two years of current continuous employment in the same or similar position(s) are entitled to the procedural rights but not the appeal rights under 5 CFR part 432.

57 - Breaks in Program, Reduction-In-Force, and Terminations

57.1 - Breaks in Program

It is the intent of the Student Educational Employment Program that the students are either attending classes or working with the Forest Service, or both, at all times while employed under the program. When circumstances justify a break in program during which the student neither attends classes nor works, Regional Foresters, Station Directors, the Area Director, and the Institute Director may approve a break in program. The Regional Forester, Station Director, Area Director, or Institute Director may delegate this authority to the unit level. The student would be placed on leave without pay (LWOP) during the time a student has a break in service.

57.2 - Reduction-in-Force

57.21 - Student Temporary Employment Program

For purposes of reduction-in-force (RIF), STEP students are covered by the regulations in 5 CFR 351.502 and 213.3202 (a) (14); STEP students are in excepted service Tenure Group III, provided they have completed 1 year of current continuous service.

57.22 - Student Career Experience Program

For purposes of RIF, SCEP students are covered by the regulations in 5 CFR 351.502 and 213.3202 (b) (19)); SCEP students are in excepted service Tenure Group II.

Such students are accorded the same retention rights as excepted service employees and may qualify for severance pay if involuntarily separated under 5 CFR part 550, subpart G.

57.3 - Termination

Students who fail to meet the eligibility requirements of the Student Educational Employment Program must be terminated from the program.

57.31 - Termination for Failure To Meet Physical Requirements

Students failing to continue to meet physical requirements may be terminated in accordance with 5 CFR 339.

58 - Personnel Ceilings and Reporting Requirements

58.1 - Personnel Ceilings

Students in the Student Educational Employment Program count against full-time equivalent (FTE) ceilings, pursuant to Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Bulletin 93-03, March 4, 1993.

58.2 - Reporting Requirements

USDA periodically requires the Forest Service to report Student Educational Employment Program hires.

59 - Exhibits

1. Exhibit 01, Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Requirements on Federal Employment of Non-Citizens.
2. Exhibit 02, Alternate Qualification Standard for Student Career Employment Program (SCEP) and Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP).
3. Exhibit 03, Attachment 1 to Chapter 550 - Pay Administration, Subchapter 13 - Advances in Pay.
4. Exhibit 04, Sample Outline of Student Career Employment Program (SCEP) Orientation Checklist.
5. Exhibit 05, Sample Service Agreement for Tuition Assistance.

6. Exhibit 06, Sample Student Career Experience Program (SCEP) Work Agreement.
7. Exhibit 07, Sample Statement of Understanding, Forest Service, Student Career Experience Program (SCEP).
8. Exhibit 08, Sample Format for Student Feedback.
9. Exhibit 09, Sample Format for Supervisor Feedback.
10. Exhibit 10, Calculating Quarters Allowance.

59 - Exhibit 01

Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Requirements on Federal Employment of Non-Citizens

U.S. Office of Personnel Management
Federal Employment of Non-Citizens
Detailed Policy Information with Citations

The Federal Government gives strong priority to hiring United States citizens and nationals, but non-citizens may be hired in certain circumstances. Agencies considering non-citizens for Federal employment in the **competitive service** must follow usual selection procedures and also meet the requirements of **all** three of the following:

- Immigration law;
- Appropriations act ban on paying certain non-citizens; and
- Executive Order restriction on appointing non-citizens in the competitive service.

Agencies considering non-citizens for Federal employment in the **excepted service** and **Senior Executive Service (SES)** must meet the requirements of the **top two** above. In addition, agencies are responsible for applying any citizenship requirements that may appear in their individual agency's authorization and appropriation laws.

Immigration Law.

- Since the passage of the Immigration Reform Act of 1986, **employers have been responsible for ensuring that the people they hire are eligible to work** in the United States. Employers and all new employees are required to complete an Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) Form I-9 and employers (appointing officials) must check employees' documents to verify employment eligibility. The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1990 added other requirements. One of those requirements is that employers may not discriminate against employees by requesting more or different documents than are required. The Immigration and Nationality Act, as modified, provides at Title 8, United States Code (U.S.C.), section 1324(a) that it is unlawful for a person or other entity to employ an unauthorized alien. In 1996, Public Law 104-208 added a statement that "the term "entity" includes an entity in any branch of the Federal Government."

59 - Exhibit 01--Continued

Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Requirements on Federal Employment of Non-Citizens

- Regulations that implement immigration laws are published in Title 8 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR). According to 8 CFR 274a, **U.S. employers may only hire an individual who is:**
 - a citizen (either by birth or naturalization);
 - lawfully admitted for permanent residence;
 - lawfully admitted for temporary residence and granted an employment authorization document by the Immigration and Naturalization Service; an alien admitted or paroled into the United States as a refugee and granted an employment authorization document;
 - an alien granted asylum and granted an employment authorization document;
 - a fiancé, fiancée, child, or parent of an alien who was admitted under certain conditions;
 - an alien who is authorized employment with a specific employer incident to status (such as on-campus part-time employment of a non-immigrant student); or
 - an alien who meets other requirements that are listed in the regulations.
- **For more detailed information** about employer and employee responsibilities under United States immigration law, please contact the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS).

Appropriations Act Ban on Paying Certain Non-Citizens

- For every year since 1939, the Congress has placed language in annual appropriations laws to **prevent the use of appropriated funds in the continental United States to pay Federal employees unless they are United States citizens or meet one of several exceptions.** It is the responsibility of each agency to apply the terms of this law. No authority is given to the Office of Personnel Management to regulate, enforce, or grant exceptions to the ban. The current ban appeared in the Treasury and General Government Appropriations Act, 2000, Public Law 106-58 (September 29, 1999):

59 - Exhibit 01--Continued

Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Requirements on Federal Employment of
Non-Citizens

<p>Excerpt from</p> <p>Public Law 106-58</p> <p>[113 Stat. 466] September 29, 1999</p> <p>Treasury and General Government Appropriations Act, 2000.</p>	<p>Sec. 605. Unless otherwise specified during the current fiscal year, no part of any appropriation contained in this or any other Act shall be used to pay the compensation of any officer or employee of the Government of the United States (including any agency the majority of the stock of which is owned by the Government of the United States) whose post of duty is in the continental United States unless such person</p> <p>(1) is a citizen of the United States,</p> <p>(2) is a person in the service of the United States on the date of enactment of this Act who, being eligible for citizenship, has filed a declaration of intention to become a citizen of the United States prior to such date and is actually residing in the United States,</p> <p>(3) is a person who owes allegiance to the United States,</p> <p>(4) is an alien from Cuba, Poland, South Vietnam, the countries of the former Soviet Union, or the Baltic countries lawfully admitted to the United States for permanent residence,</p> <p>(5) is a South Vietnamese, Cambodian, or Laotian refugee paroled in the United States after January 1, 1975, or</p> <p>(6) is a national of the People's Republic of China who qualifies for adjustment of status pursuant to the Chinese Student Protection Act of 1992: Provided, That for the purpose of this section, an affidavit signed by any such person shall be considered prima facie evidence that the requirements of this section with respect to his or her status have been complied with:</p> <p>Provided further, That any person making a false affidavit shall be guilty of a felony, and, upon conviction, shall be fined no more than \$4,000 or imprisoned for not more than 1 year, or both:</p> <p>Provided further, That the above penal clause shall be in addition to, and not in substitution for, any other provisions of existing law:</p> <p>Provided further, That any payment made to any officer or employee contrary to the provisions of this section shall be recoverable in action by the Federal Government.</p> <p>This section shall not apply to citizens of Ireland, Israel, or the Republic of the Philippines, or to nationals of those countries allied with the United States in the current defense effort, or to international broadcasters employed by the United States Information Agency, or to temporary employment of translators, or to temporary employment in the field service (not to exceed 60 days) as a result of emergencies.</p>
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Forest Service Handbook 6109.12 – Employment and Benefits Handbook
Chapter 50 - Student Educational Employment Program
Amendment: 6109.12-2001-2
Effective date: November 08, 2001
59 - Exhibit 01--Continued

**Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Requirements on Federal Employment of
Non-Citizens**

Notes on the Appropriations Act ban:

- 1) The phrase "**unless otherwise specified**" assumes some agencies may have appropriations language that specifically exempts them from the ban on paying non-citizens. The Department of Defense is granted such an exception in the Department of Defense Appropriations Act, 1999:

Excerpt from: Public Law 105-262, Sec. 8002 [112 Stat. 2279] October 17, 1998 Appropriation for the Department of Defense for fiscal year 1999	Sec. 8002. During the current fiscal year, provisions of law prohibiting the payment of compensation to, or employment of, any person not a citizen of the United States shall not apply to personnel of the Department of Defense. . . .
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- 2) The term, "**continental United States**," includes all states except Hawaii. Note that Civil Service Rule VIII provides separate authority to appoint non-citizens in overseas positions. "Overseas positions" is defined for this purpose as "positions in foreign countries and in other areas beyond the continental limits of the United States, except as provided in Sec. 8.4."

Excerpt from 5 CFR 8 Appointments to Overseas Positions	<i>Sec. 8.3 Appointment of persons not citizens of the United States.</i> Persons who are not citizens of the United States may be recruited overseas and appointed to overseas positions without regard to the Civil Service Act. <i>Sec. 8.4 Positions excepted from the application of this part.</i> This part shall not apply to positions in Hawaii, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and Alaska, and on the Isthmus of Panama.
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59 - Exhibit 01--Continued

Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Requirements on Federal Employment of Non-Citizens

- 3. **Citizens** in the United States include those who were:
 - born in the United States (the fifty states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam [since 1950], or the U.S. Virgin Islands);
 - born outside the United States to parents who are citizens of the United States, one of which was physically present in the United States or one of its outlying possessions for a continuous period of one year at any time prior to the birth of the person (in some situations only one parent has to be a citizen);
 - naturalized as a United States citizen; or
 - otherwise granted citizenship under authorities described in law, beginning at 8 U.S.C. 1401.
- 4. **Persons (nationals) who owe allegiance** to the United States include those who were "born in an outlying possession of the United States on or after the date of formal acquisition of such possession" (including American Samoa, Swains Island, and the Northern Mariana Islands), or who are children of nationals under certain circumstances, or who meet other requirements described in law at 8 U.S.C. 1408.
- 5. **The Chinese Student Protection Act of 1992** allows certain nationals of the Peoples Republic of China (PRC) who were identified in Executive Order 12711 to have their immigration status upgraded from "student" category or from some other designated category. The appropriations ban does not bar payments to PRC nationals who **qualify** under the terms of the Chinese Student Protection Act for a change in immigration status.
- **Countries "allied with the United States** in the current defense effort" are those with which the United States has certain treaties.
 - For an authoritative list of allied countries, agencies should contact the Office of the Assistant Legal Adviser for Treaty Affairs, U.S. Department of State.
 - According to the State Department, countries with qualifying treaties as of March, 1999 included: Argentina, Australia, Bahamas, Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba (as a of the Rio Treaty in 1947), Czech Republic, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, France, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Japan, Korea (Republic of), Luxembourg, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Portugal, Spain, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey, United Kingdom, Uruguay, and Venezuela.

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59 - Exhibit 01--Continued

**Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Requirements on Federal Employment of
Non-Citizens**

Executive Order Restriction on Appointing Non-Citizens to the Competitive Service

- Executive Order 11935 (September 2, 1976), **restricts the employment of non-citizens into "competitive service" positions** covered by Title 5 of the U.S. Code. This applies to all agencies with competitive service positions, any place in the world. The Executive Order amended Civil Service Rule VII to include the following section:

Excerpt from	5 CFR 7.4 <i>Citizenship</i> .
5 CFR 7	(a) No person shall be admitted to competitive examination unless such person is a citizen or national of the United States.
General Provisions	(b) No person shall be given any appointment in the competitive service unless such person is a citizen or national of the United States. (c) OPM may, as an exception to this rule and to the extent permitted by law, authorize the appointment of aliens to positions in the competitive service when necessary to promote the efficiency of the service in specific cases or for temporary appointments

- The Executive Order is also the basis for the following regulation:

5 CFR 338.101	<i>Citizenship</i> .
Citizenship	(a) A person may be admitted to competitive examination only if he or she is a citizen of the United States or owes permanent allegiance to the United States. (b) A person may be given an appointment in the competitive service only if he or she is a citizen of or owes permanent allegiance to the United States. However, a non-citizen may be given an appointment in rare cases under 316.601 of this chapter, unless the appointment is prohibited by statute. (c) Paragraph (b) of this section applies to reinstatement and transfer as well as to other noncompetitive appointments, and to conversion to career or career-conditional appointment.

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59 - Exhibit 01--Continued

**Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Requirements on Federal Employment of
Non-Citizens**

Notes on the Executive Order Restriction, 5 CFR 7.4, and 5 CFR 338.101:

- 1. The "**competitive service**," includes all positions in which appointments are subject to the provisions of law at 5 U.S.C. Chapter 33, "Examination, Selection, and Placement." The primary differences between the competitive service and the **excepted service** are in the areas of appointment procedures and job protections.
 - Some Federal agencies are outside the competitive service. These include the United States Postal Service, the Tennessee Valley Authority, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Federal Aviation Administration, and a number of other agencies. These agencies are exempt from the Executive Order ban on hiring non-citizens.
 - Some positions that are common to other agencies are "excepted" from the competitive service. These positions are also exempt from the Executive Order ban. Excepted positions include those in the Senior Executive Service (SES) and those in the excepted service, including lawyers, chaplains, interpreters (Chinese, Japanese, and Hindu languages, only), and others who are described in the Code of Federal Regulations at 5 CFR 213, *Excepted Service*. Subpart C of Part 213 lists positions that have been placed under excepted Schedules A, B, and C.
- 2. Under the Executive Order provision that permits the Office of Personnel Management to make **exceptions to the Executive Order ban**, the only exception referenced in the regulation at 5 CFR 338.101 is an appointment under 5 CFR 316.601, "Appointment without competitive examination in rare cases." Such appointments are truly rare. However, if agencies find no qualified citizens available to fill a competitive service position, and if they meet all of the requirements of the appropriations ban and immigration rules, they may hire a non-citizen under a special Schedule A excepted appointment, authorized by 5 CFR 213.3102 (bb). The position that is filled this way is withdrawn from the competitive service for the period it is filled by the non-citizen. The excepted appointment does not give the employee eligibility for any other job. He or she may not be promoted or reassigned to a position in the competitive service, except in situations where a qualified citizen is not available and a Schedule A appointment is again used.

Excerpt from
the listing of
excepted
Schedule A
Appointments
in **5 CFR 213**

5 CFR 213.3102 (bb) *Positions when filled by aliens in the absence of qualified citizens.* Appointments under this authority are subject to prior approval of the Office [of Personnel Management] except when the authority is specifically included in a delegated examining agreement with the Office.

**Alternate Qualification Standard for
Student Career Employment Program (SCEP) and
Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP)**

The Office of Personnel Management regulations allow an agency to develop a standard for student trainee positions or to utilize the standard for the target position. Whenever possible, the standard for the target position should be used. If the standard for the target position does not cover the grade occupied by the student, as is the case with professional and administrative positions below GS-5, the following alternative standard shall be used:

GS-1 No experience required.

GS-2 High school graduation or equivalent or 3 months of general experience.

GS-3 Completion of 1 academic year above the high school level or 6 months of general experience or an equivalent combination.

GS-4 Completion of 2 academic years above the high school level and 3 months of specialized experience at the GS-3 level or an equivalent combination. Twelve semester hours (or equivalent quarter hours) of academic course work related to the student's major field of study may be substituted for the specialized experience.

For GS-5 and above positions, use the competitive qualifications standard for the positions as described in the OPM Operating Manual, Qualification Standards for General Schedule Positions.

General experience is work that demonstrates ability to do the job or provides a familiarity with the subject matter or processes of the broad subject area of the occupation.

Specialized experience is work that has equipped the applicant with the specific knowledges, skills, and abilities to successfully perform the duties of the position, and that is typically in or related to the work of the position to be filled.

Education is creditable if it relates to the position and it provides the knowledges and skills needed for successful performance. For GS-3 and GS-4 positions the coursework may include general science and math course work, such as college algebra, biology, botany, chemistry, zoology, and so on.

Attachment 1 to Department Personnel Manual (DPM) Bulletin 550-97
(FSH 6109.41 - DPM bull. 550-97)

Chapter 550 - Pay Administration
Subchapter 13 - Advances In Pay

10-1 INTRODUCTION

A. **POLICY.** This authority is to be used to grant an advance in pay not to exceed pay for 2 pay periods to any individual who is newly appointed. This includes any individual who is appointed following a break in Federal service of at least 90 days. In making the decision to use this authority, USDA managers should consider whether or not its use is necessary to encourage the candidate to accept the position; the relative merits of the case by comparison to other cases in which the Agency has used the authority; and the impact of the decision on the advancement of USDA's equal employment opportunity objectives.

3. **DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY.** The authority to make advance payments of basic pay is delegated to the Agency Personnel Officers (APO's), who may redelegate it to lower levels of the organization consistent with the authority to make final firm offers of employment. APO's are responsible for ensuring judicious and equitable use of this authority.

10-2 CRITERIA FOR GRANTING/DENYING REQUESTS

Requests for an advance in pay must be submitted in writing. The following are examples of criteria on which the decision to grant or deny requests for advances in pay may be based:

- a. an indication of financial need;
- b. the recommendation by the selecting official;
- c. the difficulty encountered in filling the position;
- d. whether it will be necessary for the individual concerned to move to a different city to accept the position and the cost of moving;
- e. whether a recruitment bonus or relocation bonus would be more appropriate; or
- f. budget constraints.

10-3 PROCESSING AND ACCOUNTING PROCEDURES GOVERNING ADVANCE PAYMENTS

A. **STATEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING.** Before an advance in pay may be processed, the employee must sign a statement of understanding (see Exhibit 01).

**Attachment 1 to Department Personnel Manual (DPM) Bulletin 550-97
(FSH 6109.41 - DPM bull. 550-97)**

B. PROCEDURES FOR PROCESSING ADVANCES IN PAY AND REPAYMENT. Within 3 workdays after the employee has entered on duty, the servicing Personnel Office (designated POI) should TELEFAX a copy of the statement of understanding along with a memorandum signed by the official with authority to approve an advance of pay containing the following information, to the National Finance Center (NFC), Payroll/Personnel Operations Section.

- (1) an identification that this is a request for an advance in pay;
- (2) the name and social security number of the employee for whom the advance in pay will be issued;
- (3) the amount of money to be advanced (agencies should follow the guidelines in exhibit 2 of chapter 13 of the Payroll/Personnel Processing Manual);
- (4) the pay period in which the employee enters on duty (Note: The check cannot be issued prior to the employee's entry on duty date, but must be issued prior to the issuance of his or her first paycheck);
- (5) the check mailing address;
- (6) the agency code and Personnel Office Identifier (POI);
- (7) the name, title, and agency of the official authorized to approve an advance in pay; and
- (8) the name and telephone number of the agency representative who can answer questions regarding the request.

Form AD-343 should be forwarded to NFC stating the amount of pay that was advanced as well as instructions on the number of pay periods over which the advance is to be recovered. The maximum period of time an agency may establish for recovery of an advance payment is 13 pay periods, beginning on the date of the employee's appointment, unless recovery is accomplished by salary offset procedures and a longer period is necessary to avoid exceeding the 15 percent of disposable pay limitation described in 5 CFR 550.104(i). Further instructions for processing advances in pay and repayment will be issued by the Office of Finance and Management in the Payroll/Personnel Processing Manual.

Attachment 1 to Department Personnel Manual (DPM) Bulletin 550-97
(FSH 6109.41 - DPM bull. 550-97)

10-4 WAIVING REPAYMENT OF ADVANCES IN PAY

A. DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY. The authority to waive all or part of an advance in pay is delegated to AGENCY HEADS or their designees.

B. CRITERIA FOR WAIVER. Before waiving all or part of an advance payment, the Agency Head or his or her designee should consider whether recovery would be against equity and good conscience or against the public interest.

10-5 RECORDS AND REPORTS

A. RECORDS. At a minimum, agencies must keep the following records for at least 2 years.

- (1) a justification for approving or denying the request for an advance in pay;
- (2) a copy of the statement of understanding; and
- (3) a copy of the justification for waiving repayment, if applicable.

B. REPORTS. Use of this authority will be evaluated as a part of the Department's personnel management evaluation program; however, reports on the use of this authority may be periodically required.

Forest Service Handbook 6109.12 – Employment and Benefits Handbook
Chapter 50 - Student Educational Employment Program
Amendment: 6109.12-2001-2
Effective date: November 08, 2001
59 - Exhibit 04

Sample Outline of Student Career Employment Program (SCEP) Orientation Checklist

Supervisors shall:

- ____ 1. Complete the "Working Agreement"; discuss and have SCEP's complete the "Statement of Understanding"; and if appropriate, discuss and have SCEP's complete the Service Agreement for Tuition Assistance.
- ____ 2. Thoroughly explain work assignments.
- ____ 3. Establish performance standards in accordance with section 56.2 of FSH 6109.12.
- ____ 4. Provide an "overview" of the Forest Service--mission, organization, budget, and so on--and how the work assignment relates to the total mission of the Forest Service.
- ____ 5. Provide opportunity for students to gain information about health benefits, life insurance, FERS, and so on.
- ____ 6. Furnish specific information about the unit where students are located.
- ____ 7. Attend, if possible, a unit, Forest, and/or Regional Orientation Program with students.
- ____ 8. Inform student of any mandatory training.
- ____ 9. Review the Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch and the Principles of Ethical Conduct for Government Employees.
- ____ 10. Provide information about the Forest Service and how to make contact if needed with Early Intervention Program Managers, Pre-Complaint Counselors, Employee Assistance Program (EAP) Counselors, and so on.
- ____ 11. Explain procedures for paychecks, pay advances, travel procedures and travel credit card usage, purchasing, and other administrative processes the student may utilize.
- ____ 12. Explain what is expected in terms of timelines, work schedules, taking leave, tardiness, and so on; explain consequences if established policies are not followed.
- ____ 13. Inform students where services, such as laundromat, hair stylist, public phones, and so on, are located.

Sample Outline of Student Career Employment Program (SCEP) Orientation Checklist

____ 14. Inform students about policies dealing with phone usage, computers, and other equipment and services.

____ 15. Social aspects: Remember that for many students this will be their first time away from home. This situation can be especially difficult if the student is a minority and the town has few or no minorities. Following are some ideas that may help students feel more at home:

____ a. Inform or invite them to community social events;

____ b. Ensure that other employees, who can form a support system, know that students have arrived;

____ c. Introduce students to other employees who may be in the same age group or may have the same interests;

____ d. Describe local recreation opportunities.

59 - Exhibit 05

Sample Service Agreement for Tuition Assistance

1. I hereby agree that upon completion of the approved training for which the Forest Service pays tuition and related college expenses, I will serve in the Agency for a period equal to, at a minimum, 1 year for every academic year financial assistance received, or for a period equal to at least the length of training. This agreement may be extended to begin at a later date if additional education beyond the initial training is mutually agreed upon.
2. I agree that if I do not remain with the Forest Service for the period of time agreed to under item 1 above, unless I am separated for reasons beyond my control and acceptable to the Forest Service, I will reimburse the Agency on a pro rata basis for the amount of the tuition and expenses related to the unexpired service.
3. I understand that any amount which may be due the agency as a result of any failure on my part to meet the terms of this agreement may be withheld from any monies owed me by the United States Government, or may be recoverable from me as a debt due the United States Government.
4. If I am no longer in good standing with my university, college, or other educational institution, I understand that I will be removed from the program and must repay the tuition assistance (monies) received.
5. I acknowledge that this agreement does not in any way commit the United States Government to continue my employment.

Date

Signature of Student

cc: SCEP Coordinator

Sample Student Career Experience Program (SCEP) Work Agreement

Between

USDA Forest Service, (Unit)

XYZ University

and

Becky James

This agreement is the basis for developing mutual understanding and identifying respective responsibilities between the USDA Forest Service, WO/Region/Station/Area/Institute, the educational institution, and the student under the Federal Student Career Experience Program (SCEP). SCEP provides for Federal work experience which is directly related to the student's educational program and career goals, with the potential of noncompetitive conversion into the Federal career service. It is in accordance with the Student Career Experience Program regulations at section 213.3202 of Title 5, Code of Federal Regulations and Forest Service policy.

The educational institution will provide information, upon request and in accordance with the school's policies and procedures, regarding the student's academic record; and agrees to notify the employer when a change in the student's status becomes known. The institution may request and receive information concerning the student's work experience and progress on the job.

Student Eligibility for Selection Into the Program

1. The student must be seeking a high school or general equivalency diploma (GED); vocational/technical certificate; associate, baccalaureate, graduate, or professional degree; and must be carrying, at a minimum, a half-time course load.
2. The student must be in good academic standing as defined by the educational institution.

Requirements for Continuing in the Program

1. The student must be working with the Forest Service or enrolled in classes with a minimum half-time course load, or both, at all times, unless a "break in program" is agreed upon by both the unit manager and the student, and approved by the Regional Forester, Station Director, Area Director, or Institute Director.

Sample Student Career Experience Program (SCEP) Work Agreement

Students in a graduate program need to complete their thesis as quickly as possible within the timeframes established by their school and agreed upon by the Forest Service.

2. The work experience with the Forest Service must be related to the student's career and academic goals.
3. If the student ceases to meet the requirements of the program, the student shall be terminated from employment with the Forest Service. Employment may also be terminated for conduct or performance reasons.
4. The student agrees to provide academic records to the Forest Service and to inform the Forest Service of any changes in his/her academic status and/or field of study.

Nature of Work Assignments and Training Plans, and Schedule of Work (revise as needed)

1. Dates for work assignments (example: 6/1996-8/1996, 6/1997-12/1997).
2. Describe work assignments, using additional pages, and attach to this agreement. Following are examples of a few work assignments for two occupations:
 - a. for Fisheries Biologist:
 - conduct stream and lake surveys
 - design and implement instream structure projects
 - write fish biological evaluations
 - b. for Personnel Management Specialist:
 - take basic staffing correspondence course
 - develop a crediting plan for delegated examining
 - spend 2 weeks "shadowing" personnel processing clerks to obtain overview of the processing system
 - learn the Forest Service organization

Sample Student Career Experience Program (SCEP) Work Agreement

Schedule of Work Assignments and Class Attendance (revise as needed)

1. Class attendance

Dates of class attendance and projected courses: (note: work supervisors should discuss projected courses with the student to provide guidance for optional courses that may assist in meeting Forest Service skill needs in that occupation). Guidance as to suggested courses can be obtained from the unit's subject matter program managers.

Example: Fall term/1998: Intr. to Zoology, Inter. Speech, and so on.

Winter term/1999: Beg. Calculus, Limnology, and so on.

Spring term/1999: Advanced Chemistry, Soils, and so on.

2. Projected Date for Completion of Program: (example: 5/1999)

3. Evaluation Procedure

The immediate supervisor shall establish performance standards and conduct performance appraisals at the completion of work periods (before student returns to school). The established Forest Service appraisal process shall be used. Results shall be shared with the school.

Pay and Benefits

1. Students are paid in accordance with established pay schedules.

2. Students are eligible for the following benefits:

- Retirement
- Life and health insurance
- Vacation, sick, and holiday leave
- Travel and transportation payments between school and work site. (Payment for initial travel and transfer of station (TOS) can be paid separately, as long as there is not a duplication of payment. If a student receives reimbursement for travel to the initial work site, that individual may not be reimbursed for travel expenses to the first assignment upon conversion, but can receive other authorized relocation expenses, such as transportation of household goods. This may differ for students recruited through Forest Service-wide recruitment initiatives.)

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59 - Exhibit 06--Continued

Sample Student Career Experience Program (SCEP) Work Agreement

3. Students are eligible to apply for tuition assistance when it is offered. Students who receive tuition assistance shall be required to sign an agreement to stay with the Forest Service for a specific amount of time.

Conversion to Career, or Career-Conditional Employment

Following are the requirements that students must meet in order to be considered for noncompetitive conversion:

1. Completion of all course requirements for a degree.
2. Conversion within 120 days after completion of course requirements.
3. Completion of, at a minimum, 640 hours of career related work with the Forest Service before or concurrent with completion of course requirements.
4. Recommendation by the unit on which the career related work was performed.
5. Full completion of the requirements in the qualification standards for the position to which the student is being converted.
6. U.S. citizenship at the time of conversion to a career or career-conditional appointment.

Signatures

Student's Signature/Date

Student's Supervisor's Signature/Date

Educational Institution Representative's Signature/Date

cc: SCEP Coordinator

Forest Service Handbook 6109.12 – Employment and Benefits Handbook
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59 - Exhibit 07

Sample Statement of Understanding,

Forest Service, Student Career Experience Program (SCEP)

The following statements are to be addressed by each SCEP employee upon receipt of the working agreement which had been signed by all parties.

1. I have received a copy of the Student Career Experience Program Agreement between my academic institution, Forest Service, and myself.
2. My questions concerning the terms of the agreement have been answered to my satisfaction.
3. I understand that my employment as a SCEP employee may extend the time necessary to complete degree requirements.
4. I agree to provide a copy of my current transcripts to the unit SCEP Coordinator at the end of each grading period.
5. I understand that I must maintain the academic and work performance standards as outlined in the agreement, and that failure to do so may result in termination from the Program.
6. I must complete at least 640 hours of work experience prior to, or concurrent with, completion of all my course requirements (not during the 120-day conversion period).
7. I agree to the provisions of the agreement, which permit the sharing of appraisal information between the Forest Service and my academic institution. I understand my authorization is necessary in view of the Privacy Act of 1974 and that my failure to do so could result in disqualification from participation in the Program.
8. It is my understanding that although the Forest Service will make every effort to place SCEP students who satisfactorily complete all program requirements in a permanent position upon completion of the Program, there is no absolute obligation to do so.

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59 - Exhibit 07--Continued

Sample Statement of Understanding,

Forest Service, Student Career Experience Program (SCEP)

9. I understand my work experiences may take place at different locations within the Forest Service.
10. I understand I may be converted at a location different from my work experience location.

COMMENTS (If any):

Signature of Student

Date

NOTE: This Statement of Understanding shall be kept with the SCEP student's records.

cc: SCEP Coordinator

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59 - Exhibit 08

Sample Format for Student Feedback

NAME: _____ **WORK LOCATION:** _____

Please help us improve our efforts in placing you and other students in Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP) or Student Career Experience Program (SCEP) assignments by completing this questionnaire. (If you answer "poor" to any questions, please explain on the back).

1. How was your overall experience on the job?

_____ great _____ okay _____ poor

2. How were your living conditions compared to the cost to you?

_____ great _____ okay _____ poor

3. How well do you feel you "kept up" physically with the day-to-day work?

_____ great _____ okay _____ poor

4. How well did you and your co-workers get along?

_____ great _____ okay _____ poor

5. Did you have a mentor? (person who assisted you on the job and off, answered questions, and so on) Name: _____

Was he/she genuinely interested in your future? _____

6. How would you rate the work location, recreational opportunities, scenery, meeting people, and so on?

_____ great _____ okay _____ poor

7. Would you recommend your work location for other students next year?

_____ yes _____ no (please explain on the back)

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59 - Exhibit 08--Continued

Sample Format for Student Feedback

8. Please check the appropriate box below.

- _____ I want to change my major to _____.
- _____ I am currently majoring in _____.
- _____ I do not want to change it at this time.
- _____ I will not be returning to school.

9. Do you have any comments or suggestions to make about your summer employment experience?

(Any additional comments or suggestions may be written on the back of form.)

10. Did you receive orientation during your student work experience?

_____yes _____no _____

What type of orientation did you receive (supervisory, on-site, web-based)?

Was your orientation program: _____ great _____ okay _____ poor

11. If you are in a STEP position, would you be interested in returning to this unit as a student in the Student Career Experience Program (SCEP) if such a position were available?

_____yes _____no _____maybe (If “yes,” but not on this unit list your geographic preference:_____)

Student Name:_____ Forest Service Unit:_____

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59 - Exhibit 09

Sample Format for Supervisor Feedback

(This is not a performance appraisal; it is used to help Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP) and Student Career Experience Program (SCEP) students, and to improve guidance to upcoming students.)	
Student:	
Supervisor:	
Forest Service Unit:	
Work Period: From _____ To _____	

1. <u>Attitude/Application to work</u> <input type="checkbox"/> Outstanding in enthusiasm <input type="checkbox"/> Very interested and industrious <input type="checkbox"/> Average in diligence and interest <input type="checkbox"/> Below average <input type="checkbox"/> Unsatisfactory	7. <u>Quality of Work</u> <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Very Good <input type="checkbox"/> Average <input type="checkbox"/> Below Average <input type="checkbox"/> Unsatisfactory
--	---

2. <u>Dependability</u> <input type="checkbox"/> Can always be depended upon <input type="checkbox"/> Can usually be depended upon <input type="checkbox"/> Below average in dependability <input type="checkbox"/> Below average <input type="checkbox"/> Unsatisfactory	8. <u>Overall Assessment of Student</u> <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Very good <input type="checkbox"/> Average <input type="checkbox"/> Below average <input type="checkbox"/> Unsatisfactory
---	---

3. <u>Did student report when scheduled</u> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> Yes No </div>	9. <u>Training and/or Certification</u> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> Student Received </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <input type="checkbox"/> First Aid <input type="checkbox"/> Step Test </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Use of Chain Saw <input type="checkbox"/> CPR </div>
--	--

4. <u>Was he/she prepared?</u> (clothing, boots, and so on) <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> Yes No </div>	<input type="checkbox"/> Defensive Driving <input type="checkbox"/> Orientation <input type="checkbox"/> Basic Firefighting <input type="checkbox"/> Close Out <input type="checkbox"/> Other
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5. <u>Punctuality & Attendance (on job)</u> <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Very good <input type="checkbox"/> Average <input type="checkbox"/> Below Average <input type="checkbox"/> Unsatisfactory	10. <u>Would you consider rehiring this person?</u> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> Yes No </div>
---	--

6. <u>Interpersonal Behavior</u> <input type="checkbox"/> Works well with others <input type="checkbox"/> Average in working relationships <input type="checkbox"/> Has some difficulty working with others	11. <u>Was rehiring discussed with the student?</u> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> Yes No </div>
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59 - Exhibit 09--Continued

Sample Format for Supervisor Feedback

12. **Would you recommend this person for a SCEP position if available in the organization?**
Yes No
13. **Would you recommend this person for another SCEP or STEP assignment? If not, why?**
14. **Were future recommendations discussed with the student?** Yes No
15. **Problems, comments, and recommendations on the work assignment and program:**
16. **Was a discussion conducted with the student on success or problems with the work assignment?**
17. **Did you discuss future academic work with the student?**

Note: A copy of completed form should be sent/given to:

1. Student
2. Accredited Academic Institution
3. Personnel Office

59 - Exhibit 10**Calculating Quarters Allowance**

Students hired using the Student Career Experience Program (SCEP) and the Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP) are eligible for a quarters allowance. The maximum amount of the government quarters allowance CANNOT exceed 20% of a GS-4, step 1 salary for that geographical area. Housing costs exceeding the 20% of a GS-4/1 salary are the students' responsibility. Students are required to pay AT LEAST 20% of THEIR salary towards the cost of housing. This quarters allowance is considered income; therefore it is subject to taxes. The student is responsible for making the rent payment and the requests for reimbursement through the employing unit, with submittal of receipt, rental agreement, and other documentation. The unit completes the Form AD-343, Payroll Action Request and submits it to NFC for processing.

Example - Computation of Employee Portion (Use Applicable Geographic Salary Table)

Student 1 (GS 3, step 1): \$1,397 month x 20% = \$279.00 (minimum, student required to pay)

Student 2 (GS 4, step 1): \$1,568 month x 20% = \$314.00 (minimum, student required to pay)

Student 3 (GS 5, step 1): \$1,754 month x 20% = \$351.00 (minimum, student required to pay)

Example - Computation of Quarters Allowance

Based on salary rate of a GS 4, step 1 (\$9.02/hr or \$1568/mo gross). Salary table 1999-Rest of the United States Table (RUS)

Maximum Quarters Allowance Allowed: \$1,568 X 20% = \$314.00

Student 1, GS -3	
Rent \$600/month	Rent \$1000/month
\$314 max. allowance reimbursement	\$314 max. allowance reimbursement
\$286 student pays	\$686 student pays
Student 2, GS-4	
Rent \$600/month	Rent \$1000/month
\$286 max. allowance reimbursement	\$314 max. allowance reimbursement
\$314 student pays	\$686 student pays
Student 3, GS -5	
Rent \$600/month	Rent \$1000/month
\$249 max allowance reimbursement	\$314 max. allowance reimbursement
\$351 student pays	\$686 student pays

If the student is in one of the *Multicultural Workforce Strategic Initiatives*, please send a copy of the completed Form AD-343 to the student's Initiative Program Coordinator for payment.