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***Training and Education
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UNIVERSITY ASSIGNMENT PROGRAM

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signed

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Date

University Assignment Program (UAP)

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1. Purpose. The National Weather Service (NWS) University Assignment Program (UAP) offers opportunities for both full-time and part-time training assignments in job- or career-related studies at an accredited educational facility. It enables full-time employees to keep abreast of advances in science and technology, and other innovations within their occupational fields. The program also provides an opportunity for employees to learn new skills, as well as to develop and improve abilities they require in current or future positions. The UAP should be used only when the needed skills or knowledge requires a comprehensive long-term study program rather than a series of unconnected, short-term courses.

2. UAP Training Assignments. The UAP includes full-time and part-time training assignment options. All courses taken must result in development of the employee to better fulfill NWS' program objectives.

2.1 Full-Time Assignments. The full-time UAP option usually provides training for a period of one academic year (two semesters and summer session) in a non-Government facility, generally an accredited college or university. The educational institution's ability to meet the training needs effectively and economically should be considered. All courses must be completed by the date specified on the training application, and employees must take at least the minimum full-time course load requirement as determined by the educational institution.

Those applying for full-time UAP assignments must receive approval from their Regional Director/NCEP Director/Office Director in addition to their supervisor's approval as detailed in Section 6. It is also important to note full-time assignments are costly, and are weighed against more cost effective part-time UAP assignments, described in the next section.

Federal regulations require an employee selected for full-time training assignments to agree in writing to serve in the Government for three times the length of the training period. For example, three years of service for one year of training. The employee must sign a Continued Service and Reimbursement Agreement, which is Appendix C of this document.

2.2 Part-Time Assignments. Part-time UAP assignments allow employees to divide their 40 hour work week between work and course attendance/study assignments. For example, a 36/4 UAP option, the minimum time allowed for study under a part-time assignment, means a student spends 36 hours per week performing work duties and 4 hours per week devoted to course attendance/study assignments. Employees applying for part-time UAP assignments must ensure they are in a part-time status at the college or university where classes will be taken. Candidates should work through their supervisor to determine the appropriate work/study ratio for their assignment. Suggested guidelines for determining appropriate work/study ratios are provided in Appendix A.

An employee on part-time training shall incur a continuing service obligation of three times the number of hours he or she spends in class, in formal computer-based training, in formal self-study programs, or with a training instructor.

2.3 On-Line Studies. For UAP purposes, on-line studies associated with an accredited institution or college are considered the same as conventional in-residence studies. An advantage of on-line studies is that the necessary work/study ratio may be less than for in-residence courses. Such studies can also be much more convenient (accessible) for employees who work rotating shifts.

3. UAP Costs. Employees selected for university training assignments remain in their positions of record while in training status. The salary of selectees continues during the assignment. NWS Headquarters (NWSH) is responsible for tuition, fees, books, and supplies only. The NWS will not pay for computer or communication costs for on-line courses.
4. UAP Policy Guidelines. While the intent of the UAP is to improve employee job performance and provide enhanced skills and abilities for future positions, federal regulations prohibit the following:
 - a. The selection and assignment of an employee for training (or the payment or reimbursement of training costs) to (a) obtain an academic degree in order to qualify for appointment to a particular position or (b) for the sole purpose of providing an opportunity to an employee to obtain one or more academic degrees; and
 - b. The selection of educational facilities which discriminate in the admission or treatment of students.
5. Selection Criteria. The selection of employees to receive UAP training assignments will be based on the following factors:
 - a. Relevancy of the training to current and projected assignments within NWS and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) program objectives;
 - b. Evidence of the candidate's ability and desire to undertake and complete successfully a comprehensive long-term training program;
 - c. Basic merit principles providing equal opportunity to all eligible employees;
 - d. The total cost of the proposal and work/study ratio as compared to other proposals considered by each Region/NCEP/Office.
 - e. A complete application package (described in Section 6 below).
6. Documentation Requirements. All nominations must include a complete UAP application.

The application must include the items listed below, with an optional cover letter. The supervisor's role is important in ensuring the success of any training assignment, and the supervisor is responsible for an ongoing evaluation of both the employee's progress and the value of the training assignment. The supervisor is also responsible for assisting in the coordination of any recommended changes to the original training plan with Region/NCEP Director's Office/Office Headquarters and the Office of Climate, Water, and Weather Services (OCWWS) Training Division.

A complete set of application instructions is found in Appendix B.

6.1 Items to be Completed by the Applicant and Supervisor:

- a. A brief description of proposed course work and how this training is relevant and will be applied to current and/or future duties (Part A of Appendix B).
- b. Complete the UAP Application Summary Sheet (Part B of Appendix B).
- c. Supervisor must address the applicant's ability to complete a long-term training program and his/her commitment to the NWS, NOAA, and federal service. Supervisor will also provide a brief description of the proposed training relevancy to NWS and/or NOAA program needs (Parts C and D of Appendix B).
- d. By signing the application, the supervisor agrees to the following terms:
 - All application materials have been reviewed with the applicant, and are consistent and complete as specified by the requirements of this announcement;
 - The assignment is included in the employee's performance plan;
 - The requested work/study ratio is appropriate; and
 - The supervisor approves the terms of the application.

7. Review and Selection Procedures. Nominations must be forwarded through and approved by local management channels (i.e., immediate supervisor, Meteorologist-in-Charge (MIC), Hydrologist-in-Charge (HIC), National Centers for Environmental Prediction (NCEP) Center Director, Branch/Division Chief), and NWS Region/NCEP Director/Office Headquarters before being considered for approval. Supervisors and managers should coordinate any modifications to an application with their Region/NCEP Director's Office/Office Headquarters before an application is finalized.

The review of all UAP applications will be conducted by each Region/NCEP. The OCWWS Training Division will review all NWSH applications. Final UAP funding allocations will be decided by the National Strategic Training and Education Plan (NSTEP) team consisting of representatives from the National Headquarters Group (NHG) and Field Requirements Group (FRG).

8. Post Selection Guidelines. Participants should use a government bankcard to pay for courses. If the total dollar amount exceeds the bankcard's credit limit, then a form SF-182 - *Request, Authorization, Agreement and Certification of Training*, is required for payment. To ensure the approved courses were completed, participants will provide a copy of their final

grades after each term to the OCWWS Training Division. Complete information on submitting final grades is provided to each approved applicant.

Participants must accomplish a grade of “C” (or the individual school’s lowest numerical equivalent), or better in all UAP funded courses, or be subject to reimbursing the Government for courses in which a lesser grade is earned. All training involving appropriated funds must be completed successfully. When completing individual training, a **grade of "C"** or better is considered successful completion for all college courses. Any employee who fails to complete a course successfully is personally responsible for reimbursement of all training costs associated with training.

Participants who successfully complete all approved course work will receive a certificate of completion at the end of the program year.

9. Schedule. The UAP is announced via a NWS All-Hands email message, along with an article published in *NWS Focus*. The announcement is typically released in December for the upcoming academic year, and dates are provided for applications to be received by Regional and Office Headquarters.

10. Multi-Year Programs. Employees who are enrolling in multi-year programs of study (usually two consecutive years) must reapply for funding through the UAP each year.

Appendix A
Guidelines for Determining Work/Study Ratios

For part-time university assignments, the following guidelines should be used in determining work/study ratios. These guidelines are merely recommendations. Candidates should work through their supervisor to determine the appropriate work/study ratio.

Undergraduate Study

<u>Credits per semester/quarter</u>	<u>Recommended Work/Study Ratio</u>
12/6	20/20
9	24/16
6/3	32/8
3	36/4

Graduate Study

<u>Credits per semester/quarter</u>	<u>Recommended Work/Study Ratio</u>
9	20/20
6/3	24/16
3	32/8

Employees seeking part-time assignments directed toward acquiring academic requirements for the meteorologist series should have completed mathematics through "pre-calculus" or analytic geometry, and be ready to start calculus and physics. Those seeking full-time assignments should have completed mathematics through calculus and 1 year (2 semesters) of calculus-based college physics. Exceptions will be considered; however, appropriate justification should be provided in such cases.

Employees who are enrolling in multi-year programs must reapply for funding through the UAP each year.

On-line/Distance Learning Study

For students requesting to take courses on-line or via distance learning, the total number of credits per equivalent semester should be determined, and the recommended ratios for undergraduate or graduate study should be followed. For example, a condensed 5-week, on-line course may be three credits. Thus, if a student wished to take three consecutive 5-week on-line undergraduate courses, this would be equivalent to 9 credits in a one semester time frame. In this case, a 24/16 work/study ratio would be recommended.

Appendix B
University Assignment Program (UAP) Application

A. Applicant's brief description of proposed course work and how this training is relevant and will be applied to current and/or future duties.

B. UAP Application Summary Sheet

1. Employee Information

Name (Last, First, MI):

Title/Series/Grade:

Office Mailing Address:

Office Phone Number:

2. Academic Background. Note: Please provide a copy of college transcripts or provide a list of college level courses taken with grades and attach to this application.

College:

• School:

• Degree:

• Major:

Other University Training:

• School:

• Hours:

• Description:

3. Proposed Courses

Training Institution:

Address:

Advisor:

Phone Number:

Semester or Quarter 1; or On-Line Equivalent			
Start Date:		Completion Date:	
Course:		Credits:	
Tuition Cost:		Books/Materials Cost:	
Course:		Credits:	
Tuition Cost:		Books/Materials Cost:	
Course:		Credits:	
Tuition Cost:		Books/Materials Cost:	
Course:		Credits:	
Tuition Cost:		Books/Materials Cost:	

Semester or Quarter 2; or On-Line Equivalent			
Start Date:		Completion Date:	
Course:		Credits:	
Tuition Cost:		Books/Materials Cost:	
Course:		Credits:	

Semester or Quarter 2; or On-Line Equivalent			
Tuition Cost:		Books/Materials Cost:	
Course:		Credits:	
Tuition Cost:		Books/Materials Cost:	
Course:		Credits:	
Tuition Cost:		Books/Materials Cost:	

Quarter 3; or On-Line Equivalent			
Start Date:		Completion Date:	
Course:		Credits:	
Tuition Cost:		Books/Materials Cost:	
Course:		Credits:	
Tuition Cost:		Books/Materials Cost:	

Quarter 4; or On-Line Equivalent			
Start Date:		Completion Date:	
Course:		Credits:	
Tuition Cost:		Books/Materials Cost:	
Course:		Credits:	
Tuition Cost:		Books/Materials Cost:	

Total Cost for Proposed Courses:	
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C. Supervisor

Name (Last, First, MI)

Title:

Office Mailing Address:

Office Phone Number:

D. Supervisor's narrative addressing the applicant's ability to complete a long-term training program and his/her commitment to NWS, NOAA, and federal service. Also provide a brief description of the proposed training relevancy to NWS and/or NOAA program needs.

Supervisor's signature for approval of the application (see terms in the UAP announcement):

For Full-Time UAP Assignments only, Regional/NCEP/Office Director's approval of application (see terms in the UAP announcement):

Appendix C: Continued Service and Reimbursement Agreement

NOTE: This agreement must be signed by the nominee for all non-government training for which the Government approves payment of training costs prior to the commencement of such training. Nothing contained in Appendix C below shall be construed as limiting the authority of an agency to waive, in whole or in part, an obligation of an employee to pay expenses incurred by the Government in connection with the training.

1. I agree that upon completion of the Government sponsored training described in this request, if I receive salary covering the training period, I will serve in the agency three times the length of the training period. If I receive no salary during the training period, I agree to serve the agency for a period equal to the length of training, but in no case less than one month. (The length of part-time training is the number of hours spent in class, in computer-based training, in satellite training, or with the instructor. The length of full-time training is eight hours for each day of training, up to a maximum of 40 hours a week). NOTE: For the purposes of this agreement, the term "agency" refers to the employing organization (such as an Executive Department of an independent establishment), not to a segment of such an organization.
2. If I voluntarily leave the agency before completing the period of service agreed to in item 1 above, I AGREE to reimburse the agency for the tuition and related fees, travel and other special expenses (EXCLUDING SALARY) paid in connection with my training. However, the amount of reimbursement will be reduced on a pro-rated basis for the percentage of completion of obligated service.
3. I FURTHER AGREE that, if I voluntarily leave the agency to enter the service of another Federal agency or other organization in any branch of the Government before completing the period of service agreed to in item 1 above, I will give my organization written notice of at least ten work days, during which time a determination concerning reimbursement will be made. If I fail to give this advance notice, I AGREE to pay the amount of additional expenses (5 U.S.C. 4109(a)(2)) incurred by the Government in this training.
4. Further, if I withdraw from the course due to factors within my control, or fail to earn a grade of "C" (or the institution's lowest numerical equivalent), I agree to reimburse the government for all costs of the course, excluding my salary.
5. I understand that any amounts 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 Government, or may be recovered by such other methods as are approved by law.
6. I FURTHER AGREE to obtain approval from my organization training officer and that person responsible for authorizing non-government training requests of any proposed change in my approved training program involving course and schedule changes, withdrawals or incompletions, and increased costs.
7. I acknowledge that this agreement does not in any way commit the Government to continue my employment. I understand that, if there is a transfer of my service obligation to another Federal agency or other organization in any branch of the Government, the agreements in items 1, 2, and 3 of this section will remain in effect until I have completed my obligated service with that other agency or organization.

Period of obligated service	
Employee's signature	Date