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NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE INSTRUCTION 20-104

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Training and Education

***Training and Education, NWSPD 20-1
UNIVERSITY ASSIGNMENT PROGRAM***

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SUMMARY OF REVISIONS: This directive supersedes NWSI 20-104, “University Assignment Program,” dated April 27, 2004. Changes are: (1) Allows National Weather Service Regions, National Centers, and Offices to fund the University Assignment Program (UAP) if not funded by the National Strategic Training and Education Plan (NSTEP) process, (2) Updates the UAP selection process, (3) Requires the Office Manager’s or Office Director’s approval of the application when they are not the first line supervisor of the UAP applicant, and (4) Requires an announcement be sent only in the years when the UAP will be funded nationally by the NSTEP process.

Signed
David B. Caldwell
Director, Office of Climate,
Water, and Weather Services

July 27, 2009
Date

University Assignment Program

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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, management, leadership, 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 coordinated study program lasting a minimum of one year 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. Time off from work to participate in the UAP only applies during the time of the year when classes are in session.

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) at 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 specified 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 and office manager'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 a full-time training assignment to agree in writing to serve in the NWS 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. The employee must sign a Continued Service and Reimbursement Agreement, which is Appendix C of this document.

2.3 Online Studies (Distance Learning). For UAP purposes, online studies associated with an accredited institution or college are considered the same as conventional in-residence studies. An advantage of online 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 Funding and 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 when the UAP is funded by the National Strategic Training and Education Plan (NSTEP) process.

NWS Regions, National Centers, and other NWS Offices can fund their own UAP when funding is not provided by the NSTEP process. Also, a partial funding and no funding options are available with administrative time off.

The NWS will not pay for computer or communication costs for online 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. Relevance of the training to support/enhance current and future NWS and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) program objectives;
- b. Evidence of the candidate's ability to undertake and complete long term projects with increasing complex subject matter;
- c. The total cost of the proposal and work/study ratio as compared to other proposals considered by each Region/NCEP/Office.
- d. 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 cover letter. The supervisor's and office manager's role is important in ensuring the success of any training assignment. 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 OCWWS Training Division.

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

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. The UAP Application Summary Sheet (Part B of Appendix B).
- c. Supervisor's narrative addressing the ability of the applicant to complete long-term projects and his/her commitment to the NWS, NOAA, and federal service. Supervisor will also provide a brief description of the proposed training relevance 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.

The Office Manager or Office Director must approve the application when they are not the first line supervisor of the UAP applicant.

7. Review and Selection Procedures. The announcement, review, and selection process will be determined by OCWWS if the UAP is funded as part of the NSTEP Fiscal Year Implementation Plan for NWS Training and Education. If the funding will be provided by the NWS Regions, National Centers, or other NWS offices, the announcement, review, and selection process will be determined by that organization.

7.1 Review and Selection Procedures When the UAP is Funded by the NSTEP Process. The Director, Office of Climate, Water, and Weather Services will be the final approval authority for UAP assignments funded by the NSTEP process. All applications for the UAP will be sent to the Chief, Training Division (W/OS6) for review prior to final approval by the OCWWS Director. 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 Office Managers should coordinate any modifications to an application with their Region/NCEP Director's Office/Office Headquarters before an application is sent for final approval.

7.2 Review and Selection Procedures When the UAP is Not Funded by the NSTEP Process. NWS Regions, National Centers, and other NWS offices can fund the UAP when funding is not provided for the program as part of the NSTEP Fiscal Year Implementation Plan for NWS Training and Education. These offices should develop their own announcement, selection, and review process for those times when they will fund the UAP. If the UAP is funded outside the NSTEP yearly Implementation Plan using end-of-year funds, the funds may be allocated and dispersed to the Regions and NCEP to expedite the selection and funding process.

8. Post Selection Guidelines. Participants will need to complete a Standard Form (SF)-182, Request, Authorization, Agreement and Certification of Training. After completing the SF-182 process, the participant's office should use the government bankcard to pay for their training, if the cost is under \$3,000. For training costs over \$3,000, participants will need to fill out paperwork to have the training paid through the procurement process. To ensure the approved courses were completed, participants will provide a copy of their final grades after each term to

their Regional/Director's Office. Complete information on submitting final grades is provided to each approved applicant. Participants must earn a grade of "C" (or the individual school's 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.

9. Schedule. An announcement will be sent by OCWWS in those years when the UAP is nationally funded. The announcement will be sent via a NWS All-Hands E-mail message and an article published in the online newsletter *NWS Focus*. The announcement will also specify the dates the applications must be received and will give applicants a minimum time of 30 days to apply.

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. An example of a multi-year program is a UAP for completing educational requirements for crossing over to another job series.

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 and Office Manager to determine the appropriate work/study ratio.

Undergraduate Study

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

Graduate Study

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

Employees who have been accepted in multi-year programs must update requested courses and their costs, and provide transcripts each year.

Online/Distance Learning Study

For students requesting to take courses online 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, online course may be three credits. Thus, if a student wished to take three consecutive 5-week online 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. This guideline is merely a recommendation. Candidates should work through their supervisor and Office Manager to determine the appropriate work/study ratio.

**Appendix B
University Assignment Program (UAP) Application**

A. The applicant must attach a narrative describing the 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:
Date:

2. Academic Background. Note: Please provide a copy of college transcripts or provide a list of college level course taken with grades and attach it 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 Online Equivalent			
Start Date:		Completion Date:	
(1) Course:		Tuition Cost:	
Credits:		Books/Materials Cost:	
(2) Course:		Tuition Cost:	
Credits:		Books/Materials Cost:	
(3) Course:		Tuition Cost:	
Credits:		Books/Materials Cost:	
(4) Course:		Tuition Cost:	
Credits:		Books/Materials Cost:	
		Total Costs:	
Administrative Time-Off Hours Requested (If Applicable):			

Semester or Quarter 2; or Online Equivalent			
Start Date:		Completion Date:	
(1) Course:		Tuition Cost:	
Credits:		Books/Materials Cost:	
(2) Course:		Tuition Cost:	
Credits:		Books/Materials Cost:	
(3) Course:		Tuition Cost:	
Credits:		Books/Materials Cost:	
(4) Course:		Tuition Cost:	
Credits:		Books/Materials Cost:	
		Total Costs:	
Administrative Time-Off Hours Requested (If Applicable):			

Semester or Quarter 3; or Online Equivalent			
Start Date:		Completion Date:	
(1) Course:		Tuition Cost:	
Credits:		Books/Materials Cost:	
(2) Course:		Tuition Cost:	
Credits:		Books/Materials Cost:	
(3) Course:		Tuition Cost:	
Credits:		Books/Materials Cost:	
(4) Course:		Tuition Cost:	
Credits:		Books/Materials Cost:	
		Total Costs:	
Administrative Time-Off Hours Requested (If Applicable):			

Semester or Quarter 4; or Online Equivalent			
Start Date:		Completion Date:	
(1) Course:		Tuition Cost:	
Credits:		Books/Materials Cost:	
(2) Course:		Tuition Cost:	
Credits:		Books/Materials Cost:	
(3) Course:		Tuition Cost:	
Credits:		Books/Materials Cost:	
(4) Course:		Tuition Cost:	
Credits:		Books/Materials Cost:	
		Total Costs:	
Administrative Time-Off Hours Requested (If Applicable):			

Total Cost for Proposed Courses:	
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C. Supervisor

Name (Last, First, MI):
Title:
Office Mailing Address:
Office Phone Number:

D. The supervisor must attach a narrative addressing the applicant’s ability to complete long-term projects 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 and date of approval for the application (See terms in the UAP announcement):

Office Manager’s or Office Director’s signature and date of approval for the application (If Applicable):

For Full-Time UAP Assignments only, Regional/ NCEP/Office Director’s signature and date of approval for the 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 the National Weather Service), 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. Furthermore, if I withdraw from the course due to factors within my control, or fail to earn a grade of "C" (or the institution's 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