National Security Agency OnRamp II Scholarship Program
STUDENT HANDBOOK

Introduction:

Welcome and congratulations on your selection as an OnRamp II Scholar, a program that provides unparalleled work and education opportunities. The OnRamp II Program provides participants:

- Tuition support and education related fees (does not include meal plans, housing or parking) for up to three years for qualified undergraduate and graduate studies.
- Book allowance (including e-books and audio books) and school supplies up to $3,000 per academic year.
- Professional development allowance (travel and conference fees, professional certifications, and leadership development) up to $2,000 per year.
- Internship opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students.
- Full-time employment upon successful completion of your course of study and graduation from a designated OnRamp II academic institution.

This handbook outlines your obligations and responsibilities as an OnRamp II Program participant, summarizes the benefits of the program, describes important administrative procedures and provides contact information for the OnRamp II Program Office.

I.   OnRamp II Student Obligations and Responsibilities

Retention in the OnRamp II Program, as described in your signed Service Agreement (Attachment A), requires:

1. Completion of your course of study as approved by the OnRamp II Program Office. Failure to complete your course of study could result in immediate termination of your program participation that would result in a debt to the government (refer to Section VI for details).
2. Maintain a 3.0 cumulative GPA on a 4.0 scale each semester/quarter as determined by your academic institution. If your GPA is less than the minimum in any given semester/quarter, the OnRamp II Program Office will decide if you should be afforded one semester/quarter probationary period to improve your grades or terminate your program participation that would result in a debt to the government.
3. Upholding the standards of conduct required to successfully complete NSA's pre-employment processing and maintain a clearance.

Further, as a program participant you have agreed to continue in the service of the Agency in your course of study for a period of one year of employment for each year of scholarship support and complete at least one 12-week Agency summer internship.

Should you voluntarily terminate your NSA OnRamp II Scholarship Program Service Agreement you will be required to reimburse the U.S. Government for the total cost of scholarship provided under this program as described in Section VI.

While you are completing your course of study there are a few other responsibilities you need to be aware of and follow:

- Transcripts: An official transcript for each semester/quarter must be submitted to the OnRamp II Program Office within 30 days of completing the semester/quarter.
- Pass/Fail Courses: A grade report must be received (electronic PDF/uneditable) by the same deadline for submission of transcripts. We recommend that you arrange this with your professor at the beginning of the semester. This grade will be used to verify semester GPA requirements have been met. If a letter grade is not obtained within a reasonable amount of time, the OnRamp II Program Office has the authority to assign the course a letter grade of "C".
- Course Work: While in school you are required to carry a full academic course load (*defined as a minimum of 15 credit hours per semester/quarter*) or your school's equivalent of 15 semester hours.
- Withdrawals: You must obtain approval from the OnRamp II Program Office to withdraw from any class(es) after the first day of school, if it will reduce your total number of credit hours to less than 15 for the semester/quarter or change funding/tuition.
- Changing majors: Participants must submit a written request via email to the OnRamp II Program Office to obtain our approval prior to changing your major.

The OnRamp II Program Office is available to assist you with answers or additional information regarding any of your student program obligations outlined above, as well as any questions or concerns you may have regarding the OnRamp II Scholarship Program.

I.   NSA OnRamp II Obligations

The Agency will pay up to $25,000 per academic year for tuition support and education related mandatory fees (does not include meal plans, housing or parking), up to $3,000 per academic year for a book allowance (including e-books, audio books and school supplies), and up to $2,000 per academic year for professional development (travel and conference fees, professional certifications, and leadership development). The Agency is not obligated to pay tuition for repeated classes. Other scholarships and/or aide can be utilized if tuition and mandatory fees exceed this amount. Scholarship funding cannot be used for stipends.

Besides assistance with academic and career decisions afforded you as an OnRamp II Scholar, you will be assigned a mentor to help ensure your success in the program. Your mentor will assist you with understanding the NSA culture and mission, and help with navigating the workplace during your summer internship and assist as you Enter-on-Duty (EOD) as a full-time employee. The OnRamp II Program Office will introduce you to your mentor and provide additional details about this special opportunity.

II.   Pre-employment Processing: Obtaining a Security Clearance

Once you have signed your NSA OnRamp II Scholarship Program Service Agreement, the OnRamp II Program Office will initiate the process for you to obtain a Top Secret/Special Intelligence security clearance. You must be granted a security clearance to participate in a summer internship program or EOD as a full-time employee.

The government considers many factors when granting security clearances, including citizenship, drug use and personal integrity, and conduct. The clearance process consists of the following:

1. Background Investigation – a process to validate your character and identity based on personal history and other information.
2. Psychological Testing – a means to screen out potential candidates whose psychological profile may make them unsuitable for work affecting national security.
3. Polygraph – an examination and interview designed to assess suitability for clearance.

The Office of Human Resources in coordination with the OnRamp II Program Office will provide you the paperwork necessary to begin the clearance process. Once you receive your paperwork, it's important that you pay close attention to the deadlines for submitting your documents as the clearance process is lengthy. Be honest on your paperwork and throughout the process. If you have any questions or concerns about any aspect of obtaining a clearance, contact the OnRamp II Program Office.

III.   Summer Internship

Prior to completion of your course of study and graduation, every program participant is required to complete at least one 12-week internship with NSA as stipulated in your NSA OnRamp II Scholarship Program Service Agreement. As an intern, you will be a full-time employee on a temporary appointment entitled to a salary, for long distance participants a stipend towards housing costs, and paid time off. Internships are not considered part of your approved course of study for which course credit is granted. The internship requirement may be waived by the OnRamp II Program Office under certain circumstances (e.g., a student who received scholarship for their senior year), but in the case of a waiver the student's service obligation will be extended by 12 weeks.

A complete list and description of the Agency's internship opportunities is available at intelligencecareers.gov. Take time to familiarize yourself with the various programs and discuss

your preferences with the OnRamp II Program Office and your mentor so that you can make an informed decision about your internship choice and better understand how the experience will enrich your education.

Once your internship selection has been finalized, the OnRamp II Program Office will provide you with information on reporting instructions, security badging procedures, and other important administrative details.

IV.   Upon Graduation

Following graduation, you will begin full-time employment with NSA, as stated in your NSA OnRamp II Scholarship Program Service Agreement, on a date specified by NSA's Human Resources Office in coordination with the OnRamp II Program Office, typically on or before 30 September. You will be provided a Final Job Offer letter that confirms your start date, describes your position and work role assignment, and validates your starting grade and step.

The OnRamp II Program Office may approve deferment for undergraduate participants who pursue graduate studies immediately following their undergraduate course of study. The OnRamp II Program Office will document the deferment to include details of all scholarship expenditures, length of service obligation and projected date of obligation completion.

V.   Service Obligation and Debt Collection

Within 120 days of your EOD with the Agency, the OnRamp II Program Office will provide a written notification of all scholarship expenditures, length of service obligation and projected date of obligation completion.

The formula to calculate service obligation is:

- One year of employment reimbursement for each year of scholarship support provided by NSA. The number of years of scholarship support is the number of academic years for which NSA covered your expenses rounded up to the nearest whole number. Full-time coursework over a summer period between academic years, will be considered one half (1/2) of one year of scholarship support.
  Example: If you received scholarship support for 5 semesters of undergraduate studies, but no summer periods, your service obligation is 3 years.
  Example: If you received scholarship support for 3 semesters of undergraduate studies and one summer semester, your service obligation is 2 years.

You will be required to reimburse the U.S. Government for the total cost of scholarship support if you do not complete your course of study and/or service obligation as described in Part III of your NSA OnRamp II Scholarship Program Service Agreement. Also, you are required to submit a written notification via email to inform the OnRamp II Program Office of your decision. The OnRamp II Program Office will coordinate with the Office of Finance and Accounting, responsible for all debt collection, to determine the amount of debt and interest (CHECK ON

THIS) to be repaid. The OnRamp II Program Office will notify you in writing of the total debt to be repaid, procedures for repayment, and date debt collection will commence.

VI.   The OnRamp II Program Office Contact Information

The OnRamp II Program Office is available to answer your questions (Attachment B) and provide guidance on any issues concerning participation in the scholarship program. The staff can be reached at OnRamp@nsa.gov