

# POLICY ISSUE (Information)

September 28, 2007

SECY-07-0173

FOR: The Commissioners

FROM: Luis A. Reyes  
Executive Director for Operations /RA/

SUBJECT: FUTURE MANAGEMENT OF THE GRADUATE FELLOWSHIP  
PROGRAM

## PURPOSE:

This purpose of this paper is to inform the Commission of the staff's conclusions regarding future management of the Graduate Fellowship Program.

## DISCUSSION:

In July 2006, the staff forwarded a memorandum to the Chairman that proposed acquiring the Oak Ridge Institute for Science and Education's (ORISE's) services for administrative support of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) Graduate Fellowship Program (GFP). The Chairman's response directed the staff to investigate alternatives to ORISE that provide for a viable small GFP program taking into account the authority received under the Energy Policy Act of 2005 (EPAc) and to inform the Commission of the staff's conclusion.

The GFP originally served two key purposes, providing a direct recruitment pathway and preventing critical competency gaps. The authority provided to the NRC by the EPAc to create a scholarships and fellowships for service program provides a viable method for external recruitment, making that aspect of the GFP redundant. As a result of addressing recruitment through the EPAc Scholarship and Fellowship Program, the staff is now focusing on using the GFP solely as a method of addressing the agency's critical skill needs.

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Absent the need for announcing and offering the program to external candidates, the staff has reevaluated the costs of managing the GFP and determined that internal management is both feasible and desirable. ORISE will continue to manage the program only for the two current fellows who will complete their studies before September 2008.

Many of the GFP's attributes remain essentially unchanged. The most significant changes are:

- Fellows will remain in a full-time pay status and perform their graduate studies as work assignments instead of being converted to leave-without-pay status and being paid a stipend.
- Instead of ORISE paying the fellows' tuition and fees, NRC will pay them directly using the agency's existing process for funding tuition, books, and fees.
- The full-time GFP is limited to fellows pursuing research-intensive graduate study in areas of agency critical skill needs.
- Budgeted resources remaining after providing support for the four full-time fellows will be used to support a limited number of part-time fellows selected through a competitive process. Part-time fellows will attend classes locally at their duty stations and on their own time although their management may allow them some duty time to travel to or attend classes.
- The Office of Nuclear Regulatory Research (RES) will announce the program by posting position vacancies and fully utilizing full-time fellows' full-time equivalent (FTE) instead of only carrying them in a leave-without-pay status.

Enclosure 1 provides a point-by-point comparison of the changes between the old (pre-fiscal year [FY] 2008) and new Graduate Fellowship Programs.

#### RESOURCES:

The Office of Human Resources (HR) budget provides \$500K for the Graduate Fellowship Program in FY 2008 and \$500K in their FY 2009 budget, which is still being considered in the FY 2009 budget request. One FTE in FY 2008 and 2 FTE in FY 2009 will support full-time fellows, which are already in the RES FY 2008 budget and in their proposed FY 2009 budget. One or two other offices may elect to sponsor graduate fellows and may provide an additional 2 FTE in FY 2009 of their proposed within-budget resources to support full-time fellows. The portion of budgeted funds previously used to provide full-time fellows' stipends would not be used to support tuition and fees for part-time fellows (the currently existing program had no provision for part-time fellows). The required FTE for the internal management of the Graduate Fellowship Program are being provided within currently budgeted FTE in HR.

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COORDINATION:

The Office of the General Counsel has reviewed this paper and has no legal objections. The Office of the Chief Financial Officer has reviewed this paper for resource implications and concurs.

*/RA/*

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Executive Director  
for Operations

Enclosure:  
Comparison of the Old (Pre- FY 2008) and  
New Graduate Fellowship Programs

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**ADAMS Accession No: ML072630708**

**G20060689/EDATS: OEDO-2007-0097**

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