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Department of Defense Cyber Scholarship Program
Department of Defense Cyber and Digital Services Academy

Application Background and Requirements

Recruitment / Basic Scholarships

ATTACHMENT C

Background p.1
Description of Scholarship and Employment Opportunities p.2
Minimum Eligibility for Scholarship and Appointment p.3
General Information p.6
Other Important Information p.8
Application Requirement p.8

1. BACKGROUND

Cybersecurity is considered so important to our national defense that a formal DoD CySP was established by the National Defense Authorization Act for 2001 (Public Law 106- 398). The purpose is to promote the education, recruitment, and retention of ***rising second-year NCAE-C community college, junior and senior undergraduate, and graduate/doctoral students*** in cybersecurity studies. In 2018, the program was renamed the DoD Cyber Scholarship Program (DoD CySP). For 2023, the DoD CySP is partnering with the new DoD Cyber and Digital Services Academy (DCDSA).

The DoD is seeking rising second-year NCAE-C community college, junior and senior (third and fourth year) undergraduate, and graduate/ doctoral students who are interested in full-ride scholarships for concentrated studies in cybersecurity and other cyber-related disciplines. Applicants selected for the program will receive full scholarships. This requires the student to agree to serve one year of service to the DoD, upon graduation, for each year or partial year of scholarship received, in addition to the internship identified below. An opportunity also exists for scholarship payback through military service. Individuals choosing to enlist or accept a commission to serve on active duty in one of the Military Services shall incur a service obligation of a minimum of 4 years on active duty in that Service upon graduation. The Military Services may establish a service obligation longer than 4 years, depending on the occupational specialty and type of enlistment or commissioning program selected. Traditional Guardsmen and Reserve Soldiers are eligible to apply. Scholarship payback for this group is two years of service for each year of scholarship received.

During breaks in their academic studies, DoD Cyber Scholars will receive progressive, hands-on experience in information security internships. In return, scholars must agree to some restrictions and obligations regarding curriculum, GPA, and pre- and post- program employment. If all conditions are met, DoD Cyber Scholars will receive full-time conditional/permanent positions in Components of the DoD upon program completion.

HOW TO APPLY

Only students at designated National Centers of Academic Excellence in Cybersecurity (Cyber Defense, Research, and Operations), hereinafter referred to as NCAE-Cs may apply. Review the list of schools included with this announcement for clarification: https://www.caecommunity.org/cae-map

Note: Applicants selected must attend full-time.

Online programs are allowed

Review all application instructions and materials included with this announcement. Pay close attention to the mandatory conditions of financial assistance and employment.

Applicants will be required to use the new DoD CySP/DCDSA online application tool https://www.avuedigitalservices.com/casting/aiportal/control/mainmenu?agency=DDW&portal=CYSP to apply. Student applications are due by 01 February 2024. Each NCAE-C that participates in the DoD CySP/DCDSA has designated a campus liaison, point of contact, or Principal Investigator (PI), for DoD CySP/DCDSA management and administration. The website https://www.caecommunity.org/cae-map provides known points of contact for the current NCAE-Cs. It is the applicant's responsibility to identify the appropriate DoD CySP/DCDSA On-Campus point of contact.

2. DESCRIPTION OF SCHOLARSHIP AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

Chapter 112 of title 10, United States Code authorizes the DoD CySP/DCDSA. The purposes of the program are to recruit and retain well-qualified cyber personnel to cultivate continuing capacity for cyber workforce development at select institutions of higher learning (NCAE-Cs) throughout the United States. As directed by the Secretary of Defense, the DoD CIO has delegated authority and responsibility to establish scholarship and institutional grant programs to achieve these purposes, including the authority to conduct civilian employee recruitment for these purposes. This program is executed by the National Security Agency (NSA) on behalf of the DoD.

Rising community college, junior and senior undergraduates, master's and doctoral candidates, who are U.S. citizens and are at least 18 years of age are eligible for consideration for the program. Applicants in the second year of a two-year degree program, who are continuing to a partner university to pursue a bachelor's degree are eligible to apply. Applicants selected as Cyber Scholars will receive the full cost of tuition, books (from the institution/degree specific required book list, not books which are optional for the class), required fees (including health care), and a stipend to cover room and board. The stipend levels are $25,000 for community college students, $29,000 for undergraduate students and $34,000 for graduate (Master's/PhD) students. Awards will be made via a grant to the NCAE-C. Disabled students may receive additional allowances. There are no allowances for dependents.

Additional years of scholarship awards are dependent upon satisfactory academic progress, internship performance, if applicable, and the availability of funds. Returning students will be given first priority over new selections to the program as long as they continue to meet the DoD CySP/DCDSA requirements and appropriate

funding is available. Scholarship recipients who successfully complete the terms of an initial one or two-year scholarship (for example, complete an undergraduate degree), may apply for a second scholarship of up to three years for completing an advanced degree, if the sponsoring agency agrees. Funding amounts will be pro-rated for returning Cyber scholars requesting less than a full year of support. When funding allows, Cyber Scholars may be provided funding to attend one cybersecurity-related conference - USA-based only. No foreign travel authorized.

3. APPOINTMENT AND HIRING AUTHORITIES

Chapter 112, title 10, United States Code anticipates that recipients of scholarships will participate in experiential learning assignments (called "internships" in the law) at the DoD Components and Agencies while completing their academic degree programs. There are a variety of hiring authorities across DoD and the determination will be made by those Agencies in conjunction with the DoD CySP/DCDSA Program Office.

DoD Cyber Scholars will be appointed at those General Schedule grade levels for which they are qualified and selected by DoD component officials. Since the Area of Consideration for scholarship applicants includes 2nd-year community college, rising junior and senior year undergraduates, master's and doctoral degree candidates, and graduate/doctoral certificate program students, it is anticipated that applicants will (variously) meet minimum qualification standards for Student Trainee appointments at GS-0099-7, GS-0099-9, and GS-0099-11. The Military Departments and DoD Components that select and appoint students will decide at what grade levels successful Cyber Scholars will be appointed in light of any applicable component-unique factors such as the target occupations or full-performance position levels for the candidates. To obtain information on the general salary schedule, please visit: https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/salaries-wages/

4. MINIMUM ELIGIBILITY FOR SCHOLARSHIP AND APPOINTMENT

To be eligible for the DoD CySP/DCDSA opportunity described in this announcement, applications must meet all of the following minimum requirements:

a) Must be 18 years of age or older.
b) Must be a citizen of the United States at the time of application.
c) Must be enrolled (or accepted for enrollment) in one of the identified NCAE-C colleges or universities, or enrolled (or accepted for enrollment) at an institution selected by a NCAE-C as a collaborative partner for these purposes.
d) Must have at least one academic year remaining:
    - And completed (or by August 2024 will have completed) at a minimum:
        - the first year of an associate's degree; **or**
        - first two years of an undergraduate degree program; **or**
        - a bachelor's degree; **or**
        - a master's degree
    - And be eligible to:
        - begin a second year of an associate's degree (with continuation to a 4-year degree program); **or**
        - begin either the third or fourth year of an undergraduate degree program; **or**
        - begin the first or second year of a Master's degree program; **or**
        - pursue doctoral studies
e) Must be pursuing a course of study and/or have a declared major in one of the scientific, technical, or managerial disciplines related to cyber or with a concentration in cybersecurity. For these purposes, the scientific, technical and managerial disciplines related to computer and network security and cybersecurity are:
    - Cybersecurity encompasses the scientific, technical, and management disciplines required to ensure computer and network security, including the following functions:

- System/network administration and operations
- Systems security engineering
- Information assurance systems and product acquisition
- Cryptography
- Threat and vulnerability assessment, to include risk management
- Web security
- Operations of computer emergency response teams
- Computer forensics
- Defensive information operations
- Critical information infrastructure assurance

- Relevant cyber-related academic disciplines, with concentrations in cyber security, would include, but are not limited to:

Artificial Intelligence	Data Management
Aerospace	Data Science
Biometrics	Digital and Multimedia Forensics
Business Management or Administration	Electrical Engineering
Business Process Analysis	Electronics Engineering
Computer Crime Investigations Computer Engineering	Information Security (Assurance)
	Information Systems
Computer Programming	Information Technology Acquisition
Computer Science	IT Program/Project Management
Computer Systems Analysis Cyber Operations	Machine Learning
	Mathematics
Cybersecurity	Network Management/Operations
Cybersecurity Policy	Quantum Computing
Database Administration	Software Engineering

f) Ability to obtain a security clearance. See the web page information below, which provides more information about fulfilling the necessary security requirements. Failure to be able to obtain a security clearance is grounds for dismissal from the DoD CySP/DCDSA. Applicants/Scholars must be able to obtain the required security clearance for the position selected. Applicants/Scholars may be required to undergo certain tests, including drug and polygraph tests, to obtain and maintain a clearance. Before being awarded a scholarship or hired by DoD, Applicants/Scholars may be required to complete certain forms to initiate the security clearance process. Some of these forms will require that Applicants/Scholars reveal extensive information about their background, such as potentially sensitive information about financial circumstances and any arrests and/or convictions for offenses of any kind. Applicants/Scholars must agree to all of these conditions of employment and must complete these forms as a condition of financial assistance and appointment.

- Current web pages from the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) are provided below. These are provided for review and consideration in determining whether will be eligible for a security clearance. They may not be all inclusive, however, it is highly recommended that Applicants/Scholars review and understand the requirements prior to signing up to participate in the DoD CySP/DCDSA. https://www.indigobyavue.com/dod-emerging-tech/public/backgroundReadiness

5. ACADEMIC SUFFICIENCY

Applicants must be recommended by their school for the scholarship. The NCAE-C shall review the application materials, and conduct such verification as may be necessary to establish the following standards of academic sufficiency. NCAE-Cs shall exclude from further evaluation (and provide an endorsement of "Not Recommended" for) any applicant unable to meet the following academic requirements:

The applicant is pursuing a course of study and/or has a declared major in one of the scientific, technical or

managerial disciplines related to computer and network security that are enumerated under Section 4.E. above. As a community college or undergraduate student, the applicant has a 3.2 out of a 4.0 grade point average *(GPA)* or, as a graduate student, the applicant has a 3.5 GPA out of 4.0, or an analogous rank based on a comparable scale.

The applicant's demonstrated potential for academic success and fulfillment of degree requirements is substantial. NCAE-Cs shall review the factors enumerated below, and shall exclude from further evaluation and not recommend any candidate unable to achieve a minimum score of 2 points on a 5-point scale. Scale values range from:

- Insufficient Potential (One),
- Sufficient Potential (Two),
- Average Potential (Three),
- High Potential (Four), and
- Superior Potential (Five)

Factors to be considered in arriving at the rating for "demonstrated potential" are:

- The applicant's original transcript(s) from all institutions of higher education attended
- The applicant's current Grade Point Average (GPA)
- Academic honors, distinctions and awards
- Letters of reference

6. KNOWLEDGE AND ABILITY

The NCAE-C shall use the AVUE online tool to document its evaluation of each applicant meeting administrative and academic sufficiency requirements. Applicants are required to write to the following competencies (included in the online application). NCAE-Cs should use these competencies to evaluate the appicants.

Evaluations of the following factors shall be based on the supplemental application material provided by the candidates, letters of reference, and any additional information provided by the applicant in response to NCAE-C requests made for this purpose.

- Knowledge of the techniques of the information technology and/or information security (assurance) discipline, including encryption, access control, physical security, training, threat analysis, and authentication.
- Knowledge of the human factors in the information technology and/or information security (assurance), including human computer interaction, design, training, sabotage, human error prevention and identification, personal use policies, and monitoring.
- Ability to identify and analyze problems, distinguish between relevant and irrelevant information to make logical decisions, and provide solutions to individual and organizational problems.
- Ability to consider and respond appropriately to the needs, feelings, and capabilities of different people in different situations; is tactful, compassionate and sensitive, and treats others with respect.
- Ability to make clear and convincing oral presentations to individuals or groups; listens effectively and clarifies information as needed, facilitates an open exchange of ideas and fosters an atmosphere of open communication.
- Ability to express facts and ideas in writing in a clear, convincing and organized manner appropriate to the audience and occasion.

The NCAE-C shall also provide in written statement (within the Avue tool) the reason for one of the following recommendations:

- Highly Recommended
- Recommended
- Not Recommended

7. GENERAL INFORMATION

Application Forms and Materials: applicants will complete all questions within the new DoD CySP/DCDSA online application tool https://www.avuedigitalservices.com/casting/aiportal/control/mainmenu?agency=DDW&portal=CYSP. Please read all questions and answer to the best of your ability. The application itself consists of a resume and additional OF612 Supplemental items.

Applicants should understand that their NCAE-C is required by the DoD to participate in the evaluation of their application for scholarship assistance under this program. The NCAE-C may fulfill its responsibilities to evaluate the application in a variety of ways. The NCAE-C might constitute a panel to review application materials or conduct interviews with applicants.

If interested in applying for this opportunity, ***check with the DoD CySP/DCDSA On-Campus Point of Contact, for the school immediately*** to learn of any additional application requirements.

Veteran's Preference in Hiring: If you served on active duty in the United States Military and were separated under honorable conditions, you may be eligible for veteran's preference. For further details visit the Office of Personnel Management website at: http://www.opm.gov/veterans/html/vetguide.asp.

- To claim 5-point veterans' preference, attach a copy of your DD-214, Certificate of Release or discharge from Active Duty, or other proof of eligibility, to your Optional Form 612 - Optional Application for Federal Employment, as required at Item 15 of the application.
- To claim 10-point veterans' preference, attach an SF 15, Application for 10-Point Veterans' Preference, plus the proof required by that form, to your Optional Form 612 - Optional Application for Federal Employment, as required at Item 15 of the application.

Applicants with Disabilities: Applicants can find out about alternatives for submitting an application by calling the Office of Personnel Management at 912-757-3000. If you have a hearing disability, call TDD 912-744-2299. Applicants may obtain case-by-case assistance by calling the Department of Defense point of contact for this announcement. The name, address, and email address of the point of contact for this announcement are below:

DoD CySP/DCDSA Program Office
National Security Agency
Attn: A235, Suite 6810
9800 Savage Road
Fort George G. Meade, MD 20755-6810
AskCySP@nsa.gov

Equal Employment Opportunity: The Department of Defense is an Equal Opportunity Employer. All qualified persons shall receive consideration for this opportunity without regard to political, religious, labor organization affiliation or non-affiliation, marital status, race, color, sex, national origin, non-disqualifying

physical disability, age, or sexual orientation.

8. OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT THIS OPPORTUNITY

Before being hired, the appointing agency (the specific DoD Agency requesting to hire the applicant/scholar) will ask the applicant/scholar to complete a Declaration for Federal Employment or other agency or component specific form to determine suitability for federal employment and to authorize a background investigation of suitability. The agency will also ask applicants/scholars to sign and certify the accuracy of all the information in the application. If applicants/scholars make a false statement in any part of the application, they may not be hired; they may be fired after beginning work; or may be fined or jailed.

Applicants/Scholars will be required to obtain and maintain eligibility for a security clearance in order to receive financial (scholarship) assistance or an appointment under the DoD CySP/DCDSA. The appointing agency will ask applicants/scholars to complete certain forms to initiate the security clearance process. These forms require applicants/scholars to reveal many details about their background, including financial circumstances, and other sensitive matters such as any arrests and/or convictions for offenses of any kind. Applicants/Scholars must complete these forms as a condition of financial assistance and appointment.

If an applicant/scholar is a male over age 18 who was born after December 31, 1959, they must have registered with the Selective Service System (or have an exemption) to be eligible for a federal job.

Federal law prohibits officials from appointing, promoting, or recommending their relatives.

Federal annuitants (military and civilian) may have their salaries or annuities reduced. All employees must pay any valid delinquent debts or the employee's payroll office may garnish their salary.

9. APPLICATION CONTENT REQUIREMENTS

***DO NOT* INCLUDE SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBERS, COPIES OF PASSPORTS or DRIVERS LICENSE, BIRTH CERTIFICATES, or ANY OTHER TYPE OF PERSONALLY IDENTIFIABLE INFORMATION.**

New Applicants: An acceptable application package for the DoD CySP/DCDSA consists of the following requirements:

- New Recruitment applicants must use the new DoD CySP/DCDSA online application tool. https://www.avuedigitalservices.com/casting/aiportal/control/mainmenu?agency=DDW&portal=CYSP
- Applications missing any required documents will automatically be disqualified
- Applicants who are currently receiving funds from another scholarship program or who have a service obligation upon graduation are not eligible to apply for the DoD CySP/DCDSA.
- Anticipated Final Graduation Date is for the degree program you are applying for scholarship support. Any applications that indicates a graduation date of January through September of the current year will not be eligible.
- Transcripts: Applicants may submit either official or unofficial transcripts. Transcripts should not be mailed directly to the DoD CySP/DCDSA Program Office.
- Applicants should not attach copies/pictures of social security cards, driver's license, passports, military identification, credit cards, degrees, certificates, and any other type of personally identifiable information.

- Letters of Recommendation
    - One letter will be uploaded by the student;
    - The second letter will be emailed by the author to the DoD CySP/DCDSA Program Office by 01 February 2024. Instructions are provided in the actual application.
- Traditional resumes will not be submitted. The DoD CySP/DCDSA application tool will prompt applicants to fill in the required resume information. Applicants will be asked to provide the following:
    - Education: include degrees, institutions, location, date of graduation (or expected date of graduation); major/minor fields; GPA
    - Experience: jobs, internships, and/or volunteer work. Include name of company, position, and dates employed. List at least three important tasks, accomplishments, or skills gained at each job. Also identify any clearance level held. It is important that you identify the number of hours per week you worked.
    - Skills: include computer systems; programs which you are proficient. Include foreign languages. List any other skills, certifications, clearance levels you may hold.
- Paper applications for new scholarship will not be accepted.
- Applicants are responsible for submitting a complete application through the new application tool by 11:59 PM East Standard Time on 01 February 2024. Applicants will not have access to the application on 02 February 2024.

Returning DoD CySP Scholars WHO ARE REAPPLYING THROUGH THE AVUE TOOL: An acceptable application package for the DoD CySP/DCDSA consists of the following: (applications due 01 February 2024)

- **Log-in to the same account used last year to apply**. Contac the AVUE Help Desk for any password or login credential issues.
- Validate contact information and graduation date
- Current Transcripts
- 1 Letter of Reference

Returning DoD CySP Scholars WHO ARE REAPPLYING – Paper Application Only: An acceptable application package for the Cyber Scholarship Program consists of the following: (Applications due 1 February 2024)

1. Current DoD CySP Scholars reapplying for additional years of support will continue to use the paper copy application provided by the DoD CySP/DCDSA Program Office. The application will consist of :
    - DoD CySP Returning Student Application Form (7 pages)
    - Official Transcripts
    - Resume
    - 1 Letter of Reference

2. Current DoD CySP Scholars should save their application as a PDF (no PDF portfolios) and provide it to their DoD CySP On-Campus Point of Contact by 01 February 2024. Scholars should use the following naming structure to save their PDF: LAST NAME_First Name_University_Returning