suggestions beyond the scope of the request for comments and the questions posed therein were provided in many of the comments. The USPTO appreciates the suggestions and may address them in the future, once further evaluation and data are garnered.

This notice merely describes agency policy and procedures and does not involve substantive rulemaking. While the criteria for admission to practice in patent matters is generally described in 37 CFR 11.7, the rule does not set forth the specific scientific and technical criteria for admission.

Administrative Update 1: Add Common Category B Degrees to Category A

As explained further in the GRB, bachelor's degrees listed under Category A present prima facie evidence of the requisite technical and scientific qualifications. Prior to this notice, the bachelor's degree under Category A may only have been in one of the following subjects: Biology, biochemistry, botany, computer science, electronics technology, food technology, general chemistry, marine technology, microbiology, molecular biology, organic chemistry, pharmacology, physics, textile technology, aeronautical engineering, agricultural engineering, biomedical engineering, ceramic engineering, chemical engineering, civil engineering, computer engineering, electrical engineering, electrochemical engineering, engineering physics, general engineering, geological engineering, industrial engineering, mechanical engineering, metallurgical engineering, mining engineering, nuclear engineering, and petroleum engineering. These degree categories will remain listed under Category A.

Acceptable computer science degrees under Category A must be accredited by the Computer Science Accreditation Commission of the Computing Sciences Accreditation Board or by the Computing Accreditation Commission of the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology on or before the date the degree was awarded. This requirement for computer science degrees under Category A remains unchanged by this notice. Based on the comments received, the USPTO will continue to evaluate this requirement in light of the type of computer science degrees (*i.e.,* whether accredited or not) and the nature of computer science degrees generally awarded by colleges and universities.

Starting in early 2020, the USPTO undertook a review of Category B applications to identify bachelor's degrees that are routinely accepted as demonstrating the requisite scientific and technical qualifications. This review is ongoing. Based on the analysis to date and comments received, and understanding that Category A cannot be an exhaustive list of all degrees that would qualify, the Office is expanding the above list of Category A degrees to expressly include the following degrees that are routinely accepted under Category B: Aerospace engineering, bioengineering, biological science, biophysics, electronics engineering, genetic engineering, genetics, marine engineering, materials engineering, materials science, neuroscience, ocean engineering, and textile engineering. Listing these Category B degrees under Category A will improve operating efficiency and streamline the application process for prospective patent practitioners.

The USPTO also invited comments on any additional degrees that should be considered under Category A. Based on the comments received and a review of the applicants in the suggested degree categories over the past three calendar years (*i.e.,* 2018 through 2020), the USPTO is also expanding the list of Category A degrees to expressly include the following degree: Environmental engineering. Other degree categories suggested by commenters were considered but are not being included under Category A at this time to allow for the additional collection and evaluation of data on these degree categories. For example, one of the degree categories suggested by commenters was artificial intelligence. In the past three calendar years, however, there have been no applicants with an artificial intelligence degree. The USPTO will continue to monitor degree categories as the degrees and data develop.

The Office will continue to accept degrees where the transcript demonstrates equivalence to a Category A degree (For example, molecular cell biology may be equivalent to biology, and materials science and engineering may be equivalent to materials science.).[2]

Administrative Update 2: Accept Advanced Degrees Under Category A

Prior to this notice, Category A did not include post-baccalaureate degrees. Based on a review of applicants and the comments received, the USPTO is updating the GRB to list possession of a master's or a doctor of philosophy degree in a Category A subject as demonstrating acceptable technical and scientific training. This includes the newly added Category A degrees listed above and degrees where the transcript demonstrates equivalence to a Category A degree.

Administrative Update 3: Accept a Combination of Core Sciences Under Category B, Options 2 and 4

Prior to this notice, Category B, Option 4 in the GRB required a combination of 40 credit hours in acceptable technical and scientific courses, including at least 8 hours in either chemistry with a lab or 8 hours in physics with a lab. Category B, Option 2, which focuses on training in biology and related sciences, had a similar requirement. The requirement for lab-based core science courses is meant to ensure familiarity with the processes involved in conducting valid experiments, the scientific method, and proper analysis of scientific data.

It is not clear whether multiple courses in either chemistry or physics alone, with a lab, provide an appreciable benefit over general core science training. Accordingly, the USPTO is revising Category B, Option 4 by changing ''8 semester hours in chemistry or 8 semester hours of physics . . . obtained in two sequential courses, each containing a lab'' to ''eight semester hours in a combination of chemistry, physics, and/or biology, with at least one course including a lab.'' Category B, Option 2, which already requires training in biology, is being revised to require at least ''eight semester hours in a combination of chemistry and physics, with at least one course including a lab.''

Andrew Hirshfeld,

Commissioner for Patents, Performing the Functions and Duties of the Under Secretary of Commerce for Intellectual Property and Director of the United States Patent and Trademark Office.

[FR Doc. 2021–20378 Filed 9–21–21; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510–16–P

[2] *See* OED Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), available at *www.uspto.gov/learning-and-resources/patent-and-trademark-practitioners/oed-frequently-asked-questions-faqs.*

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Department of the Navy

National Nuclear Security Administration Pay and Performance System

AGENCY: Department of the Navy, DoD.

ACTION: Notice of the Naval Nuclear Propulsion Program (NNPP) conversion to the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) pay and performance system.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Fiscal Year 2018 National Defense Authorization Act, the DON announces that the NNPP, a joint activity of the DON and the Department of Energy (DOE), NNPP will convert from the General Schedule (GS) Classification and Pay System and the DON Interim Performance Management System (IPMS) to the NNSA pay and performance System, also known as the NNSA Demonstration Project. This conversion will align DON employees of the NNPP with their counterparts in the DOE, NNSA, and bring parity to the pay and performance systems within the Nuclear Propulsion workforce.

DATES: This conversion will become effective September 22, 2022.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Edward Rose, 412–476–7204, or *edward.rose@nrp.doe.gov.*

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: When the Naval Sea Systems Command (NAVSEA) Headquarters converted to the DoD Civilian Acquisition Workforce Personnel Demonstration Project (AcqDemo), Naval Reactors chose to opt out of AcqDemo in anticipation of aligning with the DOE, NNSA Demonstration Project. Section 3116(a)(3) of the Fiscal Year 2018 NDAA authorized NNPP to convert its DON employees to the NNSA System with the concurrence of the Secretary of the Navy. The Secretary of the Navy approved the transition of NNPP's DON civilian personnel to the NNSA Demonstration Project Personnel Management System on February 5, 2019. NNPP has been working with the NAVSEA Office of Civilian Human Resources to promulgate the conversion and plan the implementation through relevant DON and DoD offices. After providing data and supporting documentation, the DoD Defense Civilian Personnel Advisory Service has given approval to commence with the planning and implementation upon publishing of this notice. The implementation will require, among other actions, coordination with the DFAS, final notice to employees, developing NNPP procedures, creating new position descriptions, and processing pay plan adjustment personnel actions.

The NNSA Demonstration Project was designed by NNSA, with participation of and review by the DOE and the Office of Personnel Management. The NNSA Demonstration Project modifies the GS Classification and Pay System by creating broad career paths, establishing pay bands within each career path which may cover more than one GS grade, eliminates longevity-based step progression, and provides for annual pay adjustments based on performance. The NNPP has experienced higher-than-average attrition and has had difficulty filling positions, with pay/grade frequently cited as the reason for declination by candidates.

As a joint DON/DOE organization, Naval Reactors has historically managed its civilian workforce under each respective agency's personnel management system. The Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 National Defense Authorization Act states that the Director of the Naval Nuclear Propulsion Program (NNPP) may, ''with concurrence of the Secretary of the Navy,'' apply NNSA DEMO to all non-executive competitive service employees of the NNPP, thereby strengthening Naval Reactors' recruitment and retention of the highest-quality technical and professional workforce. This move aligns with the goal of shifting away from tenure-based personnel systems to performance-based personnel management systems while streamlining administrative processes inherent in managing Naval Reactors' employees under two different systems.

All DON NNPP current GS employees and vacant GS positions will be converted, excluding any Schedule C excepted service positions. There are approximately 210 affected positions, with all but about 40 of those positions located at the Washington Navy Yard. These positions will remain as DON positions. The NNPP will adopt the NNSA Demonstration Project Policies and Procedures Manual, dated March 2008, which will also be used by the servicing Human Resources Office and the Defense Finance Accounting Service (DFAS) to implement and support the NNPP. The intent of this notice is to promulgate this conversion to stakeholders within the Departments of Energy, Defense, and Navy. Affected employees are not represented by a labor union.

Dated: September 17, 2021.

J.M. Pike,

Commander, Judge Advocate General's Corps, U.S. Navy, Federal Register Liaison Officer.

[FR Doc. 2021–20510 Filed 9–21–21; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3810–FF–P

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Applications for New Awards; National Center for Information and Technical Support for Postsecondary Students With Disabilities Program

AGENCY: Office of Postsecondary Education, Department of Education.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The Department of Education (Department) is issuing a notice inviting applications (NIA) for a new award for fiscal year (FY) 2021 for the National Center for Information and Technical Support for Postsecondary Students with Disabilities Program, Assistance Listing Number 84.116D. This notice relates to the approved information collection under OMB control number 1894–0006.

DATES:

Applications Available: September 22, 2021.

Deadline for Transmittal of Applications: October 22, 2021.

Deadline for Intergovernmental Review: December 21, 2021.

ADDRESSES: For the addresses for obtaining and submitting an application, please refer to our Common Instructions for Applicants to Department of Education Discretionary Grant Programs, published in the **Federal Register** on February 13, 2019 (84 FR 3768), and available at *www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2019-02-13/pdf/2019-02206.pdf.*

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Shedita Alston, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue SW, Room 2B194, Washington, DC 20202–4260. Telephone: (202) 453–7090. Email: *Shedita.Alston@ed.gov.*

If you use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) or a text telephone (TTY), call the Federal Relay Service (FRS), toll free, at 1–800–877–8339.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Full Text of Announcement

I. Funding Opportunity Description

Purpose of Program: The purpose of this program is to support a National Center for Information and Technical Support for Postsecondary Students with Disabilities (the Center) to provide technical assistance and information on best and promising practices for students with disabilities as they transition to or attend postsecondary education. Institutions of higher education (IHEs), as well as elementary and secondary schools, have legal obligations under two civil rights laws prohibiting disability discrimination, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (Section 504) (29 U.S.C. 794), and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as amended (ADA) (42 U.S.C. 12101–12213). The technical assistance and information provided by the Center can help students, parents, and educational officials in determining how to meet