

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**Cooperative State Research,
Education, and Extension Service****7 CFR Part 3402****[Regulation Identifier Number: 0524-AA30]****Food and Agricultural Sciences
National Needs Graduate and
Postgraduate Fellowship Grants
Program****AGENCY:** Cooperative State Research,
Education, and Extension Service,
USDA.**ACTION:** Final rule.

SUMMARY: The Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES) revises administrative provisions for the Food and Agricultural Sciences National Needs Graduate Fellowship Grants Program. The revisions relax constraints that are causing grantees to return unexpended funds to CSREES and provide support to the training of students awarded Fellowships from grants of the Program.

DATES: This rule is effective October 26, 2004.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Jeffrey L. Gilmore, Ph.D.; Director,
Higher Education Programs; Phone:
202-720-1973 Fax: 202-720-2030; e-
mail: jgilmore@csrees.usda.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**Background**

On July 12, 2004, CSREES published a Proposed Rule (69 FR 41763, Jul. 12, 2004) to revise administrative provisions for the Food and Agricultural Sciences National Needs Graduate Fellowship Grants Program.

Adoption of Proposal as Final Rule

In the Proposed Rule, CSREES invited comments, which were due by August 11, 2004. The Agency received one comment which condemned the Food and Agricultural Sciences National Needs Graduate Fellowship Grants Program for wasting taxpayer money and asked that Congress terminate support for it.

The commenter is not clear that CSREES uses a competitive process to make awards. The Agency solicits applications, and bases award decisions on recommendations from a panel of subject matter experts, drawn from colleges, private associations, and appropriate government agencies. "National Needs" refer to those scientific disciplines where, according to national data supplied by the U.S. Department of Education and U.S.

Bureau of Labor Statistics, there are projected shortages of scientific personnel required for the U.S. These can change and, as a result, are described in program solicitations.

The commenter questions the value of studying abroad. However, modern agriculture is a global enterprise and funded trips allow students to round out their education and/or prepare dissertations. Concern was expressed over eligibility, which includes foreign nationals, people who are legally extended the rights of citizenship, and excludes illegal aliens.

The commenter also states that the Agency discriminates by setting aside funds for minorities. The awards do not specifically target minority students or minority student groups. The legislation that authorizes this program identifies eligible institutions and, to maximize inclusivity, specifically mentions colleges/universities that have significant minority enrollments and demonstrable capacity for teaching food and agricultural sciences.

Finally, the commenter states that one year should be the maximum amount of time USDA supports a Fellow. CSREES does not deem this to be a sufficient amount of time to support a Fellow because this program intends to provide for students for the duration of their coursework to ensure that they complete degree requirements.

Upon further consideration, CSREES is issuing the Final Rule as it was proposed. No public meeting was requested or held.

Purpose

The former rule (7 CFR part 3402) required that grantees refund all unexpended money to the Agency, if (1) Fellows are not appointed within 15 months of the effective date of the grant; or (2) Fellowships are prematurely terminated. The Agency uses refunded money to provide Fellows with supplemental grants for international travel and thesis/dissertation travel. Numerous stakeholders expressed dissatisfaction with the requirement to refund unexpended grant funds. CSREES concluded that the Fellowship Program's purpose is better served by extending the amount of time for Fellowship appointment and permitting grantees to recruit and train replacement Fellows.

The former rule required that (1) new Graduate Fellows are newly recruited; and (2) have a strong interest in preparing for careers as food or agricultural scientists or professionals. Project Directors indicated that the recruitment restriction limited their ability to gauge whether new Fellows

had the requisite interest. To give Project Directors more time to interact with potential Graduate Fellows before recruiting them into the Program, the Final Rule allows them to appoint students who have completed less than two semesters of full-time study as new Graduate Fellows.

Under the former rule, a grantee could award a Fellowship to a student enrolled as a master's or doctoral degree candidate, but a grantee was prohibited from awarding a Fellowship to a postdoctoral candidate. Because of the new and multidisciplinary expertise required of the next generation of food and agricultural scientists, stakeholders and CSREES concluded that postdoctoral training is an integral part of their preparation.

During the period of support, the former rule restricted Fellows from accepting employment from their sponsoring institution or any other agency. Grantees complained that this unfairly prohibited Fellows from participating in assistantships or other employment opportunities that included, as compensation, tuition waivers. At the discretion of sponsoring institutions, this Final Rule allows Fellows to accept additional supplemental employment that positively contributes to their training or research and provides eligibility for tuition waivers.

The Agency revises the existing rule for the Food and Agricultural Sciences National Needs Graduate Fellowship Grants Program at 7 CFR part 3402 to address these problems. This Final Rule allows grantees up to 18 months after award to appoint Fellows, and permits the recruitment and training of replacement Fellows under certain circumstances. This Final Rule permits grantees to appoint as new Graduate Fellows students who have completed less than two semesters of full-time study. It also permits the Agency to fund postdoctoral Fellows preparing for a career in agricultural research, teaching or extension. Finally, this Final Rule authorizes Fellows, at the discretion of their institutions, to accept additional supplemental employment that will contribute to their training or research and provide eligibility for tuition waivers (e.g., full or partial tuition waivers provided with research or teaching assignments).

**Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995—
Information Collection**

Under the provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. chapter 35), the collection of information requirements contained in

this Final Rule have been approved (OMB Approval No. 0524-0039).

Regulatory Flexibility Act

USDA certifies that this rule will not have a significant impact on a substantial number of small entities as defined in the Regulatory Flexibility Act, Public Law 96-354, as amended (5 U.S.C. 601, *et seq.*) because it is a Federal assistance program, not a regulatory regime, and the majority of awards will be made to colleges and universities that do not qualify as small entities.

Executive Order 12866

This rule has been reviewed under Executive Order 12866 and has been determined to be nonsignificant as it will not create a serious inconsistency or otherwise interfere with an action planned by another agency; will not materially alter the budgetary impact of entitlement, grants, user fees, or loan programs, or rights and obligations of the recipients thereof; and will not raise novel legal or policy issues arising out of legal mandates, the President's priorities, or principles set forth in this Executive Order. This rule will not have an annual effect on the economy of \$100 million or more or adversely affect in a material way the economy, productivity, competition, jobs, the environment, public health, or safety, or State, local, or Tribal governments or communities.

Unfunded Mandates Reform Act

Pursuant to title II of the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act of 1995 (Pub. L. 104-4), the Department assessed the effects of this rulemaking action on State, local, and Tribal government, and the public. This action does not compel the expenditure of \$100 million or more by any State, local, or Tribal governments, or anyone in the private sector. Therefore, a statement under Section 202 of the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act of 1995 is not required.

Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act

This rule is not a major rule under 5 U.S.C. 804(2), the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act. This rule:

- (1) Does not have an annual effect on the economy of \$100 million or more;
- (2) Will not cause a major increase in costs or prices for consumers, individual industries, Federal, State, or local government agencies, or geographic regions; and
- (3) Does not have significant adverse effects on competition, employment, investment, productivity, innovation, or the ability of U.S.-based enterprises to compete with foreign-based enterprises.

Executive Order 12988

This rule has been reviewed under Executive Order 12988, Civil Justice Reform. In accordance with the Executive Order: (1) All State and local laws and regulations that are in conflict with this rule will be preempted; (2) no retroactive effect will be given to this rule; (3) no administrative proceedings are required before bringing any judicial action regarding this rule.

Executive Order 13132

In accordance with Executive Order 13132, this rulemaking does not have sufficient federalism implications to warrant the preparation of a Federalism Assessment. The policies contained in this rule do not have any substantial direct effect on the policymaking discretion of the States, on the relationship between the national government and the States, or on the distribution of power and responsibilities among the various levels of government. Nor does this rule impose substantial direct compliance costs on State and local governments.

Executive Order 12372

For the reasons set forth in the Final Rule Related Notice for 7 CFR part 3015, subpart V (48 FR 29115, June 24, 1983), this program is excluded from the scope of the Executive Order 12372 which requires intergovernmental consultation with State and local officials. This program does not directly affect State and local governments.

Executive Order 13175

The policies contained in this rulemaking do not have tribal implications and thus no further action is required under Executive Order 13175.

List of Subjects in 7 CFR Part 3402

Administrative practice and procedure, Colleges and universities, Educational study programs, Grant programs—agriculture, Scholarships and fellowships.

■ For the reasons stated in the preamble, the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service revises title 7, part 3402 to read as follows:

PART 3402—FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES NATIONAL NEEDS GRADUATE AND POSTGRADUATE FELLOWSHIP GRANTS PROGRAM

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Authority: 7 U.S.C. 3316.

Subpart A—General Introduction

§ 3402.1 Applicability of regulations.

(a) The regulations of this part apply to competitive grants awarded under the provisions of section 1417(b)(6) of the National Agricultural Research, Extension and Teaching Policy Act of 1977, as amended, 7 U.S.C. 3152(b)(6). The Act designates the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) as the lead Federal agency for agricultural research, extension, and teaching in the food and agricultural sciences. Section 1417(b)(6) authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture, who has delegated the authority to the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES), to make competitive grants to land-grant colleges and universities, colleges and universities having significant minority enrollments and a demonstrable capacity to carry out the teaching of food and agricultural sciences, and to other colleges and universities having a demonstrable capacity to carry out the teaching of food and agricultural sciences, to administer and conduct

graduate and postdoctoral fellowship programs to help meet the Nation's needs for development of scientific and professional expertise in the food and agricultural sciences. The Graduate Fellowships are intended to encourage outstanding students to pursue and complete graduate degrees in the areas of food and agricultural sciences designated by CSREES through the Office of Higher Education Programs (HEP) as national needs. The postdoctoral Fellowships are intended to provide additional mentoring and training to outstanding USDA Graduate Fellows who completed their doctoral degrees no more than five (5) years before they begin the postdoctoral Fellowships.

(b) The regulations of this part do not apply to grants awarded by the Department of Agriculture under any other authority.

§ 3402.2 Definitions.

As used in this part:

Citizen or national of the United States means—

(1) A citizen or native resident of a State; or,

(2) A person defined in the Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 U.S.C. 1101(a)(22), who, though not a citizen of the United States, owes permanent allegiance to the United States.

College and university means an educational institution in any State which—

(1) Admits as regular students only persons having a certificate of graduation from a school providing secondary education, or the recognized equivalent of such a certificate,

(2) Is legally authorized within such State to provide a program of education beyond secondary education,

(3) Provides an educational program for which a bachelor's degree or any other higher degree is awarded,

(4) Is a public or other nonprofit institution, and

(5) Is accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency or association.

Food and agricultural sciences means basic, applied, and developmental research, extension, and teaching activities in the food, agricultural, renewable natural resources, forestry, and physical and social sciences in the broadest sense of these terms including but not limited to research, extension and teaching activities concerned with the production, processing, marketing, distribution, conservation, consumption, research, and development of food and agriculturally related products and services, inclusive

of programs in agriculture, natural resources, aquaculture, forestry, veterinary medicine, home economics, rural development, and closely allied fields.

Graduate degree means a master's or doctoral degree.

State means any one of the fifty States, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Republic of Palau, the Virgin Islands of the United States, and the District of Columbia.

Teaching activities means formal classroom instruction, laboratory instruction, and practicum experience specific to the food and agricultural sciences and matters relating thereto conducted by colleges and universities offering baccalaureate or higher degrees.

§ 3402.3 Institutional eligibility.

Applications may be submitted by land-grant colleges and universities, by colleges and universities having significant minority enrollments and a demonstrable capacity to carry out the teaching of food and agricultural sciences, and by other colleges and universities having a demonstrable capacity to carry out the teaching of food and agricultural sciences. All applicants must be institutions that confer a graduate degree in at least one area of the food and agricultural sciences targeted for National Needs Fellowships, that have a significant ongoing commitment to the food and agricultural sciences generally, and that have a significant ongoing commitment to the specific subject area for which a grant application is made. It is the objective to award grants to colleges and universities which have notable teaching and research competencies in the food and agricultural sciences. The Graduate Fellowships are specifically intended to support programs that encourage outstanding students to pursue and complete a graduate degree at such institutions in an area of the food and agricultural sciences for which there is a national need for the development of scientific and professional expertise. The postdoctoral Fellowships are designed to support academic programs that provide additional training and mentoring to USDA Graduate Fellows and have notable teaching and research competencies in the CSREES designated national need areas. Institutions which currently have excellent programs of graduate study and training in the food and agricultural sciences dealing with targeted national needs are particularly

encouraged to apply for all National Needs Fellowships.

Subpart B—Program Description

§ 3402.4 Food and agricultural sciences areas targeted for National Needs Graduate and Postdoctoral Fellowship Grants Program support.

Areas of the food and agricultural sciences, including multidisciplinary studies, appropriate for Fellowship grant applications are those in which developing shortages of expertise have been determined and targeted by HEP for National Needs Graduate and Postdoctoral Fellowship Grants Program support. When funds are available and HEP determines that a new competition is warranted, the specific areas and funds per area will be identified in a funding opportunity announcement announcing the program and soliciting program applications.

§ 3402.5 Overview of National Needs Graduate and Postdoctoral Fellowship Grants Program.

(a) The program will provide funds for a limited number of grants to support graduate student stipends and cost-of-education institutional allowances. These grants will be awarded competitively to eligible institutions. In order to encourage the development of special activities that are expected to contribute to Fellows' advanced degree objectives, the program will also provide competitive, special international study or thesis/dissertation research travel allowances for a limited number of USDA Graduate Fellows. To encourage academic institutions to provide additional training/mentoring to outstanding USDA Graduate Fellows who have completed their doctoral degrees, the program will also provide postdoctoral Fellowship grants to a limited number of USDA Graduate Fellows.

(b) Based on the amount of funds appropriated in any fiscal year, HEP will determine:

(1) Whether new competitions for graduate Fellowships, postdoctoral Fellowships, and/or special international study or thesis/dissertation research travel allowances will be held during that fiscal year;

(2) The degree level(s) to be supported—master's, doctoral and/or postdoctoral;

(3) The proportion of appropriations to be targeted for Fellowship stipends for each respective degree level supported;

(4) The proportion of appropriations to be targeted for the cost-of-education institutional allowances for each respective degree level supported;

(5) The proportion of appropriations to be targeted for the special international study or thesis/dissertation research travel allowances for each respective degree level supported;

(6) The allowable stipend amount for each respective degree level supported, the cost-of-education institutional allowance for each respective degree level supported, and the maximum funds available for each special international study or thesis/dissertation research travel allowance for each respective degree level supported;

(7) The activities for which the cost-of-education allowance may be used for awards made in that year; and

(8) The maximum total funds that may be awarded to an institution under the program in a given fiscal year.

(c) HEP will also determine:

(1) The maximum number of national needs areas for which funding may be requested in a single application;

(2) The degree levels for which funding may be requested in a single application;

(3) The minimum and maximum number of fellowships for which an institution may apply in a single application; and

(4) The limits on the total number of applications that can be submitted by an institution, college, school, or other administrative unit.

(d) These determinations will be published as a part of the solicitation, which will be available at <http://www.grants.gov>.

§ 3402.6 Overview of the special international study and/or thesis/dissertation research travel allowance.

(a) For each USDA Graduate Fellow who desires to be considered for a special international study or thesis/dissertation research travel allowance, the Project Director must apply to HEP for a supplemental grant in accordance with instructions published in the solicitation. Postdoctoral Fellows are not eligible to receive the special international study or thesis/dissertation research travel allowance. Each application must include a "Proposal Cover Page" (Form CSREES-2002), "Project Summary" (Form CSREES-2003), "Budget" (Form CSREES-2004) and National Environmental Policy Act Exclusions Form (Form CSREES-2006).

(1) To provide HEP with sufficient information upon which to evaluate the merits of the requests for a special international study or thesis/dissertation research travel allowance, each application for a supplemental

grant must contain a narrative which provides the following:

(i) The specific destination(s) and duration of the travel;

(ii) The specific study or thesis/dissertation research activities in which the Fellow will be engaged;

(iii) How the international experience will contribute to the Fellow's program of study;

(iv) A budget narrative specifying and justifying the dollar amount requested for the travel;

(v) Summary credentials of the faculty or other professionals with whom the Fellow will be working during the international experience (summary credentials must not exceed three pages per person);

(vi) A letter from the dean of the Fellow's college or equivalent administrative unit supporting the Fellow's travel request and certifying that the travel experience will not jeopardize the Fellow's satisfactory progress toward degree completion; and

(vii) A letter from the fellowship grant Project Director certifying the Fellow's eligibility, the accuracy of the Fellow's travel request, and the relevance of the travel to the Fellow's advanced degree objectives.

(2) The narrative portion of the application must not exceed the page limitation included in the program solicitation.

(b) All complete requests will be evaluated by professional staff from USDA or other Federal agencies, as appropriate. Evaluation criteria will be published in the solicitation. HEP will award grants in accordance with evaluation criteria and to the extent possible based on availability of funds.

(c) Any current Fellow with sufficient time to complete the international experience before the termination date of the grant under which he/she is supported is eligible for a special international study or thesis/dissertation research travel allowance. Before the international study or thesis/dissertation research travel may commence, a Fellow must have completed one academic year of full-time study, as defined by the institution, under the Fellowship appointment and arrangements must have been formalized for the Fellow to study and/or conduct research in the foreign location(s).

§ 3402.7 Fellowship appointments.

(a)(1) Fellows must be identified and Fellowships must be awarded within 18 months of the effective date of a grant. Institutions failing to meet this deadline will be required to refund monies associated with any unawarded

Fellowship(s). Graduate Fellowship appointments may be held only by persons who enroll and pursue full-time study in a graduate degree program in the national need area and at the degree level supported by the grant.

Postdoctoral Fellowship appointments may be held only by persons who pursue full-time traineeship in research, teaching or extension in the national need area and are supervised by the mentor indicated in the grant application.

(2) It will be the responsibility of the grantee institution to award fellowships to students of superior academic ability.

(3) Graduate Fellows:

(i) Must be appointed before completing two semesters or equivalent hours of full-time study, as defined by the institution, or immediately after passing of candidacy/qualifying examinations, whichever is later;

(ii) Must be citizens or nationals of the United States as determined in accordance with Federal law; and

(iii) Must have strong interest, as judged by the institution, in pursuing a degree in a targeted national need area and in preparing for a career as a food or agricultural scientist or professional.

(4) Postdoctoral Fellows:

(i) Must have been USDA Graduate Fellows who successfully completed their doctoral degrees in areas of the food and agricultural sciences designated by CSREES as national need areas;

(ii) Must not have obtained their doctoral degrees more than five years prior to beginning their postdoctoral Fellowships;

(iii) Must have strong interest, as judged by the institution, in preparing for a career in agricultural research, teaching or extension.

(5)(i) A doctoral level Graduate Fellow who maintains satisfactory progress in his or her course of study is eligible for support for a maximum of 36 months within a 42-month period. A master's level Fellow who maintains satisfactory progress in his or her course of study is eligible for support for a maximum of 24 months during a 30-month period. A postdoctoral Fellow who achieves his or her training objectives is eligible for support for a maximum of 36 months during a 60-month period. It is the intent of this program that Graduate Fellows pursue full-time uninterrupted study or thesis/dissertation research, including time spent pursuing USDA-funded special international study or thesis/dissertation research activities.

(ii) Postdoctoral Fellowship appointments may be held only by persons who pursue full-time

traineeship in research, teaching, or extension in the national need area and are supervised by the mentor indicated in the grant application.

However, during the period of support, USDA Graduate and Postdoctoral Fellows are permitted, at the discretion of their institutions, to accept additional supplemental employment that would positively contribute to their training or research and provide eligibility for tuition waivers (e.g., full or partial tuition waivers with research or teaching assignments).

(iii) For graduate Fellows requiring additional time to complete a degree, it is expected that the institution will endeavor to continue supporting individuals originally appointed to Fellowships through such other institutional means as teaching assistantships and research assistantships. For postdoctoral Fellows who terminate the Fellowships prematurely, the institution must return all unexpended monies to USDA. For USDA Graduate Fellows who complete the program of study early (less than 24 months for master's degree or 36 months for doctoral degree) or terminate their Fellowships prematurely, the institution may use any unexpended monies, within the time remaining on the project grant, to support pursuit of a doctoral degree in a discipline in the food and agricultural sciences by a master's degree level Fellow at the grantee institution; or a replacement Graduate Fellow. Where less than one semester/quarter remains before the expiration date of the Graduate Fellowship grant, the institution must refund any unexpended monies to the granting agency. Such funds cannot be used to increase the annual stipend amounts for current USDA Graduate or Postdoctoral Fellows.

(b) Within the framework of the regulations in this part, all decisions with respect to the appointment of Fellows will be made by the institution. However, institutions are urged to take maximum advantage of opportunities for awarding Fellowships to members of underrepresented groups at the graduate and postdoctoral level in the food and agricultural sciences, particularly minorities and women. Throughout a USDA Graduate Fellow's tenure, the institution should satisfy itself that the Fellow is making satisfactory academic progress, and carrying out, or planning to carry out, national needs related research. If an institution finds it necessary to terminate support of a USDA Graduate Fellow or a postdoctoral Fellow for insufficient progress or by decision on the part of

the Fellow, the Fellow may no longer receive funds from the active grant. However, termination does not automatically disqualify a Fellow from receiving future grant support under this program. If a graduate or postdoctoral Fellow finds it necessary to interrupt his or her program of study because of health, personal reasons, or outside employment, the institution must reserve the funds for the purpose of allowing the Fellow to resume funded training any time within a six (6) month period. However, a USDA Graduate or Postdoctoral Fellow who finds it necessary to interrupt his/her program of training more than one time cannot exceed a total of six (6) months' cumulative leave status without forfeiting eligibility. For a USDA Graduate Fellowship terminated because of insufficient progress, by decision on the part of the Fellow, or reserved due to an interrupted program but not resumed within the required time period, the institution may use any unexpended monies to support, within the time remaining on the project grant, and subject to the limitations above, a replacement Fellow at the same master's or doctoral levels. For postdoctoral Fellowships terminated because of insufficient progress, by decision on the part of the Fellow, or reserved due to an interrupted program but not resumed within the required time period, the institution must return all the unexpended monies to CSREES.

(c) Only Fellows enrolled in master's programs of study may be supported under master's Fellowship grants. Master's degree level Fellows who complete their degree early may be supported under master's Fellowship grants, if they are enrolled in Ph.D. programs in areas of the food and agricultural sciences designated as national need areas. Only Fellows enrolled in doctoral programs of study may be supported under doctoral degree Fellowship grants. Only USDA Graduate Fellows who have completed their doctoral degrees may be supported under postdoctoral Fellowship grants.

§ 3402.8 Fellowship activities.

A USDA Graduate Fellow shall be enrolled as a full-time graduate student, as defined by the institution, at all times during the tenure of the Fellowship in the national need area and at the degree level supported by the grant. This includes the time used for special international study or thesis/dissertation research, if the international travel is funded through a special international study or thesis/dissertation research travel allowance under this grant program. However, the

normal requirement for formal registration during part of this tenure may be waived if permitted by the policy of the Fellowship institution, provided that the Graduate Fellow is making satisfactory progress toward degree completion and remains engaged in appropriate full-time Fellowship activities such as thesis/dissertation research. Postdoctoral Fellowship appointments may be held only by persons who pursue full-time traineeship in research, teaching, or extension in the national need area and are supervised by the mentor indicated in the grant application. Graduate and postdoctoral Fellows in academic institutions are not entitled to vacations as such. They are entitled to the short normal student holidays observed by the institution. The time between academic semesters or quarters is to be utilized as an active part of the grant period. During the period of support, USDA Graduate and Postdoctoral Fellows are permitted, at the discretion of their institutions, to accept additional supplemental employment that would positively contribute to their training or research and provide eligibility for tuition waivers (e.g., full or partial tuition waivers provided with research or teaching assignments). A Fellow may accept from any other entity a grant supporting the Fellow's research costs.

§ 3402.9 Financial provisions.

An institution may elect to apply the cost-of-education/training institutional allowance to a Fellow's tuition, fees and laboratory expenses and to defray other program expenses (e.g., recruitment, travel, publications, or salaries of project personnel), unless stated otherwise in the solicitation. Tuition and fees are the responsibility of the Fellow unless an institution elects to use its cost-of-education institutional allowance for this purpose or elects to pay such costs out of non-USDA monies. No dependency allowances are provided to any USDA Graduate or Postdoctoral Fellows. Stipend payments and special international study or thesis/dissertation research travel allowances may be made to Fellows by the institution, in accordance with standard institutional procedures for graduate and postdoctoral fellowships and assistantships.

Subpart C—Preparation of an Application

§ 3402.10 Application package.

Applications will be available at <http://www.grants.gov> and through the CSREES Web site. An application package will be made available to any

potential grant applicant upon request. This package will include all necessary forms and instructions to apply for a grant under this program.

§ 3402.11 Proposal cover page.

The Proposal Cover Page, Form CSREES–2002, must be completed in its entirety, including all authorizing signatures. One copy of each grant application must contain the original pen-and-ink signatures, or approved electronic equivalent, of:

- (a) The Project Director(s); and
- (b) The Authorized Organizational Representative for the institution.

§ 3402.12 Project summary.

Using the Project Summary, Form CSREES–2003, applicants must summarize the proposed graduate program of study and/or the academic and research strengths of the institution in the national need area for which funding is requested. To the extent possible, applicants should emphasize the uniqueness of the proposed program of training. The summary should not include any reference to the specific number of fellowships requested. The information on Form CSREES–2003 will be used in assigning the most appropriate panelists to review an application. If an application is supported, this Form may be used in program publications.

§ 3402.13 National need narrative.

HEP will determine the composition of the narrative for each competition, including page limits, font size, the number and the order of sections, and other supporting information that may be required. Detailed instructions for preparing the narrative will be published in the solicitation.

§ 3402.14 Budget and budget narrative.

Applicants must prepare the Budget, Form CSREES–2004, and a budget narrative identifying all costs associated with the application. Instructions for completing the Budget are provided with the form.

§ 3402.15 Faculty vitae.

This section should include a Summary Vita, no more than 2 pages excluding publications listing, for each faculty member contributing significantly to institutional competence at the level of graduate study for the national need area addressed in the application. Applicants should arrange the faculty vitae with the Project Director(s) first, followed by the remaining faculty, in alphabetical order.

§ 3402.16 Appendix.

Any additional supporting information deemed essential to enhancing the application should be included in an Appendix and referenced in the national need narrative.

Subpart D—Submission and Evaluation of an Application

§ 3402.17 Where to submit an application.

The solicitation will indicate the date for submission of applications and the number of application copies required to apply for a grant. In addition, the solicitation will provide the address to which the application, the required number of accompanying duplicate copies, and any other required forms and materials should be sent.

§ 3402.18 Evaluation criteria.

Applications addressing a particular national need area at a particular Fellowship level (master's, doctoral or postdoctoral) will be evaluated in competition with other applications addressing the same national need area at the same level. Both USDA internal staff and the panelists will evaluate applications on the basis of the criteria published in the solicitation.

Subpart E—Supplementary Information

§ 3402.19 Terms and conditions of grant awards.

Within the limit of funds available for such purpose, the awarding official shall make project grants to those responsible, eligible applicants whose applications are judged most meritorious according to evaluation criteria stated in the solicitation. The beginning of the project period shall be no later than September 30 of the Federal fiscal year in which the project is approved for support. All funds granted under this part shall be expended solely for the purpose for which the funds are granted in accordance with the approved application and budget, the regulations of this part, the terms and conditions of the award, the applicable Federal cost principles, and the Department's assistance regulations (parts 3015 and 3019 of 7 CFR).

§ 3402.20 Other Federal statutes and regulations that apply.

Several Federal statutes and regulations apply to grant applications considered for review and to grants awarded under this program. These include, but are not limited to:

7 CFR part 1, subpart A—USDA implementation of the Freedom of Information Act.

7 CFR part 3—USDA implementation of OMB Circular No. A–129 regarding debt collection.

7 CFR part 15, subpart A—USDA implementation of title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended.

7 CFR part 331 and 9 CFR part 121—USDA implementation of the Agricultural Bioterrorism Protection Act of 2002.

7 CFR part 3015, or any successor rule—USDA Uniform Federal Assistance Regulations, as amended, implementing OMB directives (*i.e.*, Circular Nos. A–21 and A–122) and incorporating provisions of 31 U.S.C. 6301–6308 (formerly the Federal Grant and Cooperative Agreement Act of 1977, Pub. L. No. 95–224), as well as general policy requirements applicable to recipients of Departmental financial assistance.

7 CFR part 3017—USDA implementation of Government wide Debarment and Suspension (Nonprocurement) and Government wide Requirements for Drug-Free Workplace (Grants).

7 CFR part 3018—USDA implementation of New Restrictions on Lobbying. Imposes prohibitions and requirements for disclosure and certification related to lobbying on recipients of Federal contracts, grants, cooperative agreements, and loans.

7 CFR part 3019—USDA implementation of OMB Circular No. A–110, Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Other Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Nonprofit Organizations.

7 CFR part 3052—USDA implementation of OMB Circular No. A–133, Audits of States, Local Governments, and Nonprofit Organizations.

7 CFR part 3407—CSREES implementation of the National Environmental Policy Act.

29 U.S.C. 794, Section 504—Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and

7 CFR part 15b (USDA implementation of statute), prohibiting discrimination based upon physical or mental handicap in Federally assisted programs.

35 U.S.C. 200 *et seq.* —Bayh-Dole Act, controlling allocation of rights to inventions made by employees of small business firms and domestic nonprofit organizations, including universities, in Federally assisted programs (implementing regulations are contained in 37 CFR part 401).

§ 3402.21 Confidential aspects of applications and awards.

When an application results in a grant, the application and supporting information become part of the record of CSREES transactions, and available to the public upon specific request. Information that the Secretary determines to be of a confidential, privileged, or proprietary nature will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law. Therefore, any information that the applicant wishes to have considered as confidential, privileged, or proprietary should be clearly marked within the application.

The original copy of an application that does not result in a grant will be retained by the Agency for a period of one year. Other copies will be destroyed. Such an application will be released only with the consent of the applicant or to the extent required by law. An application may be withdrawn at any time prior to the final action thereon.

§ 3402.22 Access to peer review information.

After final decisions have been announced, HEP will, upon request, inform the PD of the reasons for its decision on an application. Verbatim copies of summary reviews, not including the identity of the reviewers, will be made available to respective PDs upon specific request.

§ 3402.23 Documentation of progress on funded projects.

(a) Fellowships/Scholarships Entry/Exit Forms (Form CSREES-2010) are available from CSREES upon request. Upon request by HEP, Project Directors awarded Graduate Fellowship (excluding supplemental international and postdoctoral) grants under the program shall complete and submit this form.

(1) Appointment Information shall be submitted to HEP within 3 months of appointment of a Fellow;

(2) The Project Director shall submit an annual update of each Fellow's progress to HEP by September 30 each year. Additional progress reports may be needed to assess continuing progress of Fellows supported by any special international study or thesis/dissertation research allowance and/or institutional adherence to program guidelines.

(3) Exit Information shall be completed and submitted to HEP by the Project Director for each Fellow supported by a grant as soon as a Fellow either: Graduates; is officially terminated from the Fellowship or the academic program due to unsatisfactory academic progress; or voluntarily withdraws from the Fellowship or the academic program. If a Fellow has not completed all degree requirements at the end of the five-year grant duration, HEP may request a preliminary exit report. In such a case, a final exit report shall be required at a later date. When a final exit report for each Fellow supported by a grant has been accepted by HEP, the grantee will have satisfied the requirement of a final performance report for the grant. Additional follow-up reports to track Fellows' career patterns may be requested.

(b) All grantees (supplemental international, graduate, and postdoctoral) shall submit initial project information and annual and summary

reports to CSREES' Current Research Information System (CRIS). The CRIS database contains narrative project information, progress/impact statements, and final technical reports that are made available to the public. For applications recommended for funding, instructions on preparation and submission of project documentation will be provided to the applicant by the agency contact. Documentation must be submitted to CRIS before CSREES funds will be released. Project reports will be requested by the CRIS office when required. For more information about CRIS, visit <http://cris.csrees.usda.gov>.

§ 3402.24 Evaluation of program.

Grantees should be aware that HEP may, as a part of its own program evaluation activities, carry out in-depth evaluations of assisted activities through independent third parties. Thus, grantees should be prepared to cooperate with evaluators retained by HEP to analyze both the institutional context and the impact of any supported project.

Dated: October 19, 2004.

Daniel E. Kugler,

Acting Administrator, Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service.

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