



FSA Now

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Summer Interns Start at FSA

Cicadas are not the only ones who have swarmed the nation's capital this summer. Each year, the summer brings hundreds of interns to the D.C. area. FSA's Summer Internship Program granted 36 interns the opportunity to gain hands-on experience in the Federal Student Aid process this summer.

The 10-week program, which began June 1, places interns into FSA departments based on the interns' majors in combination with managers' requests.

"Our business motto is 'We Help Put America through School' and this program is giving back to students," Internship Coordinator Chuck Conrad explained. "I want to get young dynamic people into our organization.

"The success of FSA's internship program is evident based on its results. Four interns are currently participating in the program for a second year, and to date, at least two interns have been hired on a full-time basis following completion of the program. Three additional former interns are participating in the Student Career Experience Program (SCEP) this summer preparing to become full-time employees.

Conrad is particularly impressed with the new interns.

"Interns add life, excitement and new ideas to FSA. They are learning, but they are also teaching employees. They add that can-do attitude."

Interns are already jumping into projects enthusiastically. Mark Seaman, an American Uni-

versity student working with IT Innovations in CIO, is focusing his efforts on the students.gov site.

"Working on an exclusive project, having the freedom to be creative, and being responsible for some thing substantial really sets the FSA internship program apart," he said.

More than 450 applicants sent resumes to FSA this year alone. The 36 interns, who survived the process, attend 25 universities across the nation from Berkeley to University of Chicago to Yale.

FSA initiated its Summer Internship Program in 1999, and since then, more than 350 students have participated in the program. Washington is the only participating region this summer. In the past, Atlanta also took part in the program.

A career fair held at the end of July will showcase the accomplishments of this summer's interns, and ask Department employees to vote on the best intern displays.

"Interns add life, excitement and new ideas to FSA. They are learning, but they are also teaching employees. They add that can-do attitude."

-Internship Coordinator Chuck Conrad



Interns Lily Lo, Megan Stearns and Elizabeth Childs enjoy an intern luncheon.

We Help Put America Through School

FSA in Kansas City

Q&A with Region VII Institutional Improvement Specialist Tom Beckerle

What is the best thing about working in your region?

We will give you three: The first is the people and the work ethic applied on a daily basis; the second is our city because we enjoy its rich culture; and third is our regional schools because of their dedication to the education of the students.

What is the biggest challenge facing your office?

We believe the biggest challenge that Region VII faces is probably the same for the other nine regional offices: to effectively accomplish our mission of Title IV oversight under travel fund restraints.

Describe some of Region VII's special projects.

Common Ownership School Work Group: This workgroup is in the process of determining the best way for Case Management and Oversight on a National Level, to deal with schools' groups that are owned by a common owner.

Perkins Project: The team identified over 37 schools that were no longer active in the Perkins program, but continued to report out on the FISAP. All the schools contacted have agreed to liquidate. We estimate that this project saved and recovered over \$3.5 million.

NSLDS Transfer Monitoring Project: We have identified and contacted schools who have not set up profiles in NSLDS in our region to ask their cooperation so that students who attend more than one institution during a program year would not be over awarded, and thus become a liability to the schools.

What three words best describe the Kansas City team? Why?

Effective Title IV Oversight. The Kansas City/DC Team members care about their work product and are dedicated to doing their best at all times. All team members benefit and continue to learn by sharing their individual experiences and knowledge. As a result, an effective, strong, united group is created.



FSA's Kansas City Regional Office Staff

Region VII's Picks

- * **Best Kansas City restaurant:** Herford House, best known for its steaks.
- * **Best local cuisine:** BBQ
- * **Favorite local sports team:** Kansas City Chiefs
- * **Favorite college teams:** Basketball: University of Kansas Jayhawks
Football: Kansas State Wildcats
- * **Most notable Kansas City natives:** U.S. President Harry S. Truman; Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain), author; Jesse James, outlaw; James C. Penny, merchant; and George Washington Carver, educator and agricultural chemist.
- * **A little Kansas City history:** Kansas City was originally named the Town of Kansas after the Kansa Indians who lived in the area. In 1853, it became known as the City of Kansas. Finally, in 1889, it officially became Kansas City.

"We are proud to be a part of the 10 Regions and all FSA/OPE DC employees, who collectively play an important role in helping to keep education available, by effective Title IV oversight, to those who exercise their opportunity to work for and achieve an educational goal."

-Tom Beckerle, Region VII



Ray Semko of Interagency
Operational Security
Support talks to the crowd.



Spotlight on: Security

Career Zone featured a special addition to their traditional services. For two weeks, May 3-14, FSA Security had a booth set up in the Career Zone that focused on information security. The booth was comprised of materials from the FSA Security library, including magazines, cds, videos, and books, all about information security. Visitors were able to check out the materials and review them at their leisure. Also, the booth had information about security-related master's degree offerings for local universities. This was a great way to expand your knowledge of computer and information security and learn something new. If you have any questions, please contact Jill Mossman at jill.mossman@ed.gov.

FSA's Hometown Heroes



Mark Washington's good deeds are not contained within the walls of Union Center Plaza in Washington, D.C. For eight hours a day he works in FSA's Borrower Services for the Disability Discharge Program. But for 12 to 20 hours a week, he volunteers his time as a firefighter and emergency medical technician in Prince George's County, Md.

Likewise with Internal Compliance Manager Spencer Sakai, who, in his fourth year as a volunteer fire and rescue person, works one weeknight shift and sometimes spends the night at his firehouse in Stafford County, Va.

Washington became a volunteer one year ago, when he decided to follow his life-long interest. Sakai began for a slightly different reason. "My wife Jean and I have two children," he said, "and when they graduated from high school, I thought that was a good time to serve our community where they gave so much to our family for so many years." Like Washington, Sakai is the only volunteer firefighter in his family.

Most surprising to Washington in his volunteering is how extensive the training was, how heavy the equipment is and how much of his job has become routine. If his team spends one hour fighting a fire, he said, they might spend three to four hours cleaning up. But his work isn't all fighting flames. He would rather ride on a fire truck than in an ambulance, but he speaks positively about the EMS aspect of his work, "I enjoy treating people decently who are in pain, to give them reassurance and help," he said.

Sakai, a native of Japan, is brimming with important lessons learned. Volunteering in this business, he said, has taught him the importance of the non-monetary reward. Sakai applies the teamwork skills he learns fighting fires and applies it to work at FSA. Sakai said, "The most important thing I am emphasizing here is to communicate well - let other members know what you know for a continuous exchange of knowledge and skills among the team members. You have to be serious about helping others." In life and death situations, teamwork, responsibility and leadership have never meant more.

On September 11, 2001, Sakai was at work when the Pentagon was attacked. From his office window he could see the black smoke and fire. He says his first priority was to provide safety to FSA employees in the building. Not knowing if more attacks were on the way, Sakai was one of the last employees to leave the building that day. Washington, who grew up in New York City and was not yet trained, said of its effect on him, "I thought, 'What am I waiting for. This country needs people to step up.'" And he did just that.

This line of business is not just for men, however. Vicki Bowen, a Management and Program Analyst in CIO, volunteers as an EMT at Huntingtown Volunteer Fire Department in Maryland. She decided to join four years ago because she enjoys helping people and she knew her local company needed EMS staff. She too has found it to be a great and humbling experience.

Why do they do it? Sakai sums it up: "It is such a rewarding experience to serve others in the community, to save lives and to teach safety." Whether it's through volunteering or through work, these dedicated employees don't stop providing aid when they leave the office.

FSA Now

Managing Editor

Chris Greene

Writers

Emily Clark

Chris Greene

Tara Young

Layout/Production

Emily Clark

Tara Young

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Spencer Sakai in front of a company fire truck in Stafford County, Va. Sakai works for FSA Administration as an Internal Compliance Manager.

"The most important thing I am emphasizing here is to communicate well - let other members know what you know for a continuous exchange of knowledge and skills among the team members. You have to be serious about helping others."

-Spencer Sakai

Reflections of an Intern... by Emily Clark

After my first week of interning for Federal Student Aid, my appreciation for the inner workings of the Department of Education has skyrocketed, and my aid vocabulary has increased tenfold. I had no idea walking in what to expect of this federal office where No Child Left Behind takes the form of No College Student Left Without Aid.

I arrived at the Union Center Plaza location at headquarters with my fellow interns on June 2 at 8:30 a.m., sleep deprived from a not-yet-revised wake-at-noon schedule. After being shown another flow chart of the organizational structure of the Department and being told what we could and could not Google, our managers picked us up and the summer class of '04 interns left the helpful coordinator Chuck Conrad and dispersed among 11 bustling floors.

I am lucky enough to share a spacious cubicle with one other intern alongside the communications crew, under the skill of Marianna O'Brien. I met the veteran intern I am replacing, and she briefed me on the office dynamic, the dress code and, of course, where to eat for lunch. Once I got down to work I was immediately struck by the dedication of the team I was placed with. My managers set the standard for a serious work ethic, all the while maintaining a healthy dose of levity—a successful and amusing recipe.

I've worked in offices before, but this is the first where it is obvious everyone is striving for a common goal. The collective mindset of the office is, for once, work-oriented. Maybe I'm used to my previous summer office jobs back home in the suburbs of Philadelphia where I felt no one believed their work was worthwhile. It did not take long for me to tire of watching lawyers bill clients when they hit the links, and I have craved an office like this one since I struggled through hot afternoons in a sleepy library where not even the patrons were awake. I remember thinking on my first busy afternoon commute home on the Metro how happy and grateful I am to be here, not only in D.C., but among professionals who care about the work they do and the atmosphere in which they thrive.



Women's Conference

Terri Shaw participated in an executive panel at the Accenture Government Women's Leadership Forum, held June 10. Shaw shared her insights on the challenges of being an effective leader and running the first government-mandated performance-based organization.

The panel, moderated by Judy Woodruff, also featured Gale Rossides of TSA and Lois Hickey, Director of Personnel for the Army. Additional speakers at the event included Helen Thomas, former United Press International correspondent and White House bureau chief; Jehan Sadat, peace, literacy and women's rights advocate and wife of Anwar Sadat; and Susan Scott, author and leadership development architect.



Terri Shaw, Gale Rossides, Jehan Sadat, Helen Thomas, Lois Hickey, Judy Woodruff and Michelle Pfeifer at the Accenture Government Women's Leadership Forum.



Sandy Santana and Steven Tessitore of Region II accept the Thomas C. Scott Distinguished Service Award.

News from Region II

Every year at the New Jersey Association for Student Financial Aid Administrators (NJASFAA) Spring Conference, presentations are made to individuals that NJASFAA recognizes who have provided service or made significant contributions to the aims and ideals of the financial aid profession. Nominations for all awards are made by the members (active and associate) of NJASFAA and are solicited by the Nominations/Elections/Awards Committee.

Steven Tessitore, IIS and Sandy Santana, TO of Region II were each presented with The Thomas C. Scott Distinguished Service Award. This award recognizes the outstanding contributions of an individual not directly involved in a Financial Aid Office to the field of financial aid and/or NJASFAA.

Ethics Matters by Sean Dent

Widely Attended Gatherings

Have you been invited in your official capacity to attend a large reception, conference, training seminar or luncheon? Will the event provide you with a unique opportunity to network and discuss the important core work of the Department? Under the widely attended gatherings exception to the gift rule, you may be able to accept a free invitation to attend such events even if the market value of the invitation exceeds \$20!

Generally, an employee shall not, directly or indirectly, solicit or accept a gift from a prohibited source or given because of the employee's official position. However, when there has been a determination that attendance at an event is in the interest of the agency because it will further agency programs and operations, an employee may accept an unsolicited gift of free attendance at all or appropriate parts of a widely attended gathering from the sponsor of the event. See 5 CFR § 2635.204 (g) (2). An event will be viewed as "widely attended" if those in attendance represent a range of persons interested in a given subject matter.

So before you decline a free invitation to attend a fancy symposium or annual awards dinner, you should first check with the Ethics Division to determine if the valuable gift falls within the widely attended gatherings exception to the gift rule. You may be pleasantly surprised. Copy of the widely attended gatherings approval form can be found [here](#) //connected under the "Forms" section.

As always, call Sean Dent at 202-401-6213 for advice tailored to your specific situation.