

Justification for Emergency Approval NASA Aeronautics Scholarship Program

NASA is requesting emergency approval for the collection of data to support the operation of the New NASA Aeronautics Scholarship Program. This undergraduate and graduate scholarship program is to develop the future aeronautical workforce in the United States. The emergency nature of this request is due to delays in the procuring of a vendor for the operation of the new aeronautics scholarship program. While the procurement started in March of this year the contract for the operation of the scholarship program was not awarded until mid November of this year. We request that NASA be granted an emergency approval so that the 2008/2009-application process can proceed. If this emergency request is not granted the scholarship program couldn't be offered since the normal application period for scholarships is from October 2007 through January 2008 for the 2008/2009 school years, i.e. for classes beginning in the fall of 2008. This early application window is due to the scholarship selection process. The students apply usually by January or February, their applications are reviewed by a selection board in the February early March, the students selected in March, then notified in the March time frame, the students accept or reject the offer in March or early April so the process is done by the close of the school year while the students are still available. Going past this time frame encounters significant issues. The students must be offered the scholarship at the same time as the other scholarships are offered so they can make an informed decision on which they would like to accept. In addition the Due to the delays in procurement we are almost unable to meet this schedule. We were not able to submit an Information Collection Request (ICR) previous to this time because we had not determined what the required data would be for the undergraduate and graduate scholarship applications, the data required for the request. NASA's Aeronautics Research Mission Directorate has set aside one million dollars for the start up of the program and is envisioning offering 1.5 million dollars in scholarships once the program is fully operational. Initially it is envisioned that approximately 20 undergraduate and 5 graduate scholarships will be awarded, increasing to a total of approximately 40 undergraduate and 15 graduate scholarships when the program is in full operation. If the emergency request is not approved, these initial 25 scholarships will not be awarded and the program will not be offered until 2009/2010. In addition, NASA will not be able to fulfill its obligation to Congress for a graduate aeronautical scholarship program as stated in public Law 109-155-DEC. 30, 2005, 119 STAT. 2927, 42 USC 16741, Section 431 NASA Aeronautics Scholarships.

Background

The genesis of the NASA aeronautics scholarship program is in public Law 109-155-DEC. 30, 2005, 119 STAT. 2927, 42 USC 16741, Section 431 NASA Aeronautics Scholarships, in which NASA will develop a scholarship program to promote aeronautics education at the graduate level in the United States. This scholarship will be for full-time graduate students who are United States citizens and are enrolled in, or have been accepted by and have indicated their intention to enroll in, accredited Masters Degree programs in aeronautical engineering or equivalent programs at institutions of higher

education. Students who have been awarded a scholarship under this section shall have the opportunity for paid employment at one of the NASA Centers engaged in aeronautics research and development during the summer prior to the first year of the student's Masters program, and between the first and second year, if applicable.

As a stop-gap measure to meet the congressional requirement, the Aeronautical Research Mission Directorate (ARMD) used the NASA Graduate Student Research Program (GSRP) as a mechanism to operate the initial Master's level program last year. NASA in reviewing what was needed in the future workforce determined that providing scholarships only to the masters level students while advantageous, did not meet the future workforce needs of NASA and the aerospace industry. A more uniform and continuous program is required. This was the rationale for the new NASA Aeronautics Scholarship Program, a multiphase program that forms a pipeline for the future aeronautics workforce. Beginning at the undergraduate level, students will be exposed to NASA aeronautics research at the NASA research centers and provided funding to support their educational expenses. This stepping stone approach to scholarships will allow a bachelors level workforce for NASA and industry while also providing students for graduate level study. The second tier of the scholarships is at the graduate level. There are fewer of these scholarships since they are more costly and there are fewer people needed with advanced degrees than undergraduate degrees. The dual undergraduate/graduate program allows NASA to tailor the number of scholarships at each level to NASA and industry needs each year.