

## ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Federal Agency Name(s): National Ocean Service (NOS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of Commerce

Funding Opportunity Title: FY14 Nancy Foster Scholarship Program

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-NOS-NMS-2014-2003873

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 11.429, Marine Sanctuary Program

Dates: Completed applications must be received by Grants.gov by December 12, 2013 at 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time or postmarked by December 12, 2013 and sent to the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries. Applications received after the due date will not be reviewed or considered and will be disqualified.

PLEASE NOTE: All applicants should be aware that adequate time must be factored into applicant schedules for delivery of the application. It may take Grants.gov up to two (2) business days to validate or reject the application. Please keep this in mind in developing your submission timeline. Electronic applicants are advised that volume on Grants.gov can be extremely heavy resulting in further delays. If Grants.gov is unable to accept applications electronically in a timely fashion, applicants are encouraged to exercise their option to submit their application in paper format by the due date outlined in this Full Funding Opportunity.

Funding Opportunity Description: The Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program provides support for independent graduate-level studies in oceanography, marine biology, or maritime archaeology (including all science, engineering, social science and resource management of ocean and coastal areas), and particularly encourages women and minorities to apply. Individuals who are U.S. citizens and are applying to or have been accepted to a graduate program at a U.S. accredited institution may apply. Prospective scholars do not need to be enrolled in a graduate program at the time of application, but must be admitted to a graduate level program in order to be awarded this scholarship. Scholarship selections are based on academic excellence, letters of recommendations, research and career goals, and financial need. Applicants must have a cumulative 3.3 grade point average to be eligible to apply and maintain a minimum cumulative and term grade point average of 3.3 for every term and for the duration of their award. Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarships may provide, subject to appropriations, yearly support of up to \$42,000 per student (a 12-month stipend of \$30,000 in addition to an education allowance of up to \$12,000), and up to \$10,000 of support for a four to six week program collaboration at a NOAA facility. Completion of one (1) program collaboration is required for every Doctoral scholarship award, with a second recommended, but not required. For Master's degree level scholars, completion of a program collaboration is strongly recommended, but is not required.

Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program recipients will be required to participate in a NOAA Orientation Training to meet with Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS) staff at a date and location to be determined during the month of either July or August, 2014. If scholarships have not been awarded before this training, recipients may be required to incur pre-award costs that will be reimbursed after award funds have been issued.

The program collaboration opportunity is designed to allow scholars to participate in research or other activities for four to six weeks at a field office of the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, or other NOAA program offices.

Federal support for the program collaboration may be used toward allowable costs such as: travel to and from the NOAA facility, housing, per diem, laboratory costs, research vessel support, and consumables while conducting research at the NOAA facility. Scholars are required to provide their own health insurance coverage during the program collaboration.

Master's degree level scholars must identify their program collaboration in the first year, and Doctoral scholars must identify their program collaboration within the first two years. Approval from NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries is required prior to embarking on the program collaboration.

Additional information about the scholarship can be obtained in the full announcement text of the Federal Funding Opportunity.

## FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

### I. Funding Opportunity Description

#### A. Program Objective

The Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program is authorized at 16 U.S.C. 1445c-1 and 16 U.S.C. 1445c to recognize outstanding achievement in oceanography, marine biology or maritime archaeology (including all science, engineering, and resource management of ocean and coastal areas) and particularly encourages applications by women and minorities. The scholarship supports independent graduate level research through financial support of graduate studies in such fields. Gender and minority status are not considered when selecting award recipients. However, special outreach efforts are employed to solicit applications from women and minorities. Scholarships are distributed by disciplines, institutions, and geography, and by degree sought, with selections within distributions based on financial need, the potential for success in a graduate level studies program (academic achievement), and the potential for achieving research and career goals. The program is administered through NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries and is funded annually with 1% of the amount appropriated each fiscal year to carry out the National Marine Sanctuaries Act.

#### B. Program Priorities

NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries is seeking applications for the Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program from individuals, particularly women and minorities, who, due to financial constraints, may otherwise not be able to pursue an advanced degree in oceanography, marine biology, or maritime archaeology (including all science, engineering, social science, and resource management of ocean and coastal areas). The program seeks to increase the number of women and minorities in these scientific disciplines, particularly as they relate to the mission of the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS).

The Office of National Marine Sanctuaries conducts, sponsors, and facilitates research to better understand ecosystems and cultural resources in marine sanctuaries, their changing condition, and the significance of threats. ONMS uses conservation science to support policy decisions, develop effective response capabilities, evaluate management practices, and support broader, NOAA-wide responsibilities for marine conservation and management. Science priorities are identified within national sanctuary management plans and are necessary to protect and conserve sanctuary resources, manage risks, reduce threats, and respond to unexpected events. Strong partnerships, expert scientific content and judgment, and peer review enhance the accuracy and credibility of monitoring and research. In addition, science, education, outreach, and policy development work together to raise awareness and prompt effective action that will address ocean problems. More information on the ONMS can be found at <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov>.

NOAA recognizes the student's need to ensure that scholarly research, which is often hypothesis based, addresses critical gaps in knowledge about ecological

processes, physiological mechanisms, evolutionary underpinnings, human behaviors, preferences and values, and related areas. The nature of ONMS research, as well as interactions with ONMS staff and partners with similar goals, can help students fulfill their degree requirements through work benefiting not only national marine sanctuaries, but marine conservation more broadly, and ecosystem science as a whole. In addition to natural resource studies, scholars may investigate socioeconomic, maritime archaeological and cultural resource studies in national marine sanctuaries.

General science priorities for ONMS are stated below. Site specific needs are identified in the ONMS Science Needs Assessment available at: <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/science/assessment>. Contact information for Conservation Science Program staff is available at the Science Needs Assessment website.

- ∩ Integrated approaches to assess and monitor the condition and trends of natural and cultural resources using ecological, archaeological and socioeconomic indicators. Results support development of sanctuary conditions reports, in which site-specific, regional, and national needs can also be found: (<http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/science/condition/>) and help sanctuary management evaluate the condition of sanctuary resources.

- ∩ Characterization of habitats, communities, and ecological processes within sanctuaries. Many sanctuaries need to establish baseline knowledge of protected resources such as deep sea communities, estuarine habitat, or coral reefs to be able to implement effective management actions.

- ∩ Climate change research and monitoring as it relates to sanctuary resources (e.g., ocean acidification, temperature change, sea level change, species range shifts and phenology, and changes in physical processes).

- ∩ Socioeconomic and ecological effects of marine zoning such as no-take reserves, recreational fishing areas, research areas, and zones designated for specific uses such as shipping lanes. The findings will support decisions about locating and sizing zones, and modifying existing zones to better protect and restore ecosystems.

- ∩ Research on protected species such as seabirds and marine mammals to inform policy and support protection and recovery efforts.

- ∩ Assessments of how human activities such as fishing, land use runoff, and marine debris affect sanctuary qualities such as biodiversity, biomass, water quality, and health of sanctuary ecosystems.

- ∩ Historical ecology studies to evaluate changes over the past centuries, including social dynamics that drove changes.

- ∩ Documentation and assessment of sanctuary submerged archaeological resources to assess their national significance according to criteria of the National Register of Historic Places.

- ∫ Comprehensive surveys for historic shipwreck sites, particularly those in deeper waters, where sites may have better chances for good preservation in sanctuaries.

- ∫ Economic value of ecosystem services of natural and/or cultural resources. This could include use and non-use values.

- ∫ Knowledge, attitudes and perceptions of sanctuary management strategies and regulations for different stakeholders/user groups.

- ∫ Native and Indigenous peoples' perceptions of cultural landscapes of sanctuaries and other protected areas located within their traditional coastal lands and waters, and how these differing cultural perceptions can be effectively integrated into place-based management of protected areas.

### C. Program Authority

16 USC 1445c-1 and 16 USC 1445c.

## II. Award Information

### A. Funding Availability

Subject to appropriations, approximately \$500,000 will be available for FY 2014. The Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program anticipates that each year approximately 2-4 scholarships will be awarded. The Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program provides yearly support of up to \$42,000 per student (a 12-month stipend of \$30,000 in addition to a tuition allowance of up to \$12,000) and up to \$10,000 support for a four to six week program collaboration at a field office of the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries or other NOAA facility. Completion of one (1) program collaboration is required for every Doctoral Scholarship Award, with a second recommended, but not required. For Master's degree level scholars, completion of a program collaboration is strongly recommended, but is not required. Based on available funding, an orientation retreat will be held for incoming and current scholars. Travel support (logistics and funding, not to exceed \$2,000 per year) will be provided to Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program recipients where Foster Scholars will also meet with Office of National Marine Sanctuaries leadership and staff. A maximum of \$98,000 may be provided to Master's degree level students (up to two years of support, one program collaboration opportunity and travel support for the orientation meeting) and up to \$196,000 may be provided to Doctoral level students (up to four years of support, two program collaboration opportunities and travel support for the orientation meeting).

### B. Project/Award Period

The award periods are up to two years for a student in a Master's level program and up to four years for a Doctoral level candidate. The anticipated start date is July

1, 2014. If an applicant is selected for initial funding, NOAA has no obligation to provide additional funding in connection with that award in subsequent years.

### C. Type of Funding Instrument

The funding instrument will be a cooperative agreement to the individual applicant. The substantial involvement anticipated under this award includes a research collaboration component where the scholar is required to spend time utilizing a NOAA facility to contribute to their education and training. NOAA intends to work with the scholar to facilitate placement at a NOAA facility and to help the scholar refine the scope of their research collaboration, if necessary.

## III. Eligibility Information

### A. Eligible Applicants

Only individuals who are U.S. citizens and are applying to or have been accepted to a U.S. accredited graduate institution to pursue a Master's or Doctoral level degree in oceanography, marine biology, or maritime archaeology, (including all science, engineering, social science and resource management of ocean and coastal areas) are eligible for an award under this scholarship program. In addition, applicants must have a cumulative 3.3 grade point average to be eligible to apply and maintain a minimum cumulative and term grade point average of 3.3 for every term and for the duration of their award. If applicant does not maintain this grade point average, the first term they will be placed on probation and if the grade point average is not brought up for that year, their scholarship will be terminated.

Universities or other organizations may not apply on behalf of an individual. Prospective scholars do not need to be enrolled in a graduate program at the time of application, but must be admitted to a graduate level program in order to be awarded this scholarship. Eligibility must be maintained for each succeeding year of support and annual reporting requirements, to be specified at a later date, will apply.

### B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

There are no matching requirements for this award.

### C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

There are no other criteria that affect eligibility.

## IV. Application and Submission Information

### A. Address to Request Application Package

Detailed information on the application package, instructions, submission procedures, and an application checklist can be located on the Nancy Foster Scholarship Program website: <http://fosterscholars.noaa.gov>. Information to be included in the application submission is shown below and outlined in detail on the

Nancy Foster Scholarship website however the FFO is the official instructions for the application. Further information about the scholarship and NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries research priorities can be found at the web sites: <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/science/assessment>, <http://fosterscholars.noaa.gov>, respectively. Information in hard copy may be requested from: Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program, Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, Attention Seaberry Nachbar, 99 Pacific Street, Bldg 455 Monterey, CA 93940. Information contact(s): Send requests for information to the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries at the address shown above, by telephone (831) 647-4204, or via e-mail to [fosterscholars@noaa.gov](mailto:fosterscholars@noaa.gov). Please allow adequate time for inquiry responses, do not expect an immediate response to email and voice mail messages.

## B. Content and Form of Application

Each application package must include the items listed below unless otherwise indicated. Failure to submit any items as described in this section will disqualify the application from consideration.

Application packages are available through Grants.gov (<http://www.grants.gov>). Grants.gov requires applicants to register with the system prior to submitting an application. This registration process can take several weeks and involves multiple steps. In order to allow sufficient time for this process, applicants should register as soon as they decide they intend to apply, even if they are not yet ready to submit their applications. ONMS will not accept applications that are submitted late due to an applicant's error during the time of submission to Grants.gov. NOAA may allow more time for application submission due to a "systems issue" at Grants.gov that takes place at the time of application submission that are beyond the control of the applicant. In these limited circumstances where there is a systems issue, the applicant must contact the help desk for the relevant system (e.g. Grants.gov) and obtain a help desk ticket number. The applicant must contact ONMS immediately upon discovering the issues and must still submit the required application documents by the submission deadline in order for their application to be considered for review.

PLEASE NOTE: As of December 2012, applicants using the newest version of Adobe Reader XI may encounter an error that could prevent them from submitting their application through Grants.gov. To check whether you have a compatible version of Adobe Reader installed, visit <http://www.grants.gov/applicants/AdobeVersioningTestOnly.jsp>. To download a version of Adobe Reader that is compatible with Grants.gov, visit [http://www.grants.gov/help/download\\_software.jsp](http://www.grants.gov/help/download_software.jsp).

Each application package must be included within the single Adobe PDF document in the correct order as outlined in Section B of the Application and Submission Information. Failure to submit any items as described in this section will disqualify the application from consideration.

1. Standard Form 424 (SF-424), Application for Federal Assistance is located on the Grants.gov portal and must be completed with information pertinent to the

applicant. Detailed instructions on how to complete the SF-424 form can be found on the Nancy Foster Scholarship Program website: <http://fosterscholars.noaa.gov>. Item number 21 on the SF-424 cannot be used as a replacement for the declaration statement required in Item 9 below. The SF-424 must be uploaded to Grants.gov separately than the items outlined below.

Numbers 2-9: The following items of the application listed below shall be uploaded into Grants.gov in a single Adobe PDF file, in the order outlined below. Failure to provide a single Adobe PDF file with all of the components in the order listed below will result in the application being disqualified.

2. General Information Sheet- Provide the information outlined below, but do not exceed 2 typewritten single-spaced pages, font size 12 in Times New Roman, with a 1” margin. General Information Sheets that are longer than 2 pages in length will not be accepted and will result in the application being disqualified. The General Information Sheet must be included within the single Adobe PDF document in the correct order as outlined in Section B of the Application and Submission Information.

a. Personal Data: Provide your full name (including all aliases and maiden/married names), country of citizenship, current address, permanent address, and home, work, fax, and cellular telephone numbers, and email address.

b. Optional Personal Data: For statistical collection purposes only you may indicate your gender, and race or ethnicity (this information is voluntary).

c. Degree Sought: State your proposed field of study oceanography, marine biology or maritime archaeology (including all science, engineering, and resource management of ocean and coastal areas) and the degree being sought (e.g. M.S., M.A., Ph.D.). Include the month and year the degree is expected. State the name and location of your institution and your academic department for your graduate study.

d. Education: List the academic degrees received, or expect to receive by the start of your proposed graduate studies for this program, including the date of receipt and institution and your current GPA. Provide your graduate advisor's name, address, telephone, fax number, and e-mail address.

e. Academic Honors. List any academic honors received.

f. Relevant Work Experience: List work experience related to your field of study. You may include research and teaching assistantships and any other paid or unpaid work.

Failure to include the General Information Sheet, as outlined above, will result in the application being disqualified.

3. Statement of Intent - Provide the following components outlined below in two separate sections. The Statement of Intent should be typewritten, single-spaced, font size 12 Times New Roman, with a 1” margin and should not exceed one page in length including sections (a) and (b). Both sections (a) and (b) will be weighted



equally; therefore your descriptions must provide enough detail to review accordingly. Statements longer than one page will not be accepted and will result in the application being disqualified. The Statement of Intent must be included within the single Adobe PDF document in the correct order as outlined in Section B of the Application and Submission Information.

This statement should not be a research proposal or scientific abstract. This statement will be used to evaluate you as an individual, not necessarily as a scientist, your motivation for applying for this scholarship, and your reflection on how to communicate and educate the public about your research. This statement should demonstrate your organizational and written communication skills.

a. A self-description of your academic, research, career goals, and how your proposed course of study or research will help you achieve these goals. This is your opportunity to present yourself, your aspirations, and your career goals. Include any background information that is pertinent, and provide insight into why you choose to pursue these goals.

b. A description of how you envision sharing your research and your results to the broader community and how the benefits of your research will impact society. As a Nancy Foster Scholar, you are asked to become a “Sanctuary Ambassador” which emphasizes the opportunity to conduct education and outreach to the public (i.e. your college or university, community groups/organizations, or schools) about current research issues in our sanctuary system. In this section please outline your ideas on a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding your research as it relates to the sanctuary system and the ocean.

Failure to submit a Statement of Intent as indicated above will result in the application being disqualified.

#### 4. Research Proposal

The Research Proposal should be typewritten, single-spaced, font size 12 Times New Roman with a 1” margin and should not exceed 3 pages in length. Page limits are inclusive of figures, and other visual materials, but are exclusive of references. Proposals longer than three pages will not be accepted and will result in the application being disqualified. The Research Proposal must be included within the single Adobe PDF document in the correct order as outlined in Section B of the Application and Submission Information.

The Nancy Foster Scholarship Program is designed to support students interested in NOAA mission related sciences of oceanography, marine biology or maritime archaeology (including all science, engineering, and resource management of ocean and coastal areas).

In your Research Proposal, please include the following information:

Discuss the research area you plan to pursue in graduate school and its relationship to sciences in the aforementioned research priorities, and how your

research activities support NOAA's mission, particularly the mission of the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries. Information about NOAA is available at [www.noaa.gov](http://www.noaa.gov) and in particular, the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries at <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov>, and the ONMS Science Needs Assessment at <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/science/assessment>.

Please make sure that your research goals and path are clearly defined and can be completed within the period of the scholarship and that the proposal is constructed well and you clearly demonstrate your technical knowledge of the research area. Failure to submit a Research Proposal as indicated above will result in the application being disqualified.

#### 5. Statement of Financial Need

To evaluate financial need, NOAA will use the Department of Education's Expected Family Contribution (EFC) determination. To receive an EFC determination, applicants must submit a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to the Department of Education. See <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov>. In response to the FAFSA, the Department of Education will provide the applicant with a Student Aid Report (SAR), which will contain the EFC determination. The previous year's SAR is acceptable for this requirement. A copy of the first page of the SAR which includes the EFC and the applicants name must be submitted. In addition a 1 page, single spaced essay describing your financial need must be submitted with the application. Statements longer than one page, font size 12 Times New Roman with 1" margins, will not be accepted and will result in the application being disqualified. The Statement of Financial Need must be included within the single Adobe PDF document in the correct order as outlined in Section B of the Application and Submission Information.

In your essay describing your financial need, discuss how you plan to fund your graduate level education and what the impact will be if you do not receive this scholarship. Also, list the following in the order stated:

- Estimated amount needed for tuition and fees;
- All resources currently available to you to cover your graduate studies (e.g., grants, student loans, scholarships, research or teaching assistant positions, personal funds);
- The length of time these resources will be available and if they include work requirements
- Other resources for which you have applied and have received, as well as those for which you have not received a response.

Failure to submit a Statement of Financial Need will result in the application being disqualified.

#### 6. Enrollment Verification or List of Graduate Schools Applied

For current graduate students, transcripts showing courses in which you are currently enrolled can be used as enrollment verification. If an applicant is not currently enrolled but are applying to graduate schools they must submit a "List of Graduate Schools applied to" including the month and year graduate studies will begin, and any acceptance letters received at the time of application, with their application. Individuals selected to receive the Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship award must provide proof of acceptance into a graduate program at a U.S. accredited institution at the time of notification or the individual will be ineligible to receive the award.

The Enrollment Verification or "List of Graduate Schools applied to" must be included within the single Adobe PDF document in the correct order as outlined in Section B of the Application and Submission Information.

Failure to include the Enrollment Verification or "List of Graduate Schools applied to" as applicable, specifically as indicated above will result in the application being disqualified. Applicants selected to receive the Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship will be required to submit a certification of enrollment at the start of each academic term.

#### 7. Transcripts

Unofficial transcripts submitted by the applicant are acceptable and must be included within the single Adobe PDF document in the correct order as outlined in Section B of the Application and Submission Information. Applicants must submit transcripts for all complete years of academic training (both undergraduate and graduate), including courses in which you are currently enrolled in. Transcripts from an institution or university that are only for one semester are not required (excluding work in progress) but may be included in the single Adobe PDF document if needed to support evidence of research experience.

Failure to submit the transcripts as indicated above will result in the application being disqualified. Official transcripts will be required prior to making an award.

#### 8. Two Letters of Recommendation

Each application must include only two letters of recommendation with written signatures on the actual letter (additional letters will not be considered) from individuals who have knowledge of your academic record, research effort, work and/or life experience. One of these letters must be from someone in your current academic career. If you are currently not enrolled, one letter should be from a professor who can provide knowledge of your academic career. Relevant paid work, such as internships and volunteer efforts, are applicable. Letters of recommendation should include:

Statements of the applicant's ability to succeed in the program proposal;

Familiarity with the applicants work;

Statement that the individual writing the letter has a clear understanding of the goals and aspirations of the applicant on a personal and professional level;

Clear support for the applicant.

If an applicant plans to have a NOAA employee submit a letter of reference as one of the letters or recommendation required in this section, please note that the letter is limited to factual information and the NOAA employee's knowledge of the applicant's ability or character based on the employee's Government interactions with the applicant. The letter may not endorse one applicant over other applicants. Subject to restrictions and management approval, a NOAA employee may submit a letter of reference to NOAA for the agency's use in evaluating the application. The supervisor must make a decision regarding whether it is in the agency's interest to write such a letter. If the supervisor approves the letter, it should be written on agency letterhead and the employee should use his or her NOAA title. The employee may not send the letter in his or her personal capacity.

Letters of recommendation must be scanned PDFs with a handwritten signature on official letterhead of the person recommending the candidate included in the single Adobe PDF document.

Applications without two, signed letters on official letterhead of recommendation will result in the application being disqualified.

#### 9. Declaration

Applicants must certify that all statements and information in their application are true and correct by copying the following statement on a separate sheet of paper, providing a handwritten signature on the same paper, and including it in the single Adobe PDF document:

I, the undersigned, declare, under penalty of perjury, that:

I understand and agree to the limitations of the allowable costs for the scholarship funds as defined in this FFO and that I am aware of the data sharing stipulation policy applicable to all NOAA Federal Funding Opportunities. This statement serves as my "Data/Information Sharing Plan" insofar as it expressly states that no funds associated with this award will be used for the collection or creation of any environmental information or data.

All statements and information in my application are true and correct at the time of this application.

Executed on [insert date]: \_\_\_\_\_

Print or type Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Failure to include the exact statement above, signed by the applicant, will result

in the application being disqualified.

Assistance on the application and submission process can be found under the "How to Apply" section at the website: <http://fosterscholars.noaa.gov> however the FFO contains the official instructions for applying to the scholarship.

Answers to frequently asked questions on the application process are available at: [fosterscholars.noaa.gov](http://fosterscholars.noaa.gov).

Questions from the NOAA NEPA questionnaire are not required to be answered since the program has been determined to be exempt from NEPA review.

Each application package must include the items listed in the Application and Submission Information section. Failure to submit all items, excluding the SF 424 which can be uploaded individually, in a single Adobe PDF document as described in the Application and Submission Information section and in the above outlined order or if any item is omitted will disqualify the application from consideration. Individual documents uploaded to Grants.gov will not be accepted and the applicant will be disqualified.

If the applicant has difficulty obtaining any of the above components of the application in electronic copy form, the applicant may submit a single hard copy application. The hard copy submission must be postmarked by the due date as outlined in the FFO.

### C. Submission Dates and Times

Completed applications must be received by Grants.gov by December 12, 2013 at 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time or postmarked by December 12, 2013 and sent to the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries. The Office of National Marine Sanctuaries mailing address is located in section IV.F., "Other Submission Requirements," below. Applications received after the due date will not be reviewed or considered and will be disqualified. Applicants may submit applications via Grants.gov or in paper hard copies. Date and time of receipt of each application sent via Grants.gov is electronically recorded. For hard copy submission, each envelope is time and date stamped when received. In order for an application to be considered "Complete" all items required in subsection IV.B. "Content and Form of Application" must be received by Grants.gov or postmarked by the submission date. If you choose to mail your full application we suggest using a service that can guarantee confirmation of delivery.

PLEASE NOTE: For detailed information about registering as an individual and applying in the Grants.gov system, please review the following document: <http://www/grants.gov/assets/IndvUserGuide.pdf>. All applicants, both those using electronic and paper, should be aware that adequate time must be factored into

applicant submission timelines for delivery of the application. It may take Grants.gov up to two (2) business days to validate or reject the application. You will receive an official notice from Grants.gov if you have uploaded your application correctly. It is not the responsibility of the Program Office to verify receipt of any application.

#### D. Intergovernmental Review

Applications under this program are not subject to Executive Order 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs.

#### E. Funding Restrictions

No special restrictions apply.

#### F. Other Submission Requirements

Please refer to important information in submission dates and times above to help ensure your application is received on time.

If an applicant does not have internet access to complete the application through Grants.gov or prefers to apply using a hard copy, hard copy applications may be submitted in one envelope to:

Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries 1305 East West Highway SSMC4 11th Floor, Room 11146 Silver Spring, MD 20910.

For paper submissions failure to submit all application items in one envelope will result in disqualification of the application.

### V. Application Review Information

#### A. Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation criteria and weighting of the criteria are as follows:

1. Statement of Intent and Academic Record (20%)

- a. Statement of Intent - 15%
- b. Coursework - 5%
- 2. Research Proposal (35%)
  - a. Alignment with NOAA and ONMS Priorities - 10%
  - b. Feasibility - 10%
  - c. Technical Understanding and Clarity of Proposal - 15%
- 3. Recommendations (15%)
  - a. Familiarity of Applicant - 7%
  - b. Strength of Support - 8%
- 4. Experience and Communication (20%)
  - a. Experience - 10%
  - b. Communication Skills - 10%
- 5. Financial Need (10%)
  - a. Estimated Financial Need - 5%
  - b. Statement of Financial Need - 5%

## B. Review and Selection Process

Once NOAA receives an application, an initial administrative review is conducted to determine compliance with the minimum requirements, including completeness of the application and inclusion of all elements required in each of the FFO sections.

Masters and Doctoral applications will be evaluated based on the same criteria; however, Masters and Doctoral scores will be ranked and considered separately.

All applications that pass the administrative review will be evaluated and scored individually in accordance with the assigned weights of the above evaluation criteria by an independent review panel. The panel will be comprised of three or more individuals, having expertise in NOAA-related science and knowledge of the program priorities of the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries. The panel will rate the proposals using the evaluation criteria and weighting provided above. The individual panelist scores will be averaged for each application and placed in a ranking order of all applications. No consensus advice will be provided by the independent review panel. The ranking order will be presented to the Program Officer who will neither vote nor score proposals as part of the independent review

panel nor participate in discussion of the merits of the application. The Program Officer will transmit the review information to the Selection Official and may make a recommendation to the Selection Official about applying the selection factors below. The Selection Official will award in rank order unless an application is justified to be selected out of rank order based on one or more of the selection factors below.

### C. Selection Factors

The merit review ratings shall provide a rank order to the Selecting Official for final funding recommendation. The Selecting Official shall award in rank order unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon one or more of the following factors:

1. Balance/Distribution of Funds

- a. Across academic disciplines
- b. By types of institution
- c. Geographic area

2. Availability of funds

3. ONMS-specific priorities

4. Degree in scientific area and type of degree sought- Selecting Official may contact high ranking applicants for further clarification of information in scholarship application.

### D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Subject to the availability of funds, review of applications and subsequent notification to applicants will be completed by May 30, 2014. Funds are expected to be awarded by July 1, 2014, which is the start date that should be used on the Application for Federal Assistance (Form 424) for successful applications.

## VI. Award Administration Information

### A. Award Notices

Successful applicants will receive electronic notification that the application has been funded from the NOAA Grants Management Division. Electronic notification will be issued to each successful applicant with instructions on how to access the Grants.gov system and view the terms of the award. The annual reporting requirements are also included in the award package.

The names, academic institutions, degrees being sought, research plans,



photographs and biographical information of the scholarship award recipients will be posted on the Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program website: <http://www.fosterscholars.noaa.gov> after selections have been confirmed and accepted. The information posted on the web site may also be published in marketing materials developed to advertise the Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program and further the mission of the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries.

Unsuccessful applicants will be notified that their proposal was not recommended for funding (declined) by May 30, 2014.

## B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

1. Administrative and national policy requirements for all DOC awards apply to this competition. These requirements may be found in the Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements, published in the Federal Register on December 17, 2012 (77 FR 74634). This notice may be accessed at the Government Printing Office (GPO) website at <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/browse/collection.action?collectionCode=FR>. You may locate the notice by clicking on the radial buttons until you reach the Federal Register published on December 17, 2012 and then clicking on “Commerce Department.”

2. Limitation of Liability- In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for proposal preparation costs. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds.

3. It has been determined that the Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarships are categorically excluded from the requirements under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

To enable the use of a universal identifier and to enhance the quality of information available to the public as required by the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006, to the extent applicable, any proposal awarded in response to this announcement will be required to use the Central Contractor Registration and Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering System and be subject to reporting requirements, as identified in OMB guidance published at 2 CFR Parts 25, 170 (2010), [http://ectr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=ecfr&tpi=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr25\\_main\\_02.tpl](http://ectr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=ecfr&tpi=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr25_main_02.tpl) and [http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=ecfr&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr170\\_main\\_02.tpl](http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=ecfr&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr170_main_02.tpl).

## C. Reporting

Scholarship recipients are required to provide annual reports documenting the scholar's activities, accomplishments, academic progress, research progress, and education and outreach progress. The report must include copies of receipts indicating disbursement of the education allowance and copies of receipts for allowable expenses under the program collaboration. The report must include a certification from the scholar's academic advisor indicating that the student's work is on track and a copy of the official transcript indicating the scholar has a minimum term and cumulative GPA of 3.3. These reports must be submitted through the Grants.gov system.

At the conclusion of the program collaboration, recipients are required to submit a trip report documenting their accomplishments and including a summary testimonial of their experience. In addition, recipients will be required to participate in an evaluation survey.

At the conclusion of the award, recipients are required to submit a final report encompassing their accomplishments during the award period and their post scholarship plans, especially regarding NOAA interactions and the "Sanctuary Ambassador" requirement. The final report should include a copy of the final transcript indicating degree earned, if applicable. All scholars are required to submit a copy of their Master's thesis or Doctoral Dissertation upon completion of their degree.

**Data Sharing Plan.** Environmental data and information, collected and/or created under NOAA grants/cooperative agreements must be made visible, accessible, and independently understandable to general users, free of charge or at minimal cost, in a timely manner (typically no later than two (2) years after the data are collected or created), except where limited by law, regulation, policy or by security requirements.

1. Unless otherwise noted in this federal funding announcement, a Data/Information Sharing Plan of no more than two pages shall be required as an appendix. A typical plan may include the types of environmental data and information to be created during the course of the project; the tentative date by which data will be shared; the standards to be used for data/metadata format and content; policies addressing data stewardship and preservation; procedures for providing access, data, and security; and prior experience in publishing such data. The Data/Information Sharing Plan will be reviewed as part of the NOAA Standard Evaluation Criteria, Item 1 -- Importance and/or Relevance and Applicability of Proposed Project to the Mission Goals.

2. The Data/Information Sharing Plan (and any subsequent revisions or

updates) will be made publicly available at time of award and, thereafter, will be posted with the published data.

3. Failing to share environmental data and information in accordance with the submitted Data/Information Sharing Plan may lead to disallowed costs and be considered by NOAA when making future award decisions.

Information on NOAA's Environmental Data Management Policy is available under:  
[http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/ames/administrative\\_orders/chapter\\_212/212-15.pdf](http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/ames/administrative_orders/chapter_212/212-15.pdf)

The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 includes a requirement for awardees of applicable Federal grants to report information about first-tier sub-awards and executive compensation under Federal assistance awards issued in FY 2011 or later. All awardees of applicable grants and cooperative agreements are required to report to the Federal Sub-award Reporting System (FSRS) available at [www.FSRS.gov](http://www.FSRS.gov) on all sub-awards over \$25,000.

## VII. Agency Contacts

Send requests for information to [fosterscholars@noaa.gov](mailto:fosterscholars@noaa.gov) or mail requests to:

Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program, NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, Attention Seaberry Nachbar 99 Pacific Street, Bldg 455, Monterey, CA 93940. Or contact Seaberry Nachbar via phone at (831) 647-4204 or Kate Thompson at (301) 713-7245.

## VIII. Other Information

### A. The Stipend and Education Allowance

The annual stipend (which consists of the full scholarship award) will be paid directly to the scholar. Tuition (including fall, winter, spring and summer) and academic fees may be negotiated between the academic institution and the Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship program officer at NOAA prior to the receipt of funds. This negotiation is intended to leverage scholarship funds and enhance opportunities for scholarship recipients. In those instances in which tuition and academic fees are not totally waived by the academic institution, the education allowance in an amount equal to the tuition and fee not waived (but not to exceed \$12,000) will be paid

directly to the scholar for remittance to the academic institution. If tuition and fees are reduced or waived by the academic institution, then that portion of the education allowance not needed (i.e., up to \$12,000 in the case of a total waiver) will be retained by NOAA for future scholarships. No money will be paid directly to the student from the education allowance for purposes other than the payment of tuition, fees, and education costs including but not limited to books required for courses. Health insurance is an allowable education cost if it is directly billed on the tuition statement. You may work and receive loans if you receive this scholarship.

#### B. General Scholarship Information

Specific instructions regarding the disbursement, management, and reporting requirements for all stipend and tuition allowance payments will be provided to the scholarship recipients upon selection for the award. The awarding of funds beyond the first year will be based on availability of funds, continued eligibility of the student, semi-annual certification by the academic institution that adequate academic progress is being made, and in compliance with applicable reporting requirements. At its discretion, each academic institution may supplement a scholar's stipend from institutional funds in accordance with the supplementation policy of the institution.