

**U.S. Department of Agriculture
1994 TRIBAL SCHOLARS PROGRAM
FELLOW EXPERIENCE PROGRAM/SERVICE AGREEMENT
between the**

**USDA Sponsoring Agency
and**

1994 Institution (full name)

USDA 1994 Tribal Scholar (first and last name)

This agreement articulates the commitments and responsibilities of the **(Agency)** and the above-identified 1994 institution in the employment of **(student)** who was selected to participate in the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) 1994 Tribal Scholars Program implemented under the USDA Fellow Experience Program (FEP).

The FEP is an opportunity for individuals in an area of study related to a USDA specialty/program area to gain exposure to public service, or to broaden professional career experience in a specialty area. Scholars accepted into the program will be appointed using the Schedule A in 5 CFR § 213.3102 (r) and may not exceed 4 years based on defined criteria.

This agreement describes the responsibilities of the participants (agency, institution, and scholar) required under the USDA 1994 Tribal Scholars Program.

A. ELIGIBILITY

The USDA 1994 Tribal Scholar applicant must:

1. Be a U.S. citizen;
2. Maintain a 3.0 cumulative grade point average (GPA) on a 4.0 scale;
3. Meet the USDA Agency's policy on nepotism;
4. Currently attend or have recently graduated from one of the thirty-two currently operating 1994 Land-Grant Institutions; and
5. Pursue a course of study from a list of required major fields/area as published annually in the USDA 1994 Tribal Scholars Program brochure, leading to a 4-year bachelor degree.

B. APPOINTMENT

The USDA 1994 Tribal Scholar is:

1. Employed as a USDA Fellow Experience Program (FEP) student; and

2. Appointed under Schedule A in 5 CFR § 213.3102 (r) and may not exceed 4 years based on defined criteria.

C. PAY AND BENEFITS

The USDA 1994 Tribal Scholar is eligible to receive:

1. Pay during work periods in accordance with established pay schedules associated with the minimum qualifications and standards for the position; and
2. Employee benefits, such as:
 - a. Retirement coverage;
 - b. Life and health insurance coverage;
 - c. Promotions, within-grade increases, and awards commensurate with work performance and academic achievements; and
 - d. Vacation and sick leave, and holiday time.

D. AGREEMENT

1. The USDA 1994 Tribal Scholar is expected to:
 - a. Comply with the University and Agency code of ethics as outlined.
 - b. Maintain a full-time course load each semester/quarter as specified by the 1994 land-grant or other higher education institution. The sponsoring agency may grant exception to the full-time course load requirement due to extenuating circumstances beyond the control of the scholar;
 - c. Achieve and maintain a minimum cumulative and semester/quarter GPA of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale (or its equivalent) for all semesters /quarters while under scholarship;
 - d. Pursue bachelor degree requirements for agreed-upon discipline identified in the letter of acceptance; and
 - e. Advance towards meeting degree requirements in a timely manner. If, after advice and counsel, it is determined that the scholar is not proceeding in a timely manner, the USDA (only) retains the right to dismiss the scholar from the program;
 - f. Provide the USDA 1994 Program and the Agency with access to academic records (transcripts, schedules, etc.) at the University;
 - g. Meet periodically with the USDA 1994 Program staff, but no less than three (3) times per semester/quarter;
 - h. Meet periodically with University academic advisor and/or professors, but no less than once monthly;
 - i. Complete a minimum of 640 hours of work experience with the USDA Sponsoring Agency, prior to receiving the terminal degree required of the agency;
 - j. Work one (1) year for (**USDA Sponsoring Agency name here**) for each year of financial assistance received;
 - k. Obtain advance approval from USDA Sponsoring Agency prior to taking unscheduled breaks/sabbaticals from school or work period assignments that may delay the completion of course work or work period obligations, and
 - l. Notify the Sponsoring Agency prior to dropping/quitting a course.

NOTE: *At the Agency's discretion, students may be dismissed for not following the terms of the agreement. Students that are dismissed from the program or voluntarily separate from the program will be billed by the agency for fees paid to date or a prorated amount.*

2. The participating 1994 Land-Grant or other Higher Education Institution is expected to:
 - a. Provide documentation on the scholar's progress such as transcripts, course listing, and grades to Sponsoring USDA Agency, USDA 1994 Program, and student;
 - b. Provide curriculum counseling, mentor/mentee relationship, and other academic personal development support services; and
 - c. Process the documents for the payment of the costs of full tuition and fees (less other financial aid received by the student) in a timely manner.

NOTE: *A scholar shall not change Institution and/or discipline for which the scholarship was awarded without prior approval by the 1994 Institution and the sponsoring USDA Agency.*

3. The USDA Sponsoring Agency is expected to:
 - a. Provide full tuition, fees, and books (less the amount of other financial aid received by the student);
 - b. Provide computer, printer, and applicable software during school;²
 - c. Provide periodic employment with pay and duties that are commensurate with the student's academic major area/course of study and the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) qualifications and standards;
 - d. Maintain and timely process the necessary administrative records relating to the scholar's employment and benefits;
 - e. Monitor and document the scholar's academic progress and work performance at the end of each semester/quarter and work period, and provide counseling and performance plans when necessary;
 - f. Provide mentor/mentee (Agency expert in field of study) relationships and career counseling; and
 - g. Provide timely transfer of scholarship funds to the Institution.

E. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

USDA 1994 Tribal Scholars will be evaluated in two areas—academic and work-related performance. Results of both evaluations will be shared by USDA and the 1994 Institutions.

1. Academic evaluation standards will be determined by the USDA and American Indian Higher Education Consortium Leadership Group.
2. Work-related evaluation standards or criteria will be determined by the USDA Agency supervisors consistent with the USDA Agency's performance appraisal system.
3. Each work experience must be planned consistent with the scholar's academic studies or career goals.
4. Scholars will be identified as trainees receiving progressive work assignments related to

their career path.

5. Scholars will be given a Performance Plan based on requirements needed to fully perform in targeted position (e.g., soil conservationist, agricultural economist, computer specialist, etc.).
6. Scholars may receive promotions based on continued satisfactory performance and established rules and regulations.
7. If the academic or work-related performance falls below a fully successful level established by the evaluation standards, the scholar will be given an opportunity to improve. Failure to improve to an acceptable level will result in dismissal from the Program.

F. WORK SCHEDULES

Scholars may work a variety of schedules based on the USDA Sponsoring Agency's organizational needs. While not in a work status and attending school, scholars will remain on the USDA Agency's employee payroll and kept in a Leave Without Pay (LWOP) status. Work schedules include:

1. **Summers Only (most common):** Under this schedule, a scholar may work only during summer time.
2. **Full-time or alternating:** Under this schedule, a scholar may work full-time in a semester or quarter and skip a semester or quarter of classes, and attend classes the next semester and not work for that semester (approval from USDA Sponsoring Agency required).
3. **Part-time or parallel:** Under this schedule, a scholar may work part-time while attending classes full-time (approval from USDA Sponsoring Agency required).

G. EMPLOYMENT AFTER COMPLETION OF THE PROGRAM:

The USDA 1994 Tribal Scholar:

1. Agrees to provide one (1) year of service to USDA for each year of financial assistance received.
2. The work experience obtained via classroom instruction; along with work experience gained working for their sponsoring agencies will establish the scholar as a strong candidate for USDA career opportunities upon graduation.
3. Agrees to reimburse the USDA Sponsoring Agency for costs of education (excluding the employee's pay and allowances) incurred by the USDA Sponsoring Agency if the scholar is voluntarily separated from the service of the USDA Sponsoring Agency before the end of the period for which the scholar has agreed to continue in the service of USDA. *The USDA Sponsoring Agency may determine that recovery would be against equity, good conscience, or the public interest. The percentage of the costs to be repaid may not exceed the proportion of the agreement not completed.*
4. Will consult with and obtain the approval of the sponsoring agency prior to any changes to the academic program. Unauthorized changes will affect continuation of the scholars' participation in the program.

