

**SUPPORTING STATEMENT
DR. NANCY FOSTER SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM
OMB CONTROL NO. 0648-0432**

A. JUSTIFICATION

1. Explain the circumstances that make the collection of information necessary.

This request is for revision and extension of a current information collection, with minor changes made to the exit form, which we are requesting to also be used as a two-year follow-up evaluation form.

The program recognizes outstanding scholarship by providing financial support to graduate students pursuing masters' and doctoral degrees in the areas of marine biology, oceanography and maritime archaeology.

In order to select qualified students, it is necessary to collect an Application Package from each candidate that consists of: 1) a General Information Sheet, 2) Statement of Intent, 3) Institute Certification, 4) Research Proposal, 5) Statement of Financial Need, 6) Declaration Statement, 7) Academic Transcripts and 8) two Letters of Recommendation from individuals who have knowledge of the student's academic record, research effort, work (paid or unpaid work, such as internships and volunteer efforts) and/or life experience. One of these letters must be from the academic advisor.

The information will be used to select those individuals who will receive Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarships. In order to properly process and monitor awardees, scholarship recipients will be required to submit an Annual Report and provide a biography and photograph of themselves for the website. Scholarship recipients will also be requested to complete an evaluation before and after the scholarship program to gather information about the level of knowledge, skills and behavioral changes that take place with the students over the course of the scholarship. The exit form will also be used as a two-year voluntary follow-up form to determine the industry sector of their current employer and their longer-term reflection of the Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program and suggestions for improvement. This two-year voluntary follow-up evaluation was already in place and approved under OMB Control No. 0648-0568 through January 31, 2017.

2. Explain how, by whom, how frequently, and for what purpose the information will be used. If the information collected will be disseminated to the public or used to support information that will be disseminated to the public, then explain how the collection complies with all applicable Information Quality Guidelines.

The Application Package information is collected annually during the application period. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS) program administrator will conduct this information collection each year, and scholarship review panelists and ONMS leadership will use the information to select scholarship recipients. The student data and information is collected, evaluated and assessed,

archived, and reported. Aggregated data is used in NOAA internal reports and reports in response to Congressional queries.

A biographical (bio) sketch and a photograph will be required once of each new awardee prior to their receiving their first allotment of scholarship funds. The bios and photographs will be posted on the scholarship website so interested individuals can see and learn more about those who were selected as awardees. A Progress Report will be required annually of all continuing awardees (in March/April); this Progress Report will outline awardees' accomplishments and academic progress and enable administrators to track awardees' efforts.

The ONMS is institutionalizing a program-wide evaluation plan to ensure that all education programs are being assessed for effectiveness against stated program goals and objectives. Therefore all education programs must be currently evaluated or have an evaluation plan in place. The scholarship awardees will be asked to complete a survey to evaluate the Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program. The questions will be used to gather information about the level of knowledge, skills and behavioral changes that take place with the students before and after the scholarship program. A five-point scale is used with some of these questions and is based on current reviewed literature on assessing impact and a recognized method of capturing this data. This survey is revised from the previously approved evaluation form.

Exit Evaluation and Voluntary Two-Year Evaluation Follow-up

1. The Exit Evaluation will take place through SurveyMonkey (an online evaluation vendor that the NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries has an account for).
2. An optional question regarding what gender a Dr. Nancy Foster Scholar identifies as was added to help staff determine if we are meeting our goal of selecting women.
3. An optional question regarding ethnicity was added to help staff determine if we are meeting our goal of selecting minorities.
4. A question related to area of discipline was added to find out the precise discipline the scholar studied in.
5. A question related to finding out if a scholar is a first generation college student was added to determine if they may be from an underrepresented community.
6. A question related to asking if Masters students will be pursuing a Doctoral degree was added to determine the next phase of the scholar's education plans.
7. A question about employment was changed from "Are you currently employed or will you be employed in the near future?" to "Which of the following best describes your current occupation?" to better evaluate the details of their current status.
8. A question related to seeking employment was added for those that answered 'student' or 'not employed.'
9. A question related to what area of work the scholar is seeking in terms of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) fields was added to help staff determine the area of work.
10. The question about being willing to participate in the Dr. Nancy Foster Scholar alumni network was removed, since all scholars are invited to participate in the alumni network at their discretion.
11. The question related to participating in a longitudinal evaluation survey of NOAA scholars was removed, since the two-year evaluation is voluntary, yet all scholars will

receive it two years after they graduated and concluded their NOAA scholarship. Note that the voluntary follow-up evaluation was already in place and OMB approved previously.

NOAA will retain control over the information and safeguard it from improper access, modification, and destruction, consistent with NOAA standards for confidentiality, privacy, and electronic information. See response to Question 10 of this Supporting Statement for more information on confidentiality and privacy. The information collection is designed to yield data that meet all applicable information quality guidelines. Prior to dissemination, the information will be subjected to quality control measures and a pre-dissemination review pursuant to [Section 515 of Public Law 106-554](#).

3. Describe whether, and to what extent, the collection of information involves the use of automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological techniques or other forms of information technology.

The collection of information will primarily entail Web-based forms submitted through the [Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship website](#) and transferred to a database (detailed information and forms are at this site (full instructions are at [grants.gov](#)). In the event that the Web-based method is not functional, the applicants and recipients may complete electronic fillable forms that may be e-mailed. Only transcripts and other documents in support of applications will be submitted by mail.

4. Describe efforts to identify duplication.

These information collections are related specifically to the Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program, and are the only ones so designated.

5. If the collection of information involves small businesses or other small entities, describe the methods used to minimize burden.

Not applicable. This collection does not involve small businesses or other small entities.

6. Describe the consequences to the Federal program or policy activities if the collection is not conducted or is conducted less frequently.

Consequences could include scholarship funds not being awarded and students not receiving financial support; scholarships being awarded less frequently than possible, or on a timeframe that is not in sync with the academic year; the scholarship administrator not being able to effectively track recipient progress; awardees not receiving their funding on time; and the scholarship administrator not being able to market the program effectively. In addition, recruitment and retention will be affected by not collecting the student data and information.

7. Explain any special circumstances that require the collection to be conducted in a manner inconsistent with OMB guidelines.

Not applicable.

8. Provide information on the PRA Federal Register Notice that solicited public comments on the information collection prior to this submission. Summarize the public comments received in response to that notice and describe the actions taken by the agency in response to those comments. Describe the efforts to consult with persons outside the agency to obtain their views on the availability of data, frequency of collection, the clarity of instructions and recordkeeping, disclosure, or reporting format (if any) and on the data elements to be recorded, disclosed, or reported.

A Federal Register Notice published on May 22, 2014 (79 FR 29430) solicited public comments. There were no comments received in response to the notice.

Comments from three Dr. Nancy Foster Scholars, solicited directly:

1) How do you feel about your photo and biography being listed on the Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program website? Are we providing too much information and data to the public?

Scholar 1: It's fine with me. No, I don't think it's providing too much information.

Scholar 2: I am happy to have my photo and biography listed on the program website. I think it provides just enough detail regarding my research and motivations in relation to the sanctuaries objectives.

Scholar 3: I think it's great, and definitely not too much information. Something I learned from another fellowship I had previously is that public exposure is excellent for your career, and having multiple locations online with professional information is actually very helpful. Specifically, when someone Googles your name, the more relevant search results you have, the more likely you are to be near the top of the pile. That comes in handy for grant reviews, job applications, fellowship applications, and so on. So again I think it's great to have our information up on the NFS website.

2) What are your thoughts in relation to the frequency of data collection as a Dr. Nancy Foster Scholar (i.e. annual reports, final report, exit survey)?

Scholar 1: I think the reporting frequency is very reasonable.

Scholar 2: I understand that it is necessary to receive updates on each scholar to ensure we are in line with graduation and research requirements. So in my opinion the frequency of data collection is sufficient.

Scholar 3: I think it's a reasonable amount of data collection and is justified by the support the scholarship offers.

3) We estimate that the hours of burden for the following elements are as follows. Is this estimate of the burden accurate from your perspective?

Scholar 1: [Completing application package (~8 hours)] This might be accurate for gathering materials together, filling out the online application and submitting, but would not include time spent writing the statements. [Letters of recommendation, (~45 minutes)] I don't know about this. Sounds plausible. [Submitting photo and biography for website (~1 hour)] Yes. [Submitting annual reports (~1.5 hours)] I probably spend 4 hours. [Pre- and post-evaluations (~15 minutes)] N/A [Two-year voluntary follow-up evaluation (~10 minutes)] Haven't done this.

Scholar 2: [Completing application package (~8 hours)] Yes. [Letters of recommendation, (~45 minutes)] From discussing writing LOR's with my advisor this seems like an accurate statement. [Submitting photo and biography for website (~1 hour)] Yes. [Submitting annual reports (~1.5 hours)] Yes. [Pre- and post-evaluations (~15 minutes)] Yes [Two-year voluntary follow-up evaluation (~10 minutes)] N/A

Scholar 3: [Completing application package (~8 hours)] Much more than this—maybe 8 hours to write the first draft, but then there are multiple rounds of review with advisors and others. [Letters of recommendation, (~45 minutes)] Requesting the letters of recommendation may be around 45-60 minutes total on behalf of the applicant, but longer to write the letters from the sponsor/supporter. And if they request lots of background information it may be longer on behalf of the scholar. [Submitting photo and biography for website (~1 hour)] Sounds about right. [Submitting annual reports (~1.5 hours)] More like 4-5 hours or maybe more for each report. [Pre- and post-evaluations (~15 minutes)] 10-15 minutes per evaluation. [Two-year voluntary follow-up evaluation (~10 minutes)] Haven't done this yet!

Response: *The burden estimate for the annual reports has been changed to 4 hours.*

4) Are the instructions from the Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program website and once selected, the Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program Handbook clear?

Scholar 1: Yes.

Scholar 2: Yes, it is clear. There are some areas where more detail can be provided or clearer expectation of the process can be outlined. What specifically comes to mind the ASAP enrollment. I am not sure I would have been able to complete the process if not speaking with other scholars who have gone through the process. Otherwise, I think the handbook provides an adequate amount of information.

Scholar 3: Yes I think so.

5) Do you have ideas on how to minimize the burden of data collection for the Dr. Nancy Foster Scholarship Program?

Scholar 1: No, I think it's fine.

Scholar 2: I think the amount of notifications from Grants Online can be reduced. For example, I received three notifications leading up to my mid-year SF-425 Cash Flow Report despite the fact that I could not process the report until two weeks after my reporting period

ended. It took me some time to figure out that the report was only available to complete after the report period ended and was not made clear in the notifications I received. Before I determined that I could not process the report I spent well over an hour trying to figure out how to submit the report.

Scholar 3: Some of the reporting guidelines could be streamlined into a single annual report. For example, perhaps submitting transcripts, certification of enrollment and the annual report all at once instead of having multiple deadlines throughout the year. I'm also a fan of pre-proposals to reduce the amount of work required both for applicants and reviewers. For example, a short pre-proposal stage without letters of recommendation (or something along those lines) that all applicants submit and a subset of agency folks review, and then solicit full applications from the top XX% of applicants. Not sure if that would be helpful in this situation but I know it has streamlined some other grant / scholarship review process that I'm involved in / have heard about.

9. Explain any decision to provide payments or gifts to respondents and the basis for assurance in statute, regulation, or agency policy.

Not applicable.

10. Describe any assurance of confidentiality provided to respondents and the basis for assurance in statute, regulation, or agency policy.

There is no statutory authority for confidentiality. However, only promotional information (student names, research projects, and photographs) is made public on the program website, in newsletter articles, and in press releases. All other information is available primarily to program staff. Protection of other information is assured on the program evaluation and progress report forms.

As needed, student information may be disclosed to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Office of Civil Rights and the Workforce Management Office to assist the Office of Education in completing and maintaining the student tracker records. The justification for sharing information on a "need to know" basis within the agency is provided explicitly within the statutory language of the [Privacy Act](#).

The physical electronic files are protected from access outside of NOAA and outside of the NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries by a system of firewalls and routers. Whenever feasible, applications are hosted within the internally protected network to limit access by NOAA personnel only. Restricted access is employed so that only authorized users within the NOAA Office of Education scholarship team have access to the scholarship files.

The student scholarship programs' paper application is destroyed after the evaluation and selection of NOAA student scholars. The student name, street address, telephone number and email address are maintained electronically in a secured location on the NOAA server. Access to the electronic files on the ONMS shared drive requires username/password combinations to retrieve the information.

11. Provide additional justification for any questions of a sensitive nature, such as sexual behavior and attitudes, religious beliefs, and other matters that are commonly considered private.

Not applicable.

12. Provide an estimate in hours of the burden of the collection of information.

All applicants are required to submit an Application Package. Based upon a 3-year average of applications, we expect to receive responses for ~ 200 applicants, consisting of one application from each applicant that includes two letters of recommendation for each applicant.

It is estimated that an average of three awardees will be selected each year, each of whom will submit a biography and photograph (6 responses) and an Annual Progress Report (6 responses). Each new awardee would complete an evaluation, and at the end of the period, another one, but only one per year (6 responses). Each graduated scholar will also have the opportunity to complete a voluntary two-year follow-up evaluation (3 responses).

200 application package respondents x 8 hours = 1,600 hours

400 letters of recommendation x 45 minutes = 300 hours

6 bio/photograph submissions x 1 hour = 6 hours

6 annual reports x 4 hours = 24 hours

6 evaluations* (pre- or post – only one in any given year) and 3 voluntary follow-up evaluation x 10 minutes x 1.5 (2) hours.

Total hours of burden = 1,932.

13. Provide an estimate of the total annual recordkeeping/reporting cost burden to the respondents resulting from the collection (excluding the value of the burden hours in Question 12 above).

All information other than transcripts and other documents required in support of the applications may be e-mailed or posted on the program Web site. Ordering and postage costs for transcripts and other supporting document submission are estimated at \$20 each, for a total of \$4,000.

*No increase in estimated response time due to the changes described in Question 2.

14. Provide estimates of annualized cost to the Federal government.

The total estimated annual cost is \$93,510. This figure represents salary dollars needed to oversee administration of the program (416 hours @ \$36 per hour = \$15,000), contract administration for scholarship fund disbursement (\$60,000), salary dollars for application review by panel members (300 hours @ \$50 per hour = \$15,000), cost of materials (\$3,000), and salary dollars for maintenance of the scholarship Website (10 hours @ \$51 per hour = \$510).

15. Explain the reasons for any program changes or adjustments reported.

Based on recent years, fewer awards are expected per year (2-4 rather than 4-7), so respondents, responses, hours and costs are slightly reduced. Also, the burden estimate for the annual report was increased in response to comments.

16. For collections whose results will be published, outline the plans for tabulation and publication.

The names, academic institutions, degree and research plans, photographs, and biographical information of the scholarship awardees will be posted on NOAA's Dr. Nancy Foster website and may be published in marketing materials developed to advertise the program.

17. If seeking approval to not display the expiration date for OMB approval of the information collection, explain the reasons why display would be appropriate.

Not applicable.

18. Explain each exception to the certificate.

Not applicable.

B. COLLECTIONS OF INFORMATION EMPLOYING STATISTICAL METHODS

This collection does not employ statistical methods.