



GCRC

Strengthening Relationships
Between Government
And Higher Education

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Federal Hiring Authority Reaches Milestone

*By Rob Seidner
HR Specialist, U.S. Office of Personnel Management
Board Member, Government-College Relations Council*

With the average age of Federal employees over 47 years old and approximately 500,000 employees expected to retire by 2013, Government agencies are working hard to make sure the best and brightest enter into public service today to guarantee high-quality operations in the future. As one part of a broad effort that includes various hiring avenues and incentives, the Federal Career Intern Program (FCIP) has matured into a successful entrance vehicle for new career public servants.

Created by an Executive Order in 2000, FCIP enables Federal agencies to hire high-potential candidates in a streamlined process while still adhering to the merit system principles and Veterans' Preference. This is accomplished by requiring that agencies continue to follow existing laws when creating their own programs; and these hires would be included in compliance reviews. For example, agencies may work directly with universities at anytime to solicit qualified candidates. These are full-time and paid positions and may be converted noncompetitively to permanent status upon successful completion of

the program. Each agency has the authority to create its own program, which often involves internal rotations, extensive training, and leadership development so that the incumbent is fully capable of performing the full range of duties.

The Merit Systems Protection Board's recently issued report about the FCIP showed program use has skyrocketed, with more than 7000 Federal Career Interns hired in Fiscal Year 2004 alone. Currently 29 agencies have FCIP programs in place and more than a dozen more are implementing them.

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Newly Created Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice

*Barbara Cosentino
Assistant Director of Placement
GCRC President*

On Thursday, November 17, 2005, Governor Rod Blagojevich signed legislation passed by the Illinois Assembly that created the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice. This action has separated incarcer-

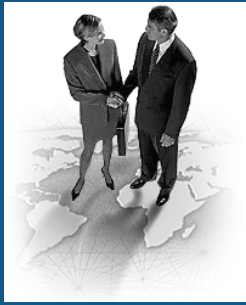
ated juveniles from the adult incarcerated population and placed them within their own facilities. According to a release from Blagojevich's office, the "new department will provide treatment and educational, vocational, social and emotional services to the state's young offenders to help them get on the

right track"

Supported by a coalition of 45 organizations and Rep. Annazette Collins (D-Chicago) and Sen. John Cullerton (D-Chicago), the legislation effectively creates a new agency that will begin on July 1, 2006.

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"...70% of interns said they would stay in the positions they were hired for..."

Interns hired through this program have filled positions in a 194 different occupations, although almost 70 percent have been hired in about 10 occupations that include Customs Inspector, Social Insurance Specialist, Auditor, Engineer and Program Analyst. FCIP is fulfilling one of its main goals as 80 percent of its participants are brand new to Federal service. Minorities represent 36 percent of the hires.

More than 60 percent have Bachelor's Degrees. Addressing another long-standing problem in Federal hiring, a majority of surveyed supervisors involved in hiring for FCIP said it took significantly less time to bring on their new Career Interns than with some of the traditionally used hiring avenues. The Government benefits as 70 percent of Interns said they would stay in the position they were hired into originally and only four

percent responded that they plan to leave Government service. The full report can be found at http://www.mspb.gov/studies/fcip_10_23_05/fcip102005.htm As FCIP continues to expand, it will deepen the talent pool and create more opportunities for graduates. The program is ideally suited to serve as a conduit for the best and brightest graduates to move from institutions of higher learning to a rewarding Federal Government career.

"There are currently 1,400 incarcerated youth in Illinois..."

Newly Created Illinois Department...Continued from Pg. 1

With this action, Illinois becomes the 40th state to have separated its juvenile and adult incarcerated populations.

There are currently about 1,400 incarcerated youth in Illinois. Since 1969, they have been housed within the adult Department of Corrections with a historical average recidivism rate

of about 47%.

In September of 2005, Blagojevich announced that the recidivism rate of juvenile offenders had dropped by 15%, the largest decline on record. The credit for the drop was given to the Illinois Department of Corrections' increased programming and restructuring of

its facilities. Specifically, juveniles were placed closer to their homes in order to increase individual family support, and new programs were added to assist juveniles with community reentry.

Despite this positive performance, however, critics of the *(Story continues on Page 3)*

Meet Our Members: Patricia Witkowski

Welcome to the first in a series of articles focusing on different members in GCRC – both on the government and college sides! The purpose of these articles is for all members to get to know one another and make connections that will benefit students. Our first member to receive such

attention is Patricia Witkowski, Program Specialist with the Department of Justice, Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA).

Patricia holds a Bachelor's Degree in Business and Management has been with the DEA in her current position since

September, 2004. Her government career, however, is extensive and varied: She began working for government in 1975 with the Small Business Administration before moving onto the DEA from 1979 - 1987. From there, she sought promotion with the *(Story continues on Page 3)*



Meet Our Members...continued from Pg. 2

US Army Corps of Engineers before moving onto the Internal Revenue Service in 1992. When the IRS Chicago Employment Office was scheduled for a reduction in force, she returned to the DEA.

According to Patricia, the DEA is the premier federal drug law enforcement agency committed to investigating and prosecuting major drug law violators worldwide. The DEA works to dismantle drug distribution organizations, prosecute drug traffickers, and destroy the financial infrastructure of these organizations. Some of the entry

level jobs offered at DEA for graduates include: Criminal Investigator; Forensic Chemist, Diversion Investigator; Intelligence Research Analyst; and other Technical and Administrative positions. The majority of these positions require a Bachelor's Degree. The DEA is currently recruiting heavily for the Criminal Investigator/Special Agent position, and is extending its outreach efforts to applicants with Finance, Accounting and Economics backgrounds. To find out more about the agency, visit <http://www.dea.gov>. Interested applicants can apply via the

USAJobs Website at <http://www.usajobs.opm.gov>.

Patricia has also been heavily involved with GCRC. She has been a general member since 1985. Her commitment and enthusiasm was noticed early and she was invited to become a member of the GCRC Steering Committee. Over time, she has held a number of offices within that committee and currently serves as its Vice-President.

College personnel interested in reaching Patricia can call the Chicago Field Division at 312.353.7875.

Would you like to be featured next in our 'Meet Our Members' column? We're looking for both recruiters and college members to introduce themselves? If so, please contact Barbara Cosentino at B-Cosentino@neiu.

Student Success Stories: Sue Olsen, Public Affairs Specialist, SSA

Welcome to the first 'Student Success Story' article! These articles will focus on the population that ties both the government recruiters and the college administrators together: Students. This issue's focus is Sue Olsen, Public Affairs Specialist for the Social Security Administration (SSA).

Olsen graduated with a degree in Special Education from Northeastern Illinois

University. At the time of her graduation, she had no idea that there were programs within SSA for the Disabled. A family member who worked for the Agency really sold her on the goals of the Agency, the opportunity for career growth, and the job security and benefits.

SSA was her first full-time position and she had been there for 20 years! Over the course of her career, she

has held titles such as Claims Representative, Operations Supervisor and Management Support Specialist. She has also been able to move around to different offices within the agency and throughout California and Nevada. Currently, she works in Northern California in her current position. She particularly enjoys the chance to educate (*Story continues on Page 4*)

Newly Created Illinois Department...continued from Pg. 2

system still felt the department needed to focus further on rehabilitation. Critics also pointed out that there had been budget cuts that forced juvenile services to be melded in with adult services.

The new legislation promises that in addition to the services already provided to

juvenile offenders, there will be additional programming implemented, including counseling, mental health and substance abuse services. Whether or not the creation of this new agency will open up new employment opportunities for graduates and interns remains to be seen.





Government College Relations Council

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- | Rob Seidner, US OPM
- | Carole Sendziol, Internal Revenue Service
- | Nancy Wajler, College of DuPage
- | Patricia Witkowski, US DEA

The mission and purpose of the Government College Relations Council is to foster communication and cooperation between college and government communities through the dissemination of new and relevant information and the formation of mutually beneficial relationships.

Our Goals are:

- Help college students and graduates find career-related jobs with government employers
- Help government employers find educated and skilled employees to meet their hiring needs
- Enhance structure, communication and efficiency of the organization



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Student Success Stories...continued from pg. 3

the public about various programs available from SSA and to assist those in need. As part of her job duties, she also writes articles for senior magazines and newsletters, along with media presentations, helps expedite customer resolutions, and assists with Agency reviews of Representative Payee organizations.

Throughout her career, she has considered herself fortunate to have had many outstanding mentors within the Agency, as well as coworkers and supervisors who have always been wonderful about sharing their knowledge and encouragement. She counts Leah Sommers, one of her initial coworkers, as one of her most influential mentors.

"I was a very young, naïve girl from the Mid-West, who started in Downtown San Francisco, working with the Aged, Blind, and Disabled with financial needs' Olsen recalls. "Leah took me under her wing, showing me the ropes, answering all my questions... helping me develop the work habits that I still hold to today...She showed me that it was okay to have fun at work and made the whole experience enjoyable and self-fulfilling".

For students looking for an internship or employment in a government agency, Olsen suggests checking the government website of the particular agency, but also contacting the local manager with

a resume and cover letter. She further details that students should explain their career aspirations in these documents, and let the agency know what they are interested in.



Sue Olsen, Public Affairs Specialist, SSA

Do you have a student or an alumni who would like to be featured in our Student Success Stories? If so, please contact Barbara Cosentino at B-Cosentino@neiu.