

OVAE Seeks Director of Policy, Research and Evaluation Staff (PRES)

OVAE seeks to employ a supervisor of a team of policy analysts and education research analysts. The incumbent will advise OVAE's deputy assistant secretary for policy and its assistant secretary in guiding policy development for programs and projects, the review and development of legislative options and draft language, analysis by staff of research findings and evaluation studies, and development of regulatory and program announcements. The incumbent will ensure that policy and evaluation efforts of the office are carried out with a high degree of accuracy, relevance, and professionalism. Applications are due **Jan. 23, 2013**.

For a complete description of the position, its requirements, responsibilities, grade level, salary range, and qualifications, go to the appropriate link.

If you are a current or former federal employee with career status, use: <https://www.usajobs.gov/GetJob/PrintPreview/335235700>.

If you are not a current or former federal employee with career status, use the link designed for all candidates: <https://www.usajobs.gov/GetJob/PrintPreview/335235900>.

Work-based Learning: New Report on Proven Model

The [National Academy Foundation](#) (NAF) has reported impressive [findings](#) including:

- In 2011, 97% of NAF seniors graduated from high school—compared to 50% graduation rate in the cities where most NAF academies are located.
- 4 out of 5 NAF students go on to college or other post-secondary education.
- 52% of NAF graduates earn bachelor's degrees in four years—compared with 32% nationally.

NAF recently released [Work-based Learning Exemplars: Worthwhile Internship Experiences for Students, Local Employers, and the Community](#). The report focuses on internships that NAF, a "network of career-themed academies that open doors for underserved high school students to viable careers," studied to identify best practices in work-based learning. NAF academies, offering a rigorous curriculum in history, literature, mathematics, and science in public schools nationwide, also offer NAF certification to their graduates who:

1. "Demonstrate career knowledge, skills, and proficiency through end-of-course and project assessments, each one directly informed by industry professionals; and
2. "Complete an internship or culminating work-based learning experience that has been assessed by their supervisor."

Each academy is organized around one of five career themes: engineering, finance, health sciences, hospitality and tourism, and information technology. In school year 2011-12, some 60,000 students attended 469 academies in 39 states, D.C. and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The students also worked with employees from over 2,500 companies.

The report features four academies, two in finance and one each in engineering, and hospitality and tourism.

The Southwest Miami High School Academy of Finance has a close partnership with the South Florida Educational Federal Credit Union to help students learn about money, investing it, and its benefits to a community. The credit union serves Miami-Dade County Public Schools employees, students, and families and the academy operates an in-school, student-run mini-branch of it. The credit union offers a free financial literacy program to students and teachers. It also offers an interview-skills "boot camp," to help students improve their chances to get the jobs they seek. Sixteen students become interns at the credit union itself, the largest of the academy's internship programs and one sought by as many as 200 applicants per year. Interns also run marketing programs for the credit union.

The Lancaster High School Academy of Finance in Lancaster, N.Y., has an internship program in which, during the summer, high school sophomores interview a variety of employers, shadow two or three of them, complete a career interest survey, give three hours of community service, and journal about it all to learn where they want to be an intern. This expanded program, called "Career Discovery," extends into other fields beyond finance. The connections the program has built and continues to build with local employers allow it to offer paid internships to all Academy of Finance juniors.

The Harmony Magnet Academy of Engineering in Porterville, Calif., is developing an internship to connect its students with college students in engineering and architecture and with industry employees in related fields through virtual internships. The interns, who will work on a single design project identified as "an education center for autism," will have tasks suited to their skills and useful to the participating firms. Porterville is a rural area, but through this use of technology the academy will be able to involve increasing numbers of students, who will earn high school or college credits and compete for stipends through the program.

As one of its work-based learning opportunities, the Skyline High School Academy of Hospitality & Tourism in Dallas, Texas, sent students to help the Dallas Farmers Market learn how it might increase a diminishing flow of customers by marketing itself better.

Students spent time observing and then interviewing both those selling produce and their customers. They presented their suggestions in a give-and-take forum to community business leaders, culminating in a 20-page report of recommendations for improving the viability of the market.

Using Prior-Learning Assessments to Meet the U.S. College Completion Goal?

In his first [State of the Union address](#) in February 2009, President Obama set as a goal that by 2020 America would once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world. According to Department [projections](#), the proportion of college graduates in the U.S. will need to increase by 50 percent by 2020 to meet this goal. One way this could occur is for 8 million more young adults, aged 25–34, to earn associate or bachelor's degrees by the deadline. In its projections the Department emphasizes that, to elevate the college completion rate by 50 percent, U.S. higher education will require far-reaching reforms "to widen college access, improve college readiness, ensure quality, and accelerate college completion."

One strategy to accelerate completion of college degrees is prior-learning assessment (PLA)—granting college credit for college-level learning that takes place outside of the traditional academic environment through the use of learning portfolios, exams and reviews of training programs. A recent Inside Higher Ed [article](#) notes that while PLA is not a new idea, several foundations, state college systems, and state and federal policymakers have been promoting expansion of its use, especially among adult students.

For instance, according to the article, a task force of the Tennessee Higher Education Commission released several [recommendations](#) last August to expand the use of PLA and make the process more consistent across the state. The task force recommended that credits earned for demonstrating prior learning be treated as are traditional course credits and count toward fulfilling major, general education, and prerequisite requirements. The task force also recommended that students be allowed to use prior-learning credits for up to half of their degree requirements. These recommendations are being considered by the governing boards of the state's colleges and universities. The State University of New York system also is working to expand the use of PLA on its 64 campuses, as are the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education and the University of Wisconsin System.

While policymakers and system administrators are examining PLA policies and standards, the expansion of PLAs as a college completion strategy remains controversial, as the article points out. Some argue that accelerating college completion through PLAs will result in a deterioration of the quality of higher education, and that the strategy emphasizes quantity of graduates over the quality of learning and skill development. The debate about and use of PLAs and other higher education reform strategies, such as the use of online courses and competency-based credentialing, may increase in intensity as the race to achieve the president's college completion goal heats up.

Applications Due Jan. 29 for ED's Teaching Ambassador Fellowships

Applications for the U.S. Department of Education's [Washington](#) and [Classroom](#) Teaching Ambassador Fellowship are **due Jan. 29, 2013**, and are available online. Positions are paid for one year on a full- or part-time basis. Teaching Ambassadors are outstanding teachers with a record of leadership, strong communication skills, and policy insights who will contribute their classroom expertise to the national dialogue and facilitate discussions with educators across the country. Potential fellows must have received strong support from their professional communities and have participated in training or development activities that sharpen their capacities to learn quickly about and contribute to discussions on education policy. More information about the program and application is available at <http://www.ed.gov/programs/teacherfellowship>.

Small Business Innovation Research Program Solicitations: FY2013 Proposals Due Feb. 5

The Department's Institute of Education Sciences (IES) announces its annual competition of the Institute's Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) program, which provides funding to firms and partners for the development and evaluation of commercially viable education technology products. The program released three Fiscal Year 2013 solicitations, **each due by 2 P.M. EST, on Feb. 5, 2013**:

Phase I is a request for proposals for the development of prototypes of education technology products to improve student learning in education and special education settings.

Fast-Track is a request for proposals for the development of education technology products designed to improve student learning in education and special education settings.

Phase I for Games is a solicitation released by IES in partnership with the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) requesting proposals for the development and evaluation of commercially viable education technology games, in four select topic areas, to support student learning and outcomes in education and special education settings.