

NASA Advisory Council Recommendation

Broadening the Employment Base for NASA Centers 2011-03-04 (C-01)

Recommendation:

The Council recommends that NASA Centers further broaden recruitment for new engineers and scientists beyond their local colleges and universities to increase the diversity and quality of the workforce.

Major Reasons for the Recommendation:

Data supplied to the NASA Advisory Council show that hiring of scientists and engineers at NASA Centers is heavily biased toward local colleges and universities, perhaps because of the practice of hiring largely through the Cooperative Education (Co-op) program at the Centers. While this is a natural and even laudable practice, the lack of an equal effort to recruit across the Nation can deprive the Centers of the best engineers and scientists emerging from the country's most highly rated institutions.

Consequences of No Action on the Recommendation:

NASA will not enjoy the benefits of a geographically diverse workforce and may miss opportunities to hire the most talented and creative scientists and engineers. This could mean missed opportunities in future development and innovations.

NASA Response:

NASA concurs with this recommendation. NASA is highly committed to diversity recruitment, to include geographic diversity. NASA's current decentralized recruitment structure provides Centers with the flexibility to identify their individual Center's needs and conduct targeted recruitment to fill their positions. However, with this flexibility, Centers have relied on recruiting at the institutions that have proven successful in the past to obtain their science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) talent.

The Office of Human Capital Management (OHCM) recognizes that NASA's current recruitment structure should be modified to revitalize our recruitment efforts. Accordingly, OHCM is currently in the process of reviewing the Agency's recruitment program, with a special focus on determining the Agency's personnel and competency skills gaps that require increased attention.

Through a strategic review of NASA's recruitment program, OHCM will identify the most advantageous and effective recruitment structure for the Agency. We will examine our current decentralized method, explore a corporate-centralized approach, and possibly blend those two recruitment approaches in order to develop a more effective strategy that will produce a high-quality, diverse STEM talent pool for NASA.

During this transitional phase for NASA, it is imperative that we aim to cast a wider net to capture the most talented and creative STEM applicants. OHCM will collaborate with NASA

Enclosure

Centers, along with the Office of Education and the Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity, as we move forward in our strategic recruitment planning. Our strategies will include working to broaden our recruitment base and include those high-quality STEM institutions from which NASA may not have recruited in the past.

Additionally, OHCM will need to align its efforts consistent with various Government-wide drivers that will impact our future recruitment programs. Recent initiatives include the Presidential Executive Orders instituting the Pathways Programs and increasing the focus on diversity and inclusion in Federal personnel programs.

Pathways Programs:

NASA will use the new Pathways Programs (the Internship, Recent Graduate, and Presidential Management Fellows Programs) to hire talented students and recent graduates as part of an overall workforce planning strategy. These new programs will allow NASA to bring students on board in structured developmental programs that will inspire their interest in seeking a more permanent service with the Agency. One of the key components of the new programs is the requirement for agencies to broaden their public notice of student opportunities to reach a wider range of candidates. Broadening recruitment efforts beyond local colleges and universities will be an effective strategy to meet this requirement.

Diversity and Inclusion:

To eliminate demographic group imbalances and improve our workforce diversity NASA's diversity and inclusion recruiting strategies will include a greater focus on underrepresented populations in the STEM fields. OHCM will assess how NASA attracts qualified candidates where the diversity of the STEM applicant pool is less than desirable; specifically with regard to women and minorities. Students' exposure to peers with diverse backgrounds and views provides them with greater personal development and challenge, broadens their perspectives, and helps develop the great minds of the "NASA of the Future."