

Higher Education Multicultural Scholars Program (MSP)

FY 2010 Request for Applications

APPLICATION DEADLINE: July 28, 2010

 **U.S. Department of Agriculture**
National Institute of Food and Agriculture

**NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE;
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

HIGHER EDUCATION MULTICULTURAL SCHOLARS PROGRAM (MSP)

INITIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE: This program is listed in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance under 10.220.

DATES: Applications must be received by close of business (COB) on July 28, 2010 (5:00 p.m. Eastern Time). Applications received after this deadline will normally not be considered for funding. Comments regarding this request for applications (RFA) are requested within six months from the issuance of this notice. Comments received after that date will be considered to the extent practicable.

STAKEHOLDER INPUT: The National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) is requesting comments regarding this RFA from any interested party. These comments will be considered in the development of the next RFA for the program, if applicable, and will be used to meet the requirements of section 103(c)(2) of the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 (7 U.S.C. 7613(c)(2)). This section requires the Secretary to solicit and consider input on a current RFA from persons who conduct or use agricultural research, education and extension for use in formulating future RFAs for competitive programs. Written stakeholder comments on this RFA should be submitted in accordance with the deadline set forth in the DATES portion of this Notice.

Written stakeholder comments should be submitted by mail to: Policy and Oversight Branch; Office of Extramural Programs; National Institute of Food and Agriculture; USDA; STOP 2299; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW; Washington, DC 20250-2299; or via e-mail to: RFP-OEP@nifa.usda.gov. (This e-mail address is intended only for receiving comments regarding this RFA and not requesting information or forms.) In your comments, please state that you are responding to the Higher Education Multicultural Scholars Program RFA.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: NIFA announces the availability of grant funds and requests applications for the Higher Education Multicultural Scholars Program (MSP) for fiscal year (FY) 2010 to conduct undergraduate scholarship programs to meet national and international needs for training food and agricultural scientists and professionals, or professionals in rural economic, community, and business development. In FY 2010, NIFA is soliciting applications for: (1) Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (D.V.M.) and/or undergraduate level degree in food and agricultural sciences; and (2) for Special Experiential Learning (SEL) opportunities for eligible USDA Higher Education Multicultural Scholars. **Applicants should be institutions that confer an undergraduate degree in at least one of the disciplines of food and agricultural sciences and/or D.V.M., first professional degree.** The amount available for support of this program in FY 2010 is approximately \$1.1 million. Awards are made to eligible colleges, universities, and research foundations. **Individuals are not eligible to apply for these grants to support their baccalaureate or Doctor of Veterinary Medicine education.**

This notice identifies the objectives for MSP projects, the eligibility criteria for projects and applicants, and the application forms and associated instructions needed to apply for an MSP grant. NIFA additionally requests stakeholder input from any interested party for use in the development of the next RFA for this program.

In FY 2010, special emphasis is placed on training that will address the changing demographics of the nation and the development of 21st century skills in USDA mission areas that include STEM disciplines and social sciences. The next generation workforce in USDA mission sciences will be multicultural, and as for all Americans, their educational development will need to provide success tools to learn, thrive, and creatively and innovatively contribute to their areas of emphasis, profession, and U.S. global competitiveness.

Table of Contents

PART I—FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION.....	5
A. Legislative Authority and Background.....	5
B. Purpose and Priorities	5
C. Program Area Description	12
PART II—AWARD INFORMATION.....	18
A. Available Funding.....	18
B. Types of Applications	18
C. Project Types.....	18
PART III—ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION.....	21
A. Eligible Applicants	21
B. Cost Sharing or Matching.....	21
PART IV—APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION.....	22
A. Electronic Application Package.....	22
B. Content and Form of Application Submission.....	23
C. Submission Dates and Times	34
D. Funding Restrictions.....	34
E. Other Submission Requirements.....	35
PART V—APPLICATION REVIEW REQUIREMENTS	36
A. General.....	36
B. Evaluation Criteria	36
C. Conflicts of Interest and Confidentiality.....	40
D. Organizational Management Information.....	41
PART VI—AWARD ADMINISTRATION.....	42
A. General.....	42
B. Award Notice	42
C. Administrative and National Policy Requirements.....	43
D. Expected Program Outputs and Reporting Requirements	44
PART VII—AGENCY CONTACT	47
PART VIII—OTHER INFORMATION.....	48
A. Access to Review Information.....	48
B. Use of Funds; Changes	48
C. Confidential Aspects of Applications and Awards.....	49
D. Regulatory Information.....	49
E. Definitions.....	49
Application Submission Checklist	49

PART I—FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority and Background

Legislative authority for this program is contained in section 1417 of the National Agricultural Research, Extension and Teaching Policy Act of 1977 (NARETPA) (99 Stat. 1548; 7 U.S.C. 3152). USDA/NIFA administers this federal assistance grant program to support food and agricultural sciences baccalaureate and Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (D.V.M.) degree training of the next generation of scientists, policy makers, and educators in the Food and Agricultural Sciences. USDA initiated the Higher Education Multicultural Scholars Program in FY 1994. This program, functioning collaboratively with eligible higher education institutions, is developing intellectual capital to secure the preeminence of U.S. food and agricultural systems.

The MSP began as a “minority scholars program” funded by Congress in FY 1994 with approximately \$1,000,000 per FY in annual appropriations. Congress provided these funds to USDA for obligation without fiscal year limitation. In FY 1995, NIFA created the Higher Education Minority Scholars Program and awarded nearly \$3,500,000 in competitive grants to eligible institutions to fund undergraduate scholarships for students from minority groups that are traditionally underrepresented and underserved in the food and agricultural sciences. In FY 1999, Congress changed the statutory language of the authorization to the “Higher Education Multicultural Scholars Program,” and USDA awarded approximately \$1.9 million in new competitive grants that same FY. New competitions have been held annually since FY 2005 with annual appropriations of approximately \$1.2 million.

B. Purpose and Priorities

The purpose of the Higher Education Multicultural Scholars Program, as outlined in this RFA, is to provide scholarships to support recruiting, engaging, retaining, mentoring, and training committed, **eligible multicultural scholars**, resulting in either baccalaureate degrees within the food and agricultural sciences disciplines or the D.V.M. degree. The scholarships are intended to encourage outstanding students from groups that are traditionally underrepresented and underserved in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) specifically for the USDA mission sciences, to pursue and complete baccalaureate degrees in food and agricultural sciences, or achieve a D.V.M. and pipeline into careers that yield a **diverse work force at senior and highly skilled levels**, in USDA mission areas that include STEM disciplines and social sciences.

Postsecondary participation and graduation rates of students in several racial and ethnic groups are substantially below those of students who are White and not of Hispanic origin. 2002 data from the U.S. Census Bureau indicates that White, non-Hispanic persons represent 70.9 percent of the total population of the United States and 62.5 percent of the college-aged population 18 to 24 years of age, and received 78.8 percent of all bachelor degrees, and 87 percent of the baccalaureate degrees in the food and agricultural sciences awarded by colleges of agriculture, renewable natural resources, and forestry. African-Americans represent 12.3 percent of the total population and 14.3 percent of the 18 to 24 years of age, but received 7.5 percent of all

baccalaureate degrees and only 2.8 percent of the food and agricultural science baccalaureate degrees. Hispanics were also underrepresented. At 12.5 percent of the total population and 17.7 percent of the traditional college-age population of 18 to 24 years of age, Hispanics received only 4.6 percent of all baccalaureate degrees and 3.3 percent of the baccalaureate degrees in the food and agricultural sciences. For American Indian and Alaskan Native students, the percentages for total population, 18 to 24 years of age, are 0.9 percent and 1.1 percent, yet for baccalaureate degrees in the food and agricultural sciences, graduates were 0.6 percent each from these groups. For Asians and Pacific Islanders, the percentages for the traditional college-age population of 18 to 24 years of age were 3.7 percent and 4.4 percent. The percentage of Asians and Pacific Islanders receiving food and agricultural science baccalaureate degrees were 5.2 percent and 4.0 percent, respectively.

According to the data published by the Food and Agricultural Education Information System (FAEIS, 2005) for the period 2001 to 2002, of the reported baccalaureate degrees awarded in the Food and Agricultural Sciences (all disciplines, including Veterinary Medicine), less than 10 percent were earned by underrepresented and underserved groups (gender, ethnicity, race or first generation college). Further, it is projected (Employment Opportunities for College Graduates in the Food and Agricultural Sciences, United States, 2005 to 2010 - Purdue University and USDA, 2005) that there will be an increase of approximately 10,000 employment opportunities for college graduates in the food and agricultural sciences by . The data published by FAEIS (2006) [http://faeis.ahnrit.vt.edu/newsletter/hort/faeis_newsletter_oct_06_hort.html] indicate that there are gaps that need to be addressed. It is clear that a large percentage of traditionally underrepresented and underserved groups in the Nation's population are not being recruited and matriculated in the food and agricultural sciences disciplines.

According to data published by the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, for the academic year 2006/2007, the total awarded Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degrees was 2,445. Of that total, the demographics for recipients reflected no parity with the U.S. census data. The breakdown of the 2006/2007 DVM degree recipients: 2,228 were White; 55 were Black; 67 were Hispanic; 12 were American Indian/Alaska Native; and 70 were Asian/Pacific Islander (Source: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, 2010).

The 2008 enrollment in Doctor of Veterinary Medicine totaled 10,522 comprised of 8,161 female and 2,361 male students. The demographic breakdown of the 10,522 enrolled students at the 28 U.S. Veterinary Colleges is: 8,842 White, 249 Black, 424 Asian, 390 Hispanic, 89 Native American, 135 Unspecified Minority, 36 Non-U.S. Citizen and 357 were of unknown race/ethnicity (Source: FAEIS, 2010).

In 2008, for all institution types, FAEIS (2010) data show 15,117 baccalaureate degrees were awarded in food, agriculture and related sciences, with 7,222 graduates male, 6,004 female, and 1,891 for whom gender was not reported. Of the 15,117 B.S. degrees in food, agriculture and related sciences, 1862 institutions awarded a total of 11,228 in 2008. For the 1862 Institution degree recipients, 8,229 were White, 262 Black, 309 Asian, 450 Hispanic, 42 Native American, 8 Native Hawaiian, 47 Unspecified Minority, 113 to Non-US Citizen, and 1,768 were of Unknown

Ethnicity. The 1890 institutions awarded a total of 307 baccalaureate degrees in food, agriculture and related sciences to 46 White, 207 Black, 1 Asian, 8 Hispanic, 1 Native American, 3 Non-US Citizen, and 41 degree recipients were of Unknown Ethnicity. Non-Land Grant institutions awarded a total of 3,574 baccalaureate degrees in food, agriculture and related sciences, 2,518 to White, 15 to Black, 20 to Asian, 136 to Hispanic, 19 to Native American, 2 to Unspecified Minority, 12 to Non-US citizen, and 852 recipients were of unknown ethnicity. Private institutions awarded a total of eight baccalaureate degrees in food, agriculture and related sciences to 1 Black and 7 White recipients. Given the shifting demographics and the U.S. becoming more multicultural and multiethnic, the critical impact of USDA's investments through the MSP grant projects will be in enabling an educated, diverse U.S. society with high capacity to compete globally.

The goal of the MSP grant program is to increase the multicultural, next-generation work force with 21st century skills in USDA mission areas that include STEM disciplines and social sciences. Annually, MSP training projects will support at least 50 MSP Scholars, with participation of students from groups traditionally underrepresented in the highly trained, STEM technical workforce specifically for food, agricultural and related sciences, and Veterinary Medicine. Specifically, the MSP grants program 2015 performance target is for a 10 annual percent increase in participation in USDA mission areas by any group traditionally under represented – Alaskan Native, American Indian, Asian-American, Black, Hispanic American, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, or any other group – whose representation among food and agricultural professionals in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) is disproportionately less than their proportion in the general population as indicated in standard statistical references, or as documented on a case-by-case basis by national survey data from: (A) The most current edition of the Department of Education's Digest of Education Statistics; (B) The National Research Council's Doctorate Recipients from United States Universities; (C) the National Science Foundation, Division of Science Resources Statistics, National Survey of College Graduates; or (D) Other **standard statistical references, as documented by national survey data like the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Agricultural Education Information Systems; U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics; and U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics.**

The MSP training grants will:

- (i) Advance the national STEM education achievement, by supporting at least fifty (50) students, representing a multicultural pool of experts entering the future food and agricultural scientific and professional workforce, and advance the educational achievement of all Americans;
- (ii) Support America's academic competitiveness in STEM by supporting at least fifty (50) scholarships in D.V.M. and/or undergraduate degree level training grounded in curricula to advance food and agricultural sciences;
- (iii) Sustain and increase the volume of qualified multicultural students from traditionally underrepresented and underserved groups pursuing undergraduate/D.V.M. training programs that have the highest chance for success as assessed through competitive peer review; and

(iv) Help the United States of America achieve the objective of workforce diversity in STEM fields within the Federal government and the private sector by funding experiential learning opportunities in the public and private sectors for MSP Scholars.

The MSP provides competitive grants to colleges and universities that have (1) a demonstrable capacity to carry out the teaching of the food and agricultural sciences, and (2) unique capabilities for achieving representation of diverse, multicultural groups in the USDA mission areas. Applications are sought for student training that: (i) will prepare graduates to meet the demand for highly qualified personnel entering the workforce in the food and agricultural sciences domain; (ii) will pipeline more undergraduates into graduate education in USDA mission sciences; (iii) will address the substantial gap between White, American Indian, Black, and Hispanic populations entering graduate schools to enable the American system of higher education to remain globally competitive; (iv) will engage and promote students in success within food, agricultural and related science disciplines at the undergraduate/DVM level; and (v) will focus on student learning, e.g., academic preparation, social support structure (tutoring, mentoring, experiential opportunities in research and study abroad), and professional mentoring to ensure matriculation and entry into food and agricultural sciences areas of graduate education or the workforce.

In addition to course-work and related experiences that prepare students for graduation, grantee institutions will be expected to identify and develop opportunities through partnerships with food and agricultural research programs at other academic institutions, and cooperate with public and private entities, to ensure Scholars are provided with an increase in exposure to a wide spectrum of careers in the food and agricultural sciences. Such plans should include increasing knowledge about academic, governmental, private sector and non-profit enterprise that involve Scholars and will strengthen the likelihood of successfully meeting the goals of the MSP grants.

Finally, the MSP provides funding through Special Experiential Learning (SEL) opportunities to further the development of student scientific and professional competencies through experiential learning programs that provide MSP Scholars with opportunities to solve complex problems, including policy development and management, in the context of real-world situations. SEL is a component of the MSP competitive grants program that will support MSP Scholars for one- or two-year experiential learning activities that are not normally available to other students within the institution.

The objectives of the FY 2010 MSP grants are to work collaboratively with eligible institutions, to:

(1) Provide scholarship support for training students at the baccalaureate and D.V.M. levels, to pipeline those students into graduate education in nationally identified expertise shortage areas or into the workforce in the food and agricultural sciences;

(2) Graduate an increased number of workforce-ready and globally competitive Scholars in the food and agricultural sciences with skills to participate in: (a) agronomy to support a bioenergy economy; (b) sustainable crop management and conservation; (c) agricultural bioprocessing/bioenergy byproducts utilization; (d) agricultural food, or animal or crop

biosecurity, especially to assess risks and develop guidelines for evaluating and monitoring to enhance security; and/or (e) specialty crops;

(3) Increase the percentage of undergraduate degrees awarded in the food and agricultural sciences relative to the number of undergraduate degrees in all fields of study;

(4) Increase by 50, the number of outstanding students, including those from traditionally underrepresented and underserved groups, annually entering D.V.M. and/or undergraduate training in higher education in the food and agricultural sciences;

(5) Support undergraduate/D.V.M. training to develop core competencies in 50 MSP Scholars to meet the emerging workforce demands in the food and agricultural sciences; and

(6) Support SELs securing enhanced training in food and agricultural sciences for 15 eligible MSP Scholars.

Applications are being solicited for the Higher Education Multicultural Scholars Program to support undergraduate and veterinary (first professional) training scholarships for MSP for both baccalaureate and D.V.M. levels of study in the identified Program Areas of Emphasis for meeting the goals of the MSP grants. Applications are also being solicited for SEL funding for USDA MSP Scholars.

FY 2010 MSP Program Areas of Emphasis

(1) **Veterinary Medicine (First Professional Degree in Veterinary Medicine i.e., D.V.M.)** – specifically targeted is professional entry in **large animal veterinary medicine**;

(2) **Agricultural Sciences and Engineering** – specifically in agronomy, agricultural process engineering, agricultural biotechnology, animal science, crop sciences, and related sciences to address the workforce demands for expertise to meet demands relevant to USDA mission areas that include STEM disciplines and social sciences;

(3) **Natural Resource Sciences Training** – particularly transdisciplinary training programs in sciences for global food security, food and agricultural sustainability to find solutions for real world issues relating to water, renewable energy, effects of climate change on environmental sustainability – including green jobs, and land use management relating to food, feed, and fiber;

(4) **Human Sciences Training** – specifically addressing the rural/urban interface as it pertains to food and agricultural sciences, including rural economic prosperity, specialty crops and markets and trade, agricultural communication, and the links to developing economic and social policy;

(5) **Food Science and Human Nutrition Training** – specifically focused on development of food and agricultural science expertise to address diet, nutrition for improved health – reducing childhood obesity, and improving food quality; and

(6) **Agrosecurity Science Training** – specifically addressing food and agricultural science impacts on animal and crop health, including insect and pest management.

Institutions that have not previously applied are especially encouraged to do so. (See eligibility information in Part III of this RFA.) **Applicants should be institutions that confer a baccalaureate degree in at least one of the areas of food and agricultural sciences, and/or Doctor of Veterinary Medicine.** Awards are made to eligible colleges and universities. **Individuals are not eligible to apply for these grants to support their D.V.M. and/or baccalaureate education in food and agricultural sciences.**

Applicants are strongly encouraged to respond to this request with training that will use USDA investment to:

(1) Establish innovative frameworks, grounded in curricula, for D.V.M. and/or undergraduate training with collaborative knowledge and technology transfer components that transcend traditional disciplinary boundaries in agriculture (NOTE: innovative means new or unique or creative approaches to training multicultural students that matriculate individuals with, in additions to core competencies, the ability to understand and function in capacities that add valuable expertise to meet the needs identified in the MSP Program Areas of Emphasis (included in this section);

(2) Establish D.V.M. and/or baccalaureate degree programs in which Scholars can pursue related summer research opportunities (especially at other colleges/universities, industry or federal agencies, non-profit enterprise); or other learning opportunities in topics related to the identified Program Areas of Emphasis (included in this section);

(3) Provide professional mentoring in D.V.M. and/or undergraduate degree programs for areas relating to: bioenergy, agrosecurity; food, agricultural biotechnology and environmental sustainability; human nutrition and obesity;

(4) Increase the numbers of students from multiculturally (economic, social, cultural, racial, ethnic, geographical, gender, traditionally underserved populations) diverse groups who enter baccalaureate and/or D.V.M. degree level programs and matriculate with scientific and professional competence to meet the increasingly technologically advanced needs of the 21st century food and agricultural systems workforce;

(5) Partner to provide exceptional D.V.M. and/or undergraduate training in the food and agricultural sciences to develop human capital to participate in meeting the mission of the USDA and the challenges that NIFA is addressing: (i) Keep American agriculture competitive while ending world hunger, (ii) Improve nutrition and end child obesity, (iii) Improve food safety for all Americans, (iv) Secure America's energy future, and (v) Mitigate and adapt to climate change;

(6) Provide relevant leadership, research, management and professional learning experiences for D.V.M. and/or undergraduate training in such a way as to demonstrate the potential for USDA

MSP Scholars to participate in the emerging emphasis areas requiring knowledge and technical skills in food and agricultural science disciplines where the connections that link training project goals to workforce outcomes are clearly outlined; and

(7) Develop performance measures for evaluating the overall effectiveness of the D.V.M. and/or undergraduate training that USDA Higher Education Multicultural Scholars receive, while developing expertise in the Program Areas of Emphasis included in this section, that will demonstrate proficiency in pipelining to workforce or further training; have the identified core competencies for: (a) subject matter and related disciplines; (b) skilled in 21st century communication; and (c) aptitude to operate in a globally-oriented and technologically-driven world economy.

Additionally, applicants to the MSP grants program will consider the contribution of proposed training grants to preparing outstanding multicultural scholars to meet the national demand for 21st century skills and America's competitiveness in the global science and technology economy. A new National Academies Report on [*The New Biology for the 21st Century: Ensuring the United State Leads the Coming Biology Revolution*](#) is a highly recommended reference as it provides vision for addressing the major societal challenges of food, climate, energy, and health. The report lays out potential for the coordinated and focused approach needed, using integrative support and ownership, to address fundamental problems faced by society. The MSP grant program is an opportunity to give attention to the recommendations to produce future innovations and innovators in STEM fields integral to the food and agricultural systems domain.

The National Academy of Science 2009 report entitled, *Transforming Agricultural Education for a Changing World* recommends that academic institutions with undergraduate programs in agriculture implement nine steps to better meet the needs of students, employers, and the broader society. For information on the full report, please refer to http://dels.nas.edu/ag_education/report.shtml and click on recommendations.

A 2009 white paper on Human Capacity Development was prepared by the Academic Programs Section of the Association of Public and Land Grant Universities. The MSP grants can impact the numbers of people including underrepresented and underserved minorities, who enter college to pursue degrees in food, agricultural and related sciences, by leveraging K-12 activities of beneficiaries of funded MSP projects. MSP Scholars can have enormous influence on grade students and their parents, to see that training in food, agricultural and related sciences can lead to new careers, robust personal and community prosperity, and advance America's competitiveness. Copies of the white paper entitled "Human Capacity Development - The Road to Global Competitiveness and Leadership in Food, Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences (FANRRS)," can be found at: <http://www.aplu.org/NetCommunity/Document.Doc?id=1639>.

More information about USDA mission, NIFA and the MSP grants program can be found on the following respective web sites: www.usda.gov, www.nifa.usda.gov, and <http://www.nifa.usda.gov/funding/msp/msp.html>. Two informational teleconferences with the Federal Program Officer will occur on Wednesday, May 19th and Wednesday, June 16th 2010

(time 3:00 p.m. Eastern (New York) Standard Time). Interested applicants should register by contacting MSP@nifa.usda.gov and include in the Subject line of the e-mail: “Interested in MSP Teleconference – Need Details” and provide the interested parties’ name, institution and telephone number in the body of the e-mail. **Where possible, people from the same institution should try to call in using one telephone line.**

C. Program Area Description

Under the FY 2010 program, NIFA intends to support training for baccalaureate degrees within the food and agricultural sciences disciplines and/or the D.V.M. degree with MSP grants and SEL awards, if applicable.

a. Multicultural Scholarship Program Grants

To allow for maximum flexibility under the program, institutions may apply for funds to support any combination of two-, three-, and/or four-year scholarships. In lieu of indirect costs, institutions may receive an annual cost-of-education allowance for each Scholar supported by an award.

Applicants are encouraged to provide a five-year budget with a zero dollar budget for any year where support is not allocated. Applicants should factor into their application, a recruitment interval to meet the program requirements. **The statutory limit for this program is 5-years. No extensions beyond the five-year period are allowed.** Institutions may, however, apply and compete for new awards in any fiscal year(s) in which appropriated funds are available for this program.

(1) Student Eligibility as Beneficiary Scholars

Awards to scholars are made by eligible institutions (grantees) receiving funds under this program. **No NIFA awards will be made directly to students; therefore, students cannot apply directly to USDA/NIFA for scholarships.** Persons eligible to receive scholarships must:

(a) be citizens or nationals of the United States as determined in accordance with Federal law (see Part VIII, E, Definitions); (b) have been accepted for enrollment, or be enrolled, at an institution awarded a project grant under this program, or at a two-year institution which has entered into an articulation agreement, bridging agreement, or other type of collaborative arrangement with a baccalaureate-level institution that has been awarded a project grant under this program; (c) be newly enrolled in a course of study leading to a baccalaureate degree, or to a DVM degree, in the food and agricultural sciences; (d) not have been enrolled previously in an academic program in the food and agricultural sciences at the same degree level; and (e) have a strong interest, as judged by the institution, in pursuing a baccalaureate degree, or DVM degree, in the food and agricultural sciences, and in a career as a food or agricultural scientist or professional.

A MSP Scholar must be enrolled as a full-time student, as defined by the institution, in a program of study in the food and agricultural sciences during each semester or quarter that he/she receives MSP support. However, the requirements for formal registration during part of this tenure may be waived if permitted by the policy of the grantee, provided that the MSP Scholar is making satisfactory progress toward degree completion and remains engaged in appropriate full-time scholarship activities such as study abroad experiences or internships. MSP Scholars are entitled to the normal term breaks and holidays observed by the institution. MSP Scholars may, but are not required to, take summer classes.

First-year DVM degree students and freshmen (including those participating in the program at two-year institutions) receiving scholarships may be supported for a total of four academic years (defined as eight semesters or 12 quarters of full-time study) within the five-year grant period, provided they maintain their eligibility. Enrolled students changing their majors to a discipline in the food and agricultural sciences, transfer students from two-year and baccalaureate-level institutions, and students enrolling at the grantee institution, may be supported for a proportional number of years based upon their academic level at the time they enter the program (i.e., three years for sophomores and two years for juniors), provided they maintain their eligibility under the program. For Scholars finishing the baccalaureate program early, the institution has options for utilizing the unexpended monies prior to the expiration of the grant.

In summary, students are to be supported in the following manner – students entering as Freshmen (or First-Year DVM) are to receive support for 4 years, students entering as sophomores in the food and agricultural sciences for the first time are to receive support for 3 years, students entering as juniors in the food and agricultural sciences program are to receive support for 2 years.

The scholarship should be awarded to the same student for the time that correlates with that student's academic classification in a food and agricultural science baccalaureate program or in the DVM program.

Scholars may be selected, and MSP scholarships awarded, without regard to student financial need. Selection of students to receive scholarships will be based on academic ability, commitment to a career in the food and agricultural sciences, and enhancement of cultural diversity. Other considerations may include a student's status as a first-generation college student, chosen major in relation to the needs of the college or university, or projected human resource requirements of the food and agriculture industry. Students from all racial and ethnic groups are eligible for scholarships.

A MSP Scholar may seek and accept employment during the grant period; however, the intent of the program is for MSP Scholars to devote their full energies to their studies wherever possible. Therefore, grantee institutions are expected to monitor MSP Scholars' employment demands so their academic progress is not jeopardized.

A MSP Scholar may accept other grants and awards that support his/her academic program provided such support is for expenditures other than those supported by USDA/NIFA.

(2) Scholarship Appointments and Tenure

Within the framework of these guidelines, all decisions with respect to the appointment of MSP Scholars will be made by grantees. **Scholars must be identified and Scholarships must be awarded within twelve (12) months of the effective start date of a grant.** Grantee must notify and obtain approval from the Program Office Point-of-Contact if scholarship funds cannot be allocated within this twelve-month period. Failure to obtain this approval will result in the loss of funding for the unawarded scholarships. Institutions will be required to refund monies associated with unawarded Scholarships to NIFA. Undergraduate and/or D.V.M. scholarship appointments may be held only by persons who enroll and pursue a full-time D.V.M. or baccalaureate degree within the food and agricultural sciences disciplines supported by the grant. It is the responsibility of each grantee institution to award scholarships to students of outstanding academic ability deemed likely to graduate.

The grantee institution should only select MSP Scholars who are (1) making satisfactory academic progress and (2) planning to pursue a career related to the food and agricultural sciences. If the institution finds it necessary to terminate support of a MSP Scholar for academic or disciplinary reasons, or by decision on the part of the MSP Scholar, the MSP Scholar becomes ineligible for future assistance under the program.

Once accepted to the program, **MSP Scholars must maintain their eligibility** by (1) continuing their enrollment as a full-time student, as defined by each grantee institution, leading to an undergraduate degree in a discipline in the food and agricultural sciences or DVM; (2) maintaining good academic standing and satisfactory degree progress as determined by their institution; and (3) through Education Outreach activities be engaged in service learning projects, with populations from groups traditionally underrepresented and underserved in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) disciplines, that will lead to: (a) increased literacy of the public in food and agricultural sciences; (b) increased understanding of food and agricultural science concepts for students in Grades Pre-K through 12; or (c) increased recruitment of students from 2-Year postsecondary programs into 4-Year higher education food and agricultural sciences training programs and/or the food and agricultural sciences workforce. These projects can include development communication materials, using social media that are reviewed by a mentor, prior to being published digitally.

MSP monies budgeted for scholarship awards shall be used by the grantee to pay, in order of payment precedence: MSP Scholars' tuition and mandatory fees; on-campus room and board; off-campus room and board; books and supplies; other aligned broader context activities; and other student educational expenses. Any remaining scholarship funds shall be paid by the grantee to the MSP Scholar as a stipend according to standard institutional procedures. Each four-year grantee institution is responsible for disbursing grant funds to any MSP Scholars at collaborating two-year institutions.

If funds remain as a result of MSP Scholars completing their studies early or scholarships being terminated prematurely, such funds may be used, within the time remaining on the award to:

(1) support a MSP Scholar's pursuit of additional education including graduate study in the food and agricultural sciences (especially in instances where the MSP Scholars have completed baccalaureate or DVM degree requirements early); (2) recruit and support a replacement MSP Scholar(s) provided that remaining funds are sufficient to support a MSP Scholar for at least one semester/quarter of study; or (3) offer enrichment activities for MSP Scholars. Such funds may not be used to increase the stipend amounts for current MSP Scholars.

For this program, a replacement MSP Scholar is a student who is recruited into the program, under the aegis of a specific MSP Scholarship, to take the place of a MSP Scholar who left the program prematurely, e.g., due to academic difficulty, disciplinary action, transfer to another institution, personal necessity, or early graduation. The tenure of such a replacement MSP Scholar is limited to whatever time is remaining on the grant before it expires; however, an institution may not appoint a replacement MSP Scholar unless there is time for the student to complete at least one semester/quarter of study before the expiration date of the grant. Replacement MSP Scholars must meet all of the eligibility criteria and other requirements established for MSP Scholar selection and are subject to the same provisions as other MSP Scholars during their tenure in the program. Replacement MSP Scholars are entitled, during their tenure, to the same benefits that other MSP Scholars receive from the grant award and MSP grants Program. Institutions may, but are not required to, continue a replacement MSP Scholar's tuition and other benefits beyond the expiration date of the grant using institutional or other funds.

A MSP Scholar who finds it necessary to interrupt his/her program of study because of health, personal situation, outside employment, or another non-academic and non-disciplinary reason must be allowed to resume funded study at any time within 12 months of the interruption, provided there is adequate time remaining before the award expires. A MSP Scholar who finds it necessary to interrupt his/her program of study more than one time cannot exceed a total of 12 months cumulative leave status without forfeiting MSP eligibility.

Should a MSP Scholar require additional time beyond the grant period to complete his or her degree, it is expected that the grantee will endeavor to continue supporting the MSP Scholar through other means.

A MSP Scholar at a two-year institution, who participates in the MSP through an articulation agreement, bridging agreement, or other type of collaborative arrangement with a four-year grantee institution, is subject to the same provisions as a MSP Scholar at the four-year grantee institution.

b. Special Experiential Learning (SEL) Funding

SEL funded activities may include, but are not limited to, those that provide opportunities for eligible MSP Scholars to: (a) participate in research projects focused on multidisciplinary topics of national importance at institutions or organizations other than their own; (b) complete apprenticeships, internships, or similar participatory learning experiences including, but not

limited to, practicum for DVM students, internships abroad or externships in the private or public sector; and (c) complete study abroad programs relevant to their majors.

SEL funds may be used only to pay living expenses, travel expenses, additional tuition (e.g., practicum credits for courses that would not have been taken if not for this experiential learning activity), and/or a cash stipend for SEL-supported Scholars during SEL-approved experiential learning activities. SEL funds cannot be used to increase annual stipend amounts for MSP Scholars participating in activities that have already been approved and funded by the MSP Program.

(1) SEL Funding Eligibility

In FY 2010, applications for SEL funding may be submitted by colleges and universities that: (1) are current MSP grantees, who have at least one year remaining in his/her grant period, to support a current, eligible MSP Scholar, under Award Category 3; and (2) new applicants, under Award Category No. 1 (see Part II, C, 1), for the MSP Program may propose SEL opportunities for future To-Be-Recruited MSP Scholars. **Applicants must use a stand-alone application to request SEL for current, eligible MSP Scholars.**

(a) **Current MSP Scholars.** To be eligible to receive SEL support, a current Scholar: (1) must have completed one academic year of full-time study, as defined by their institution, under the MSP appointment; (2) must have sufficient time remaining in their grant to complete proposed experiential learning activities prior to the termination of their award; and (3) must have a NIFA Form 2010 – Student Appointment Form for the current, eligible MSP Scholar(s) submitted to NIFA, prior to submitting an application for SEL support (see Part IV, B.3).

(b) **To-Be-Recruited MSP Scholars.** To be eligible to participate in a SEL activity, a MSP Scholar recruited after the award has been made to the institution must: (1) have been appointed as a MSP Scholar and the NIFA Form 2010 – Student Appointment Form for the eligible MSP Scholar(s), been filed, with NIFA; (2) have completed one academic year of full-time study, as defined by their institution, under the MSP appointment; (3) have, at the time of participation in the SEL, sufficient time remaining in their grant to complete proposed experiential learning activities prior to the termination of their award; and (4) **have provided to NIFA, the specific information about the SEL for evaluation at least 150 days (approximately five months) prior to travel.** Before a SEL may commence, arrangements must have been formalized for the MSP Scholar to study and/or conduct research in a foreign location(s).

SEL support is intended to provide opportunities for undergraduate students, who are eligible MSP Scholars, to build the skills and knowledge needed to advance their study, and to function and contribute in careers and enter graduate education in disciplines within the Food and Agricultural Sciences.

(c) eXtension Projects

MSP encourages projects that develop content suitable for delivery through eXtension (http://about.extension.org/mediawiki/files/5/51/EXECUTIVE_SUMMARY_-_March_14%2C_2006_-_YEAR_2.pdf). This content is for end users, as opposed to staff development, and must align with the eXtension Implementation Plan (available at <http://about.extension.org/wiki/Planning>). Funds may be used to contribute to existing Communities of Practice (COPs) (http://about.extension.org/wiki/Glossary_of_eXtension_Terms#Community_of_Practice_.28CoP.29;) or form new COPs that focus on **broadening awareness and positive branding of the food systems domain and its role in achieving national STEM education goals** (for examples of developing COPs and guidance on forming COPs, see http://cop.extension.org/wiki/Main_Page).

PART II—AWARD INFORMATION

A. Available Funding

There is no commitment by USDA to fund any particular application or to make a specific number of awards. MSP typically awards \$180,000 for training five (5) students at the baccalaureate and/or DVM level training. Each MSP application may request any combination of undergraduate and/or D.V.M. degree level scholarships (\$6,500 per student per year for up to four years). For each award, there is a \$2,500 per student per year cost-of-education allowance for the institution. For the SEL support there will be \$4,000 per eligible USDA MSP Scholar, in FY 2010. Approximately \$1.1million is available to fund student training including SEL applications in FY 2010.

Awards issued as a result of this RFA will have designated the Automated Standard Applications for Payment System (ASAP), operated by the Department of Treasury's Financial Management Service, as the payment system for funds. For more information see http://www.nifa.usda.gov/business/method_of_payment.html.

B. Types of Applications

In FY 2010, applications may be submitted to the MSP/SEL funding opportunity as one of the following types of requests:

(1) New application. This is a project application that has not been previously submitted to the MSP Program. All new applications will be reviewed competitively using the selection process and evaluation criteria described in Part V—Application Review Requirements.

(2) Resubmitted application. This is an application that had previously been submitted to the MSP Program but not funded. Project Directors (PDs) must respond to the previous review panel summary (see Response to Previous Review, Part IV). Resubmitted applications must be received by the relevant due dates, will be evaluated in competition with other pending applications in appropriate area to which they are assigned, and will be reviewed according to the same evaluation criteria as new applications.

C. Project Types

Each MSP application may request any combination of D.V.M. and/or undergraduate degree level scholarships. There is no limit to the number of applications an institution may submit. NIFA reserves the right to fund fewer Scholars than requested in any application.

1. Award Category No. 1 – Single Institution Training Program Application – An applicant can request \$6,500 in stipend support per scholar per year for up to four (4) years. In addition, the applicant may request \$2,500 per scholar per year for up to four years as a cost-of-education institutional allowance (in lieu of indirect costs). Each applicant may request NIFA/USDA funding for a minimum of \$108,000 for scholarship support for a cohort of students. A cohort of

students can be comprised of any combination of two-year, three-year, four-year or DVM appointments. The appointments must conform to the MSP eligibility requirements (Part I, C, a., (1)). For this project type, \$4,000 may be requested in SEL support, for TO-BE-RECRUITED USDA MSP Scholar. (See Part II C. 3.). A single application may propose D.V.M. and/or baccalaureate level training that addresses any of the six (6) Program Areas of Emphasis (Part I, B.); – singly or in combination, **up to a maximum of \$248,000 per application in Award Category No. 1.**

[Note: Category 1 cannot be used to request SEL support for any current, eligible USDA MSP Scholar(s) who are beneficiaries of a current MSP award.]

2. Award Category No. 2 – Multi-Institutional MSP/SEL Training Program Application – Priority will be given to the multi-institutional group which includes at least one eligible institution that, in each academic year over a ten-year period, prior to this Program Announcement, matriculated at the D.V.M. or baccalaureate degree levels, in food and agricultural science disciplines, a graduating class in which more than 40 percent (40%) of the students were from a group traditionally underrepresented and underserved in the food and agricultural sciences (attach documentation to Field 12, Other Project Information). **The same scholarship, Cost-of-Education, and minimum funding requirements apply as provided in Award Category No. 1.** Each application, under Award Category No. 2 may request scholarship support for a cohort of up to 15 students. A cohort of students can be comprised of any combination of two-year, three-year, four-year or DVM appointments. The appointments must conform to the MSP eligibility requirements (Part I, C, a., (1)). The budget sharing criteria (Part IV, B., 6) for Award Category No. 2 must be satisfied. Similarly, a single application that proposes to train **students through a multi-institutional training program may request up to a maximum of \$560,000 per application in Award Category No. 2.** An application submitted under Award Category No. 2 would require participation of a minimum of three (3) eligible applicants.

Note: Multi-Institutional Training Projects (Award Category No. 2) must include both the R&R Budget and the R&R Subaward Budget Attachment Forms. The forms should clearly identify the total grant funding anticipated for the applicant and each partner to demonstrate the required sharing percentage. All expenditures for the applicant and all partners should be further itemized in the Budget Justification. Funds **do not** have to be divided equally among project years.

3. Award Category No. 3 – Student Experiential Learning (SEL) – One-time \$4,000 for an eligible USDA MSP Scholar that may be used by eligible MSP Scholars (PART I, C, b., (1)), over the active period of the award.

There is no limit to the number of applications an eligible institution may submit; however, an institution may only receive support up to a maximum of **\$570,000 in awards including MSP and SEL. An Award Category No. 1 or Award Category No. 3 application may request up to \$20,000 in SEL funding.** This support may be provided through multiple grant awards. NIFA reserves the right to fund fewer MSP Scholars than requested in an application, and to partially fund SEL requests.

Applicants, in an Award Category, may not request partial scholarships. Also, current USDA MSP grantees, without previous SEL funding, may apply for SEL funding, for currently eligible USDA MSP Scholars, only using Award Category No. 3.

There is no limit to the number of applications an eligible institution may submit. However, an institution may only receive up to a maximum of \$400,000.00 in awards. This maximum support may be comprised of any combination of awards made through multiple funded proposals in any of the Award Categories.

PART III—ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. Eligible Applicants

Pursuant to **section 1417 of the NARETPA of 1977 (99 Stat. 1548; 7 U.S.C. 3152)**.

Applications may be submitted by: (1) land-grant institutions, (2) colleges and universities having significant minority enrollments and a demonstrable capacity to carry out the teaching of food and agricultural sciences, and (3) other colleges and universities having a demonstrable capacity to carry out the teaching of food, and agricultural sciences. Research foundations maintained by an eligible college or university are eligible to submit undergraduate and/or D.V.M. training proposals under this RFA. **Applicants should be institutions that confer an undergraduate or D.V.M. degree in at least one of the disciplines in the food and agricultural sciences.**

Students attending two-year colleges that are legally authorized to offer a two-year or equivalent program of college-level studies which are principally creditable toward a baccalaureate degree, may be awarded a MSP Scholarship from eligible baccalaureate institutions in cases where an articulation agreement, bridging agreement, or other type of collaborative arrangement exists between the subject baccalaureate-level institution(s) and the two year college. **In such instances, the baccalaureate-level institution must be the applicant.**

Award recipients may subcontract to organizations not eligible to apply provided such organizations are necessary for the conduct of the project.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching

There are no matching requirements for the MSP and SEL project effective in FY 2010 and matching resources will not be factored into the review process as evaluation criteria. Applicants are strongly encouraged to work with schools, Two- and/or Four-Year Colleges/Universities, public and/or private sector enterprises to expand learning opportunities for Scholars.

PART IV—APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

A. Electronic Application Package

Only electronic applications may be submitted via Grants.gov to NIFA in response to this RFA.

Prior to preparing an application, it is suggested that the PD/PI first contact an Authorized Representative (AR) (also referred to as Authorized Organizational Representative or AOR) to determine if the organization is prepared to submit electronic applications through Grant.gov. If the organization is not prepared, the AR should see http://www.grants.gov/applicants/get_registered.jsp for steps for preparing to submit applications through Grants.gov.

The steps to access application materials are as follows:

1. In order to access, complete and submit applications, applicants must download and install a version of Adobe Reader compatible with Grants.gov. This software is essential to apply for NIFA Federal assistance awards. For basic system requirements and download instructions, please see http://www.grants.gov/help/download_software.jsp. To verify that you have a compatible version of Adobe Reader, Grants.gov established a test package that will assist you in making that determination. Grants.gov Adobe Versioning Test Package:
<http://www.grants.gov/applicants/AdobeVersioningTestOnly.jsp>.
2. The application package must be obtained via Grants.gov, go to <http://www.grants.gov>, click on “Apply for Grants” in the left-hand column, click on “**Step 1: Download a Grant Application Package and Instructions,**” enter the funding opportunity number **USDA-NIFA-HEMS-003177** in the appropriate box and click “Download Package.” From the search results, click “Download” to access the application package.

Contained within the application package is the “NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide: A Guide for Preparation and Submission of NIFA Applications via Grants.gov.” This Guide contains an introduction and general Grants.gov instructions, information about how to use a Grant Application Package in Grants.gov, and instructions on how to complete the application forms.

If assistance is needed to access the application package (e.g., downloading or navigating Adobe forms), refer to resources available on the Grants.gov Web site first (<http://www.grants.gov/>). Grants.gov assistance is also available as follows:

Grants.gov customer support
Toll Free: 1-800-518-4726
Business Hours: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Closed on [Federal Holidays](#).
Email: support@grants.gov

See <http://www.nifa.usda.gov/funding/electronic.html> for additional resources for applying electronically.

B. Content and Form of Application Submission

Electronic applications should be prepared following Part V and VI of the document entitled “A Guide for Preparation and Submission of NIFA Applications via Grants.gov.” This guide is part of the corresponding application package (see Section A. of this Part). The following is **additional information** needed in order to prepare an application in response to this RFA. If there is discrepancy between the two documents, the information contained in this RFA is overriding.

Note the attachment requirements (e.g., portable document format) in Part III section 3. of the Guide. ANY PROPOSALS CONTAINING NON-PDF DOCUMENTS WILL BE AT RISK OF BEING EXCLUDED FROM NIFA REVIEW. Partial applications will be excluded from NIFA review. With documented prior approval, resubmitted applications will be accepted until close of business on the closing date in the RFA.

If you do not own PDF-generating software, Grants.gov provides online tools to assist applicants. Users will find a link to “Convert Documents to PDF” on <http://grants.gov/assets/PDFConversion.pdf>.

1. SF 424 R&R Cover Sheet

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 2. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide. A **project’s duration should normally be at least 42 months (to allow time for student recruitment and appointment) but not exceed 60 months. Project Start Date should not occur before June 1, 2011.**

2. R&R Project/Performance Site Location(s)

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 3. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

3. R&R Other Project Information Form

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 4. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

a. Field 7. Project Summary/Abstract. The summary should also include the relevance of the project to the goals of the Higher Education Multicultural Scholars Program.

1. The summary should not exceed **250 words**. Title the attachment ‘Project Summary’ in the document header and save file as ‘Project Summary’. The importance of a concise, informative Project Summary cannot be overemphasized.
2. Include the names and affiliated organizations of all PDs and Co-PDs.
3. Include the title of the project (must be descriptive of the proposed training).
4. Indicate the specific FY 2010 Project Type for which you are applying and which specific program priority(ies) the proposed training project addresses (see Part I, B). Identify the Program Area(s) of Emphasis, disciplines, number of scholars and target audience (region, geography, gender, age, and other demographics) aligned with MSP grants purpose and priorities.

5. The summary must be a self-contained specific description of the activity to be undertaken and should focus on goals, strategies and anticipated project outcomes that align with the MSP grants purpose and goals.
6. Failure to identify Program Area(s) of Emphasis, number of scholars and how training will advance the MSP grants program purpose, priorities and goals will result in proposal not being peer reviewed.

The major academic program area addressed by the application must be identified in the Project Summary. Applicants also should choose from the Program Area(s) of Emphasis and disciplines provided in the tables below.

Program Area(s) of Emphasis for FY 2010 Funding Cycle
Veterinary Medicine (First Professional Degree in Veterinary Medicine i.e., D.V.M.) – specifically targeted is professional entry in large animal veterinary medicine
Agricultural Sciences and Engineering – specifically in agronomy, agricultural process engineering, agricultural biotechnology, animal science, crop sciences, and related sciences to address the workforce demands for expertise to meet demands relevant to USDA mission areas that include STEM disciplines and social sciences
Natural Resource Sciences Training – particularly transdisciplinary training programs in sciences for global food security, food and agricultural sustainability to find solutions for real world issues relating to water, renewable energy, effects of climate change on environmental sustainability – including green jobs, and land use management relating to food, feed, and fiber
Human Sciences Training – specifically addressing the rural/urban interface as it pertains to food and agricultural sciences, including rural economic prosperity, specialty crops and markets and trade, agricultural communication, and the links to developing economic and social policy
Food Science and Human Nutrition Training – specifically focused on development of food and agricultural science expertise to address diet, nutrition for improved health – reducing childhood obesity, and improving food quality
Agrosecurity Science Training – specifically addressing food and agricultural science impacts on animal and crop health, including insect and pest management

Relevant Discipline for FY 2010 Funding Cycle	Code
Animal Science	A
General/Basic Biotechnology, Biochemistry and Microbiology	B
Plant Sciences and Horticulture (includes Turf Grass/Weed Science/Plant Breeding)	P
Conservation and Renewable Natural Resources (includes any aspect of Forestry, Air Quality, Sustainable Agriculture)	C
Environmental Sciences/Management (includes Economics, Decision Management and Biometry)	L
Soil Sciences (includes Soil Quality; Processes)	D
Water Sciences/Resources (includes Water Quality)	W
Agricultural/Biological Engineering (includes Rangeland, Urban/Rural Technology)	E
Agricultural Marketing and Management (includes Agricultural Economics)	M
Food Science/Technology/Manufacturing/Safety	F
Human Nutrition (includes obesity and relevant to USDA Strategic Goals)	N
International Agriculture (includes Disciplines Related to Global Food and Agricultural Systems and Competitiveness)	I
Agricultural Social Sciences (includes Rural Sociology)	S
Veterinary Medicine (graduate degree training)	V
Interdisciplinary, Sustainable Food, Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, Social Sciences and Economics Graduate Degree Programs	G
Agricultural Biosecurity	X

b. Field 8. Project Narrative.

PLEASE NOTE: The Project Narrative shall not exceed twenty (20) pages of written text and up to five (5) additional pages for figures and tables. This maximum of twenty-five (25) pages has been established to ensure fair and equitable competition. Prepare the application using one-inch margins, using no type smaller than 12 point font, and in **double space**. Acceptable fonts are Courier, Courier New or Arial, Geneva, Helvetica, Times New Roman. Applications that do not conform to the preparation requirements will not be reviewed.

Project Narrative must include all of the following:

1. Quality of Education

Use the 2005-2006 academic year as the baseline, provide **complete and accurate annual** data by major, first-generation college, gender and racial/ethnic group (White, Black, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islanders, American Indian/Alaska Native) for (i) institution-; (ii) College-/Department-; and (iii) Program-level in the following categories:

- (a) Total enrollment;
- (b) Total baccalaureate or Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degrees conferred;
- (c) Retention from Year 1 through Year 2;
- (d) Years to degree completion;

- (e) Participation in service learning, internship, experiential research, extension and/or outreach; and
- (f) Participation by faculty, staff and students in opportunities to develop multicultural competency.

Provide data at the Department- and Program-level only for:

- (g) Participation in local or regional or national scientific, professional or industrial conferences and meetings;
- (h) Participation in international experience;
- (i) Participation in leadership, management and policy development;
- (j) Participation in industry experiences or internships;
- (k) Use of student services (including academic support, financial, career, student organizations, multicultural, safety and health); and
- (l) Post-graduation placement in employment (describe entry job types) or graduate education. All works cited should be referenced in Bibliography & References.

NOTE: For all data a total number must be provided as a reference for any percentages in proposal document.

2. Progress Report

If the application is from an institution that has received an MSP project funded competitively by this agency in the past five years, include a clearly marked progress report describing results to date from the previous award. The progress report must be contained within the 20-page limit and should contain the following information:

- (a) A comparison of actual accomplishments with the objectives established for the previous award;
- (b) The reasons established objectives were not met, if applicable;
- (c) A listing of any graduated MSP scholars, new curricula, service learning (including with Agriculture in the Classroom (AITC) or 4-H programs), or other outputs, including those outputs identified in the project logic model resulting from the award; and
- (d) The Grant Number (xxxx-**38413**-xxxxx) for the award.

3. Rationale and Significance

- (a) Concisely present the rationale behind the proposed project;
- (b) Describe the specific relationship of the project's objectives to one or more of the particular program priorities; and
- (c) Provide the measurable objective(s) of the proposed training project with a full description of:
 - (i) How projected workforce demand has been used in developing training program;
 - (ii) How training project will impact broad awareness about the proposed area of training;

- (iii) How training project will impact your institution; and
- (iv) How training project will reverse the trend in low enrollment, retention rates, and completion of baccalaureate or Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degrees by multicultural students for USDA **mission areas that include STEM disciplines and social sciences.**

4. **Approach**

Describe fully showing content and context as it relates to how the proposed training will allow Scholars to achieve competence in the Program Area(s) of Emphasis through:

- (a) Recruitment and selection plan that must be clear, comprehensive (identify demographics of the recruitment and selection target group including entry requirements) and time-bound;
- (b) Curricula that offer relevant and rigorous (provide number of credits and describe common core and specialization) courses as well as hands-on and on-site instructional approaches;
- (c) Experiential, interdisciplinary or capstone opportunities to develop understanding of the related natural and human-made perturbations, ethics, socio-economic, global, policy development, cultural competency, and pedagogical issues;
- (d) Mentoring for success of scholar, including how the project will handle at-risk students, with a plan, and a timetable for the process of mentoring, to assist students with their matriculation;
- (e) Integration of "best practices" and special features into the student support services and the academic training activities;
- (f) Partnering to access new strategies for developing critical thinking and problem solving skills built into the training and leading to enhanced scholarship; Service learning that includes linkages to K-12 audiences to clarify branding, and to enhance awareness and understanding of food, agriculture and related sciences in the contexts of STEM education and global competitiveness;
- (g) Opportunities for developing self efficacy including decision-making, analyzing and assessing information to make conclusions, participation in workshops and professional meetings;
- (h) Management plan with timeline for deliverables and rigorous academic and project review;
- (i) Matrix identifying expected outcomes, the project outcome measures associated with clearly established measurable performance targets for each of the elements above (a-i).

5. **Evaluation and Assessment**

Clearly define plan with timeline to extensively evaluate the project using formative and summative assessment tools that can help inform future modifications to the student support services and strategies. Identify pitfalls and limitations to proposed approaches and how these will be addressed. Clearly:

- (a) Define the approach for longitudinal tracking of the Scholars after completion of the program, include strategies for tracking of MSP Scholars up to three years

after completion – exit point and if employed where and at what level, if graduate training then what institutions and in what level/areas of study;

- (b) Describe how outcomes measures were chosen; and
- (c) Define how each measure will be used to demonstrate that the proposed project: advances –
 - i. Grant program goal of increasing the numbers of highly trained, scientifically competent **multicultural graduates** entering either the food systems workforce or further graduate training,
 - ii. Student learning outcomes with specific expectations for student-deliverables such as grade-point average at graduation,
 - iii. NIFA goal for preparation of highly skilled next generation workforce, and
 - iv. National STEM educational goals; and
- (d) Provide strategies to assess, at the project-level, management for successful outcomes.

6. Institutional Support

- (a) Fully describe institutional climate for proposed training specifically addressing:
 - i. Recruitment of multicultural students to higher education programs and careers in disciplines of food and agricultural and related sciences;
 - ii. Support and mentoring of students by faculty, upper-level students and other professionals;
 - iii. Academic support services such as tutoring, study-groups, or supplemental instruction programs; and
 - iv. Community building and psycho-social network for supporting MSP Scholars within the institution.
- (b) Provide signed documentation (not to exceed two pages per supporting enterprise) from senior leadership of College/Department at institution to demonstrate support for proposed training project (see Field 12 below).

7. Dissemination

- (a) Dissemination plan, for proposed training project, must be clearly articulated and fully describe the strategies identifying opportunities for communicating results in food, agricultural and related issues with accuracy, objectivity, responsibility and awareness of any limitations;
- (b) Dissemination to diverse communities – including K-12, higher education, government, private sector, non-profit sector, and the general public – should use information that is comprehensive and understandable; and
- (c) MSP Scholars – gaining broad awareness of and skills to communicate the role of the food systems domain in achieving national STEM education goals.

8. Key Personnel

This should relate to the performing activities for success in proposed project and spells out responsible parties, cooperating institutions, their roles and responsibilities and their personnel.

9. Other Project Narrative – Special Experiential Learning (SEL)

A. When applying for SEL awards under Award Category No. 3, for a Current Eligible USDA MSP Scholar, the Project Narrative should include all of the following:

(a) The anticipated, specific destination(s) and duration of the experiential learning activity;

(b) Information about the objectives, timeline, expected outcomes and deliverables from the eligible, USDA MSP Scholar(s) participating in a SEL;

(c) The specific experiential learning activities (specific tasks) in which USDA MSP Scholars will be engaged;

(d) How the SEL will contribute to the USDA MSP Scholar's program of study;

(e) A budget narrative specifying and justifying the dollar amount requested for the SEL (see R&R Budget below);

(f) Identify contact personnel where SEL activity will be undertaken and provide summary credentials of both the faculty or other professionals with whom the USDA MSP Scholar will be working during the SEL and the nature of support to be provided to insure success of the Scholars' learning experience;

(g) A letter from the dean of the USDA MSP Scholar's college or equivalent administrative unit supporting the USDA MSP Scholar's SEL request and certifying that the activity will not jeopardize the USDA MSP Scholar's satisfactory progress toward degree completion (see Field 12 below);

(h) A letter from the MSP grant project director certifying the USDA MSP Scholar's eligibility and the relevance of the travel to the USDA MSP Scholar's training program objectives (see Field 12 below); and

(i) The criteria that will be used to evaluate success of the SEL. A copy of an updated NIFA Form 2010 – Fellowship/Scholarship Appointment Form for any current USDA MSP Scholar participating in the proposed SEL opportunity should be attached in Field 12 (see below) of the R&R Other Project Information; and

B. For To-Be-Recruited USDA MSP Scholars who are to participate in the Special Experiential Learning (SEL) – The applicant must provide the anticipated measurable objectives and expected student learning and performance outcomes relating how the SEL will contribute to the program of study within the project narrative section under Project Type, Award Category 1 in response to this announcement. If an application of this type is recommended for an award, fund for SEL that will be used for To-Be-Recruited MSP Scholars will be withheld. When the MSP Scholars have been appointed and are eligible to participate in the SEL, Project Director must provide, at least 150 days prior to travel, the specifics for the SEL as outlined in Part IV, B., 3, b, Section 1 along with the identity of the eligible USDA MSP Scholar(s), to the USDA MSP Program Office. MSP Project Directors should note that specific program evaluation and dissemination will be required of MSP/SEL activities and participants. The USDA MSP Program Office must receive the plans for: (1) an *Outcomes Report* to be submitted to the USDA that describes accomplishments of the Scholar(s) after completing the SEL - *this is not an activity report with a daily log of tasks*; and (2) SEL disseminating impacts and achievements to a wide audience of educators and policy makers, in order to expand the pipeline of outstanding students interested in careers in USDA mission areas.

Bibliography & Cited References - (Must be PDF format)

Provide a complete list of all references cited in the application. **For each reference, provide the complete name for each author, the year of the publication, full title of the article, name of the journal or book published, volume, and the page numbers.** The references should be listed in alphabetical order using the last name of the first author.

Facilities & Other Resources - (Optional Attachment – Must be PDF format)

If needed, describe the types, location, and availability of instrumentation and physical facilities necessary to carry out the work proposed. **If special academic, private or government laboratories or facilities are being used, attach a letter to the application from the authorized representative of the facility describing the proposed arrangements and availability.** This letter should be included as a part of Other Attachments, see Field 12 below.

Field 12. Other Attachments - (Must be PDF format)

- **Fellowships/Scholarships Entry and Exit Form – PDF Attachment.** Attach an updated copy of the NIFA Form 2010. (See Part IV, B.3.)
http://www.nifa.usda.gov/funding/all_forms.html
- **Table of Contents – PDF Attachment.** Include an application ‘Table of Contents’ page that lists all forms and attachments comprising this complete application. Use titles from the Application Submission Checklist found at the end of the RFA (Part VIII) as a guideline.
- **Response to Previous Review - PDF Attachment. 1 Page Limit.** This requirement only applies to “Resubmitted Applications” as described under Part II, B., “Types of

Applications”. PDs must respond to the previous review panel summary on **no more than one page**. If desired, additional comments may be included in the text of the Project Narrative, subject to the page limitations of that section.

- **Letters of Commitment – PDF Attachment.** Attach signed letters of commitment subaward(s).
- Appendices – PDF Attachment. **Attach appendices to the Project Narrative.** Appendices are strictly limited to:
 - (i) **Two (2) examples of materials from previous projects** similar to those proposed in this project;
 - (ii) **Supporting documentation** for institution support and/or partnerships;
 - (iii) **A letter from the dean** of the USDA MSP Scholar’s college or equivalent administrative unit supporting the USDA MSP Scholar’s SEL request and certifying that the activity will not jeopardize the USDA MSP Scholar’s satisfactory progress toward degree completion; and
 - (iv) **A letter from the MSP grant project director** certifying the USDA MSP Scholar’s eligibility and the relevance of the travel to the USDA MSP Scholar’s training program objectives.

Information may not be appended to an application to circumvent page limitations prescribed for the Project Narrative. Extraneous materials will not be used during the peer review process.

- **For Category 2 Applications – Traditionally Underrepresented – PDF Attachment.** **Attach documentation indicating that in each academic year over a 10-year period prior to this program announcement more than 40 percent (40%) of the students were from a group traditionally underrepresented in the food and agricultural sciences** (see Part II, C(2)).

4. R&R Senior/Key Person Profile (Expanded)

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 5. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

5. R&R Personal Data – As noted in Part V, 6. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide, the submission of this information is voluntary and is not a precondition of award.

6. R&R Budget

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 7. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

Complete one R&R Budget Form for each 12-month period, plus a cumulative budget and narrative for the entire project. If your project involves partners with whom you plan to share Federal funds (Award Category No. 2 Project Proposal), make sure (a) you include a budget form for the applicant institution and a R&R subaward attachment form for each project partner

(subaward), for each 12-month period plus a cumulative budget and narrative, and (b) your budget figures reflect the budget sharing criteria that: (i) no single institution may receive more than forty percent (40%) and (ii) any institution may not receive less than fifteen percent (15%) of the requested funding. Applicants are encouraged to provide a five-year budget with a zero dollar budget for any year where support is not allocated. The latter planning will allow efficient recruitment and appointment of MSP Scholars within the stipulated 12-month interval. No extensions beyond the five-year period are allowed (see Part II, C.2.). Signed letters of commitment from the subaward AR are required. Attach in Field 12 “Other Project Information”.

Subaward Attachment. This form is necessary only if there is a subaward or applicant is submitting a Multi-Institutional Training Project. Annual budget(s) and cumulative budget with justification is required for each subcontractual arrangement.

Field E., Participant/Trainee Support Costs

On the R&R Budget Form Field E, the student support is to be included on Line 2, stipends, and the cost-of-education allowance is to be included on the Line 5 Other, and enter “cost-of-education allowance” as the descriptor in the block provided. The SEL, if applicable, is to be included on Field E on Line 3 Travel of the R&R Budget Form.

Cost-of-Education Allowance: A cost-of-education allowance (CoE) is provided in lieu of indirect costs (indirect costs are unallowable). Institutions receive a \$2,500 per year cost-of-education (CoE) allowance for each Scholar supported by a D.V.M. or baccalaureate training award for up to 4 years. The Project Directors are required to use part of the CoE: (i) to attend, and bring Scholars to, at least one NIFA-sponsored Project Directors and Beneficiaries Meeting, held during the life of the grant, and (2) to support the broader communication of the project and USDA mission science. The purpose of the NIFA-sponsored Project Directors’ and Beneficiaries meeting will be to discuss project and grant management, opportunities for collaborative visioning for aligning training to STEM education goals; forming new collaborations; providing stakeholder input into future directions for education reform, and opportunities to enhance dissemination of exemplary and innovative training programs along with products/results. Scholars, working with Project Directors are required to engage wider audiences including students in Pre-K through 12 and two-year post secondary institutions to increase awareness and understanding of USDA mission science areas in STEM education and enhancing America’s competitiveness. In addition, institutions may use the CoE to defray program-related expenses including, but not limited to, student retention and mentoring programs, Scholar travel to attend professional meetings, publications, or salaries of project personnel and/or to conduct research, laboratory fees and educational expenses (e.g., books and supplies). An institution may elect to apply the CoE to a Scholar’s tuition and fees; however, such is not required. As an example, a typical budget allocation to an institution to support one (1) scholar would be: \$36,000 as federal funding that is comprised of a stipend of \$6,500 per year (equals \$26,000 for four years), and \$2,500 per year for the CoE (equals \$10,000 for four years). **Note: Institutions may not reduce MSP Scholar’s stipends.**

In years where no funds will be expended a zero-dollar budget should be included. In addition, a cumulative budget is required detailing the requested total support for the overall project period. *[Note for the Multicultural Scholars Program: The Federal dollars requested as scholarship, stipend, and the cost-of-education allowance would be a combined value that will appear in Section E. of the Research & Related budget form. There is no need to itemize and/or explain what the cost-of-education will be used for on the budget form. The explanation should be in the budget narrative.]* Justify that the total budget, including funds requested from USDA, is allocated adequately between the applicant and any collaborating institution, and will be appropriate to carry out the activities of the project. All costs must be fully explained and justified. **The Budget Justification must be submitted as a single PDF attachment to the R&R Budget Form.**

Matching. No matching is required. Applicants are strongly encouraged to work with schools, Two- and/or Four-Year Colleges/Universities, public and/or private sector enterprises to expand learning opportunities for Scholars.

Cost Effectiveness. Justify the project's cost-effectiveness. Show how the project maximizes the use of limited resources, optimizes educational value for the dollar, and achieves multicultural diversity in the food systems domain. For example, discuss how the project has the potential to generate a critical mass of expertise in students from traditionally underrepresented and underserved groups entering the future workforce. Justify how SEL associated with student training will develop human capital in students from groups traditionally underrepresented and underserved in the food and agricultural sciences.

7. Supplemental Information Form

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part VI, 1. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

a. Field 2. Program Code. Enter the program code name (i.e., enter “Higher Education Multicultural Scholars”) and the program code (i.e., enter “KF”).

b. Conflict of Interest List. A conflict of interest list is required under this program. Conflicts of Interest for Senior/Key Personnel (any individual who provided a curriculum vita) must be submitted. List alphabetically by last name (and with last name first) the full names of individuals and indicate which categorical conflict(s) listed below applies:

(i) All co-authors on publications within the past three years, including pending publications and submissions;

(ii) All collaborators on projects within the past three years, including current and planned collaborations;

(iii) All thesis or postdoctoral advisees/advisors; and

(iv) All persons in your field with whom you have had a consulting/financial arrangement/other conflict-of-interest in the past three years.

A suggested template for the Conflict of Interest List can be found at:
http://www.nifa.usda.gov/funding/templates/conflict_of_interest.doc.

Note: Other individuals working in the applicant's specific area are not in conflict with the applicant unless those individuals fall within one of the listed categories. The National Program Leader(s) responsible for the MSP grants must be informed of any additional conflicts of interest that arise after the application is submitted.

This form is necessary to assist program staff in excluding from application review those individuals who have conflicts of interest with the personnel in the grant application.

C. Submission Dates and Times

Instructions for submitting an application are included in Part IV, Section 1.9 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

Applications must be received by Grants.gov by COB on July 28, 2010 (5:00 p.m. Eastern Time). Applications received after this deadline will normally not be considered for funding.

Correspondence regarding submitted applications will be sent using e-mail. Therefore, applicants are strongly encouraged to provide accurate e-mail addresses, where designated, on the SF-424 R&R Application for Federal Assistance.

If the AR has not received correspondence **from NIFA** regarding a submitted application within 30 days of the established deadline, please contact the Program Contact identified in Part VII of the applicable RFA and request the proposal number assigned to the application. **Failure to do so may result in the application not being considered for funding by the peer review panel. Once the application has been assigned a proposal number, this number should be cited on all future correspondence.**

D. Funding Restrictions

Pursuant to 7 U.S.C. 3152(b), no indirect costs may be recovered under the MSP Program. Funds are restricted to the clearly designated uses found within this RFA.

For Award Category No. 2 Proposals, the budget sharing criteria are: (i) no single institution may receive more than forty percent (40%) **and** (ii) any institution may not receive less than fifteen percent (15%) of the requested was funding for the baccalaureate and/or D.V.M. degree level training project (see Part II, C).

When grant is for SEL that will be used by To-Be-Recruited Scholars: The SEL funds for To-Be-Recruited Scholars will be withheld until the Project Director has submitted and NPL has

approved, to the MSP Grants Program Office, all of the required documentation for eligibility of the MSP/SEL Scholar(s) for the SEL as well as the required specifics outlined in the RFA for the SEL. The information must be submitted for approval, no less than 150 days prior to the use of the SEL funds (see Part IV, B., 3, b, Section 1).

E. Other Submission Requirements

The applicant should follow the submission requirements noted in the document entitled “A Guide for Preparation and Submission of NIFA Applications via Grants.gov.”

Described below are the requirements for successful submission of an application, all of the following steps must be met for an application to be considered for peer review:

- 1) Meeting the deadline: To electronically send the application to Grants.gov the submit button is hit, which triggers a date and time stamp on the application. The date and time stamp is used to determine whether the application was received by Grants.gov before the deadline, which is prior to close of business (5:00 p.m. Eastern Time) on July 28, 2010. An application submitted or resubmitted after the deadline is late. Consideration of late applications is only given in extenuating circumstances (e.g., natural disasters, confirmed Grants.gov outage) with proper documentation and support of the Agency Contact (see Part VII). The occurrence of one of these situations does not automatically ensure that a late application will be accepted. If an applicant wants a late application considered under an extenuating circumstance, the applicant should contact the Agency Contact accordingly.
- 2) Successful Grants.gov validation: The Grants.gov system performs a limited check of the application, and applicants are notified by Grants.gov of the outcome of the initial review. Applications meeting Grants.gov requirements are made available to the funding agency for further processing. Applications that fail Grants.gov validation may be resubmitted to Grants.gov if the original agency deadline has not passed. (Note that the Grants.gov system may allow applications to be submitted after the deadline has passed, but the application is considered late by NIFA.)
- 3) Successful Agency validation: NIFA staff performs precursory review of the application. The agency validation process includes, for example, meeting eligibility requirements and following agency application guidelines (e.g., formatting, page limitations, and limits on budget requests). Applicants are notified by NIFA of the outcome of this review.

PART V—APPLICATION REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

A. General

Each application will be evaluated in a 2-part process. First, each application will be screened to ensure that it meets the administrative requirements as set forth in this RFA. Second, applications that meet these requirements will be technically evaluated by a review panel.

Reviewers will be selected based upon training and experience in relevant scientific, extension, or education fields, taking into account the following factors: (a) The level of relevant formal scientific, technical education, or extension experience of the individual, as well as the extent to which an individual is engaged in relevant research, education, or extension activities; (b) the need to include as reviewers experts from various areas of specialization within relevant scientific, education, or extension fields; (c) the need to include as reviewers other experts (e.g., producers, range or forest managers/operators, and consumers) who can assess relevance of the applications to targeted audiences and to program needs; (d) the need to include as reviewers experts from a variety of organizational types (e.g., colleges, universities, industry, state and Federal agencies, private profit and non-profit organizations) and geographic locations; (e) the need to maintain a balanced composition of reviewers with regard to minority and female representation and an equitable age distribution; and (f) the need to include reviewers who can judge the effective usefulness to producers and the general public of each application.

B. Evaluation Criteria

All applications submitted under in response to this RFA shall be technically evaluated by a review panel using the evaluation criteria below. The percentage weight that will be given to each criterion is listed after the criterion.

The evaluation criteria in section 1 below will be used in reviewing all applications submitted under Project Types Award Category 1 and/or Award Category 2 in response to this RFA, **except** those only requesting funds for SEL grants for current USDA MSP Scholars:

1. Applications for Baccalaureate or D.V.M. Training

- **Educational Quality and Merit (40%)** – will be evaluated on the basis of:
 - (a) Thoroughness, quality, necessity, innovation, and originality;
 - (b) Overall proposed project has technically sound approach, and potential to enhance positive learning experiences and help develop the leadership and professional skills of the Scholars, relevant to USDA mission that includes STEM disciplines and social sciences;
 - (c) Demonstrated awareness of previous and comparable training, outreach, mentoring and education programs that address the needs identified for the target audience;

(d) Clarity and alignment of proposed measurable objectives with matching measurable outcomes with the MSP grants purpose, priorities, and goal;

(e) Clarity and conceptual adequacy of the proposed activities related to target beneficiary (who; how many; from where; and to be trained in what Program Area(s) of Emphasis), recruitment, selection criteria, and deliverables (success deliverables identified for Scholars (e.g. entry and exit targets);

(f) Conceptual adequacy of the proposed activities to meet the needs of the targeted audience including suitability and feasibility of the approach for retaining, training and graduating highly skilled and technically competent multicultural scholars in USDA mission areas;

(g) Clarity of strong curriculum, student learning outcomes and plan for assessing, guiding and sustaining the MSP Scholars in their MSP training;

(h) Expected outcomes of the project in terms of the number of first-generation and underrepresented and underserved minorities trained and placed in careers or graduate education in areas related to USDA mission;

(i) Defined approach for longitudinal tracking of the Scholars after completion of the program and sustainability beyond the life of the grant; and

(j) Probability for successful investment in human capital development for USDA mission that includes STEM disciplines and social sciences.

- **Relevancy (20%)** – Explanation and documentation that the training project is directed toward:

(a) Specific areas identified in Part I, B in this RFA. These areas are designed to yield improvements in the trend in enrollment and retention rates of multicultural students in USDA mission sciences;

(b) Involving key stakeholders in evaluation of performance markers and student quality linking entry and completion requirements for career placement or graduate education;

(c) Addressing projected workforce demand in the MSP grants Program Area(s) of Emphasis; and

(d) MSP Scholars gaining food, agriculture, and related sciences-based knowledge, 21st workforce skills, and capabilities of proposed MSP training project to become human capital pipeline for NIFA challenge areas to secure impacts beyond the life of the project.

- **Adequacy of plans for evaluation, dissemination and management of the proposed project (20%)** – Plan and methods for evaluating success of project activities and documenting potential impact against measurable short and mid-term outcomes are suitable and feasible and address:

 - (a) Time allocated for systematic attainment of objectives;
 - (b) Effective functioning of key personnel to have a strong workflow scheme that facilitates successful achievement of program and project goals and objectives;
 - (c) Full description of monitoring and evaluation rubrics;
 - (d) Participatory evaluation of project activities, development and use of outcomes-based measures and reporting, and effectiveness in communication of activities, outputs, and impacts to wide-ranging audiences; and
 - (e) Administration of the proposed project and its maintenance, partnerships, and collaborative efforts for enriched learning provided to Scholars participating in supervised-internships, -K-12 USDA-mission outreach, -extension, -service-learning or -research projects in diverse fields.
- **Institutional Support (10%)** – Probability of success of the project is appropriate given demonstration that:

 - (a) The climate, personnel, support resources, collaborations and facilities are available, committed and well-positioned;
 - (b) The integration needed to ensure that project will recruit, retain, train, graduate and place the target audience in either graduate training in food, agricultural and related sciences or careers to secure MSP investment;
 - (c) The support for project objective(s) including maintenance of website and service-learning to impact broad awareness about the USDA mission areas of training; and
 - (d) The support for any remaining MSP Scholars to degree completion, after federal funding has ended.
- **Key personnel (10%)** – Demonstration of feasibility and competence gained through:

 - (a) Prior experience in education, outreach, mentoring, experiential learning, training, and placement of food, agricultural and related sciences baccalaureate and first professional degree Doctor of Veterinary Medicine-level students;
 - (b) Qualifications of applicant (individual or team) to conduct the proposed project;
 - (c) Strong commitment in guiding Scholars to develop self-efficacy in their program of study and support them to clearly articulate, via traditional and/or social media, and

service learning, the role of USDA mission areas in achieving national STEM education goals; and

(d) Individual faculty showed strong track record of facilitating the graduation of multicultural students in area of proposed training.

All applications submitted by current MSP Project Director(s) under Project Type Award Category 3 to request support for SEL, in response to this RFA shall be technically evaluated by a peer review panel using the evaluation criteria below.

2. Applications for Special Experiential Learning (SEL) for Current, Eligible MSP Scholars

a) Potential for Advancing the Quality of Education (10%)

This criterion is used to assess the likelihood that the proposed international/research learning experience for the eligible D.V.M. and/or undergraduate Scholar(s) will contribute to training and will result in the development of outstanding graduates to meet the future needs of a globally interconnected, technologically advanced, rapidly diversifying and consumer driven food and agricultural industry. Elements include: quality of the SEL activity to enhance the training program of the Scholar; and target area and duration for the developmental professional experience - the degree to which the SEL is appropriate for enhancing the USDA MSP Scholar's academic program.

b) Proposed Approach (40%)

(1) **Advanced preparation** – the degree to which the proposed study or research activities are well-planned, including the likelihood that these activities will come to fruition and that the participation of identified personnel will materialize based on: (1) the clarity of the learning objectives with measurable targets for deliverables; (2) the planned activity(ies); (3) established and documented evidence of availability of facilities and personnel at host institution; and (4) the completeness of arrangements for the SEL.

(2) **Academic advising, career counseling, mentoring, student support and pipelining** – the applicant's plans and procedures for assessing, monitoring, guiding, and sustaining a Scholar's progress in the SEL activities toward securing a positive impact on the academic program of the Scholar(s); strategies for application of critical thinking and problem solving skills in Scholars; and development of skills to sustain the discipline(s) and entry into the workforce or graduate training.

(3) **Program evaluation and dissemination** – the plans for (1) an SEL Outcomes Report to be submitted to the USDA that describes accomplishments of the Scholar(s) after completing the SEL - **this is not an activity report with a daily log of tasks**; (2) clear documenting of progress from entry to exit of training program to meet the needs of the Program Area of Emphasis (Part I, B.); (3) develop materials targeted to grades 8 through 12; and (4) disseminating impacts and

achievements to a wider audience of educators and policy makers, in order to expand the pipeline of outstanding students interested in careers in food and agricultural sciences.

c) Institutional Commitment and Resources (20%)

The degree to which the proposal substantiates clearly: (1) that the facilities and equipment, instructional/learning support resources and other academic attributes are excellent for providing outstanding international/research experiential learning opportunities at the forefront of science and technology related to the academic program of the Scholar(s); (2) provides opportunities for Scholar to develop 21st century work force skills; and (3) the documented commitment (**letters**) to support the Scholar(s) in the educational value of the international research experience.

d) Key Personnel (10%)

The degree to which the personnel, both U.S. and international, involved with the research and/or travel experience have the appropriate credentials and experience to direct the USDA MSP Scholar's professional developmental experience, and the likelihood that their participation as mentors, trainers, advisors, or teachers will contribute to the educational value of the travel experiences.

e) Impacts for Broader Contexts (20%)

The degree to which the proposal describes significant features of the SEL activities that will focus on: (1) approaches for scholar(s) to be engaging in and generating a new body of knowledge that strengthens the academic program, and; (2) an emphasis on learning, understanding and translating/communicating the information relative to the **Program Area(s) of Emphasis (Part I, B.)** and alignment to global influences and competitiveness in a fast-evolving sphere.

C. Conflicts of Interest and Confidentiality

During the peer evaluation process, extreme care will be taken to prevent any actual or perceived conflicts of interest that may impact review or evaluation. For the purpose of determining conflicts of interest, the academic and administrative autonomy of an institution shall be determined by reference to the current Higher Education Directory, published by Higher Education Publications, Inc., 6400 Arlington Boulevard, Suite 648, Falls Church, Virginia 22042. Phone: (703) 532-2300. Web site: <http://www.hepinc.com>.

Names of submitting institutions and individuals, as well as application content and peer evaluations, will be kept confidential, except to those involved in the review process, to the extent permitted by law. In addition, the identities of peer reviewers will remain confidential throughout the entire review process. Therefore, the names of the reviewers will not be released to applicants.

D. Organizational Management Information

Specific management information relating to an applicant shall be submitted on a one time basis, with updates on an as needed basis, as part of the responsibility determination prior to the award of a grant identified under this RFA, if such information has not been provided previously under this or another NIFA program. NIFA will provide copies of forms recommended for use in fulfilling these requirements as part of the preaward process. Although an applicant may be eligible based on its status as one of these entities, there are factors which may exclude an applicant from receiving Federal financial and nonfinancial assistance and benefits under this program (e.g., debarment or suspension of an individual involved or a determination that an applicant is not responsible based on submitted organizational management information).

PART VI—AWARD ADMINISTRATION

A. General

Within the limit of funds available for such purpose, the awarding official of NIFA shall make grants to those responsible, eligible applicants whose applications are judged most meritorious under the procedures set forth in this RFA. The date specified by the awarding official of NIFA as the effective date of the grant shall be no later than September 30 of the Federal fiscal year in which the project is approved for support and funds are appropriated for such purpose, unless otherwise permitted by law. It should be noted that the project need not be initiated on the grant effective date, but as soon thereafter as practical so that project goals may be attained within the funded project period. All funds granted by NIFA under this RFA shall be expended solely for the purpose for which the funds are granted in accordance with the approved application and budget, the regulations, the terms and conditions of the award, the applicable Federal cost principles, and the Department's assistance regulations (2 CFR 215, 2 CFR 220 and 2 CFR 230), and the Department's assistance regulations (parts 3015, 3019 and 3430 of 7 CFR).

B. Award Notice

The award document will provide pertinent instructions and information including, at a minimum, the following:

- (1) Legal name and address of performing organization or institution to whom the Director has issued an award under the terms of this request for applications;
- (2) Title of project;
- (3) Name(s) and institution(s) of PDs chosen to direct and control approved activities;
- (4) Identifying award number assigned by the Department;
- (5) Project period, specifying the amount of time the Department intends to support the project without requiring recompetition for funds;
- (6) Total amount of Departmental financial assistance approved by the Director during the project period;
- (7) Legal authority(ies) under which the award is issued;
- (8) Appropriate Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) number;
- (9) Applicable award terms and conditions (see <http://www.nifa.usda.gov/business/awards/awardterms.html> to view NIFA award terms and conditions);

(10) Approved budget plan for categorizing allocable project funds to accomplish the stated purpose of the award; and

(11) Other information or provisions deemed necessary by NIFA to carry out its respective awarding activities or to accomplish the purpose of a particular award.

C. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Several Federal statutes and regulations apply to grant applications considered for review and to project grants awarded under this program. These include, but are not limited to:

7 CFR Part 1, subpart A—USDA implementation of the Freedom of Information Act.

7 CFR Part 3—USDA implementation of OMB Circular No. A-129 regarding debt collection.

7 CFR Part 15, subpart A—USDA implementation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended.

7 CFR Part 331 and 9 CFR Part 121—USDA implementation of the Agricultural Bioterrorism Protection Act of 2002.

7 CFR Part 3015—USDA Uniform Federal Assistance Regulations, implementing OMB directives (i.e., OMB Circular Nos. A-21 and A-122 (2 CFR Parts 220 and 230), and incorporating provisions of 31 U.S.C. 6301-6308 (formerly the Federal Grant and Cooperative Agreement Act of 1977, Pub. L. No. 95-224), as well as general policy requirements applicable to recipients of Departmental financial assistance.

7 CFR Part 3017—USDA implementation of Governmentwide Debarment and Suspension (Nonprocurement).

7 CFR Part 3018—USDA implementation of Restrictions on Lobbying. Imposes prohibitions and requirements for disclosure and certification related to lobbying on recipients of Federal contracts, grants, cooperative agreements, and loans.

7 CFR Part 3019—USDA implementation of OMB Circular A-110, Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Other Agreements With Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Nonprofit Organizations (2 CFR Part 215).

7 CFR Part 3021—Governmentwide Requirements for Drug-Free Workplace (Financial Assistance).

7 CFR Part 3052—USDA implementation of OMB Circular No. A-133, Audits of States, Local Governments, and Nonprofit Organizations.

7 CFR Part 3407—NIFA procedures to implement the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended.

7 CFR 3430—Competitive and Noncompetitive Non-formula Grant Programs--General Grant Administrative Provisions.

29 U.S.C. 794 (section 504, Rehabilitation Act of 1973) and 7 CFR Part 15b (USDA implementation of statute) —prohibiting discrimination based upon physical or mental handicap in Federally assisted programs.

35 U.S.C. 200 et seq. —Bayh Dole Act, controlling allocation of rights to inventions made by employees of small business firms and domestic nonprofit organizations, including universities, in Federally assisted programs (implementing regulations are contained in 37 CFR Part 401).

D. Expected Program Outputs and Reporting Requirements

1. Documentation of Progress on Funded MSP Projects

Pursuant to 7 CFR Part 3402.23, Project Directors will be required to:

(a) Reporting on Individual Student Beneficiaries

(i) Student Appointment - Project Directors are required to complete and submit, to the NIFA MSP Grants Program Office (MSP@nifa.usda.gov), a Fellowships/Scholarships Entry Form (OMB No. 0524-0039), [Page 1 of Form NIFA-2010, http://www.nifa.usda.gov/funding/all_forms.html] when eligible, committed students are appointed and approved as Higher Education Multicultural Scholars Program under an award. This information must also be provided for replacement Fellows appointed under the program.

(ii) Annual Student Progress in Training Program - Project Directors are required to complete and submit, to the MSP Program Office, an Annual Update Form (OMB No. 0524-0039), [Page 2 of Form NIFA-2010] that provides information about the academic accomplishment including products, recognitions, service learning, and professional mentoring outcomes, for each Scholars supported. This information is treated as confidential. The Annual Update is used to assess the continuing progress of Scholars through their undergraduate training program to meet the objectives of the funded undergraduate or D.V.M. training project **as well as determine the continued eligibility as a beneficiary of the award.**

(iii) Exit and/or Termination - Project Directors are required to complete and submit, to the MSP Program Office, a Fellowships/Scholarships Exit Form (OMB No. 0524-0039), [Page 3 of Form NIFA-2010] as soon as a Scholar either (1) graduates; (2) is officially terminated from the Scholarship or the academic program due to unsatisfactory academic progress or disciplinary action; or (3) voluntarily withdraws from the Scholarship or academic program. If a Scholar has not completed all degree requirements at the end of the five-year award duration, NIFA may request a preliminary Fellowships/Scholarships Exit Form (Annual Update and Exit Reports)

(OMB No. 0524-0039). In such a case, a final Fellowships/Scholarships Exit Form would be required at a later date.

(b) SEL Outcomes Report:

An Outcomes Report must be submitted to the USDA program contact personnel within 90 days of completion of the SEL. This report is prepared by the USDA MSP Scholar and submitted through the Project Director of the active Higher Education Multicultural Scholars Program award. ***This is not an activity report with a daily log of tasks.*** The Outcomes Report describes accomplishments and may include images.

(c) Current Research Information System Required Reporting:

Grantees are required to submit initial project information and annual and summary reports to NIFA **Current Research Information System (CRIS)**. The CRIS database contains narrative project information, progress/impact statements, and final technical reports that are made available to the public. For applications recommended for funding, instructions on preparing and submission of project documentation will be provided to the applicant by the Agency Contact. **Documentation must be submitted to CRIS before NIFA funds will be released.** Project reports will be requested by the CRIS office when required. [Note: ***The Annual Accomplishment Report and the Final Technical Report address the funded undergraduate/D.V.M. training project as a whole and not the individual annual progress of each Scholar in his/her program of study.***] For more information about CRIS, visit <http://cris.nifa.usda.gov>.

Annual Performance Report:

Annual performance reports are due 90 days after the anniversary date of the award and should be submitted to the NIFA's CRIS.

Annual performance reports must:

- 1) Identify each participant of target audience (traditionally underrepresented and underserved in USDA mission STEM fields) in advancing from the baseline established in funded objectives;
- 2) Address the collaborations and placement of MSP grants target audiences to demonstrate successful pipelining in USDA mission STEM fields;
- 3) Provide a comparison of actual accomplishments as gains in USDA mission STEM knowledge skills and capabilities, as well as new participants in USDA mission science through outreach activities, new careers or advanced or graduate training with the goals established for the reporting period;
- 4) If established goals were not met, give the reasons;
- 5) Include documentation of outputs; i.e., significant activities, including dissemination activities, events, services or products that contribute toward achieving the goals and objectives of the project;

- 6) Include outcomes/impacts; i.e., a change in knowledge, actions or conditions; and
- 7) Include any other indication each Scholar's increased capacity for carrying out the USDA mission.

Final Technical Report:

A final technical report must be submitted to CRIS within 90 days after the expiration date of the project. The expiration date is specified in the award documents and modifications thereto, if any. Generally, the final technical report should be a summary of the completed project, including:

- 1) Identify all of the MSP project participants from the target audience who were recruited, trained and gainfully employed and or pursuing graduate education (full funding details and funds aligned to each beneficiary for the target audience will be needed);
- 2) A review of project objectives and accomplishments;
- 3) A description of outcomes resulting from the project and activities undertaken to disseminate these outcomes;
- 4) An explanation of partnerships and new collaborations that resulted from the project, including future initiatives that are planned as a result of the project;
- 5) A description of the project's impact on the Scholars, PD(s), the institution(s) involved, and the community;
- 6) Any pertinent data on project personnel and beneficiaries. The final technical report also must contain any other information specified in the terms and conditions of the award; and,
- 7) Soft and/or hard copies or samples of products or publications resulting from this project must be sent to the NIFA National Program Leader overseeing MSP (see Part VII).

When NIFA has accepted a Final Technical Report in CRIS **and** the Fellowships/Scholarships Exit Form (OMB No. 0524-0039) for **each Scholar** supported by an award, the grantee has satisfied the requirement of the final performance reporting for the award. Additional follow-up reports to track Scholars' career patterns also may be requested.

For informational purposes, the "Federal Financial Report," Form SF-425, consolidates into a single report the former Financial Status Report (SF-269 and SF-269A) and the Federal Cash Transactions Report (SF-272 and SF-272A). The [NIFA Agency-specific Terms and Conditions](#) include the requirement that Form SF-425 is due on a **quarterly basis no later than 30 days following the end of each reporting period. A final "Federal Financial Report," Form SF-425, is due 90 days after the expiration date of this award.**

PART VII—AGENCY CONTACT

Applicants and other interested parties are encouraged to contact: Dr. Audrey A. Trotman; National Education Program Leader, Higher Education Graduate Fellowships, Science and Education Resources Development Unit; National Institute of Food and, U.S. Department of Agriculture; Stop 2251; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW; Washington, DC 20250-2251; telephone: 202-720-1973; fax: 202-720-2030; e-mail: NNF@NIFA.usda.gov.

PART VIII—OTHER INFORMATION

A. Access to Review Information

Copies of reviews, not including the identity of reviewers, and a summary of the panel comments will be sent to the applicant PD after the review process has been completed.

B. Use of Funds; Changes

1. Delegation of Fiscal Responsibility

Unless the terms and conditions of the award state otherwise, the awardee may not in whole or in part delegate or transfer to another person, institution, or organization the responsibility for use or expenditure of award funds.

2. Changes in Project Plans

a. The permissible changes by the awardee, PD(s), or other key project personnel in the approved project shall be limited to changes in methodology, techniques, or other similar aspects of the project to expedite achievement of the project's approved goals. If the awardee or the PD(s) is uncertain as to whether a change complies with this provision, the question must be referred to the Authorized Departmental Officer (ADO) for a final determination. The ADO is the signatory of the award document, not the program contact.

b. Changes in approved goals or objectives shall be requested by the awardee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to effecting such changes. In no event shall requests for such changes be approved which are outside the scope of the original approved project.

c. Changes in approved project leadership or the replacement or reassignment of other key project personnel shall be requested by the awardee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to effecting such changes.

d. Transfers of actual performance of the substantive programmatic work in whole or in part and provisions for payment of funds, whether or not Federal funds are involved, shall be requested by the awardee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to effecting such transfers, unless prescribed otherwise in the terms and conditions of the award.

e. The project period may be extended by NIFA without additional financial support, for such additional period(s) as the ADO determines may be necessary to complete or fulfill the purposes of an approved project, but in no case shall the total project period exceed any applicable statutory limit or expiring appropriation limitation. Any extension of time shall be conditioned upon prior request by the awardee and approval in writing by the ADO, unless prescribed otherwise in the terms and conditions of award.

f. Changes in Approved Budget: Unless stated otherwise in the terms and conditions of award, changes in an approved budget must be requested by the awardee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to instituting such changes, if the revision will involve transfers or expenditures of amounts requiring prior approval as set forth in the applicable Federal cost principles, Departmental regulations, or award.

C. Confidential Aspects of Applications and Awards

When an application results in an award, it becomes a part of the record of NIFA transactions, available to the public upon specific request. Information that the Secretary determines to be of a confidential, privileged, or proprietary nature will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law. Therefore, any information that the applicant wishes to have considered as confidential, privileged, or proprietary should be clearly marked within the application. The original copy of an application that does not result in an award will be retained by the Agency for a period of three years. Other copies will be destroyed. Such an application will be released only with the consent of the applicant or to the extent required by law. An application may be withdrawn at any time prior to the final action thereon.

D. Regulatory Information

For the reasons set forth in the final Rule related Notice to 7 CFR part 3015, subpart V (48 FR 29114, June 24, 1983), this program is excluded from the scope of the Executive Order 12372 which requires intergovernmental consultation with State and local officials. Under the provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. chapter 35), the collection of information requirements contained in this Notice have been approved under OMB Document No. 0524-0039.

E. Definitions

Please refer to 7 CFR 3430, Competitive and Noncompetitive Non-formula Grant Programs--General Grant Administrative Provisions, for the applicable definitions for this NIFA grant program.

First generation means an individual neither of whose parents completed a baccalaureate degree, or in the case of any individual who regularly resided with and received support from only one parent, an individual whose only such parent did not complete a baccalaureate degree.

Application Submission Checklist

The following checklist contains suggested guidelines to verify prior to application submission:

- Have all attachments been submitted in the portable document format (PDF)?** Only PDF attachments will be accepted. See Part III, section 3.1 of the NIFA Application Guide.

- Do all submitted PDF documents have one-inch margins and are typed or word processed using no type smaller than 12 point and double spaced? Are all PDF documents numbered sequentially on each page of the attachment? Are all page limitations for a given attachment followed? Submitted applications that do not meet these requirements for PDF attachments may be returned without review.
- ❑ Have all seven required components of the SF 424 Research and Related (R&R) Application Package been completed? Did you use the “Check Package for Errors” feature of the Adobe Reader (see Part IV, section 1.8 of the NIFA Application Guide)?
 - ❑ SF 424 R&R Cover Sheet
 - ❑ R&R Project/Performance Site Location(s)
 - ❑ R&R Other Project Information
 - ❑ R&R Senior/Key Person Profile (Expanded)
 - ❑ R&R Personal Data
 - ❑ R&R Budget
 - ❑ R&R Subaward Budget Attachment (Only if there is a subaward or if submitting an Award Category No. 2 Project Proposal)
 - ❑ Supplemental Information Form
- ◆ **SF 424 R&R Cover Sheet**
 - ❑ Have all required fields been completed? Field 5 must contain the legal name of the eligible college or university.
- ◆ **R&R Project/Performance Site Location(s)**
 - ❑ Have all required fields been completed?
- ◆ **R&R Other Project Information**
 - ❑ Have the fields describing project potential or actual environmental impact been properly completed?
 - ❑ **Project Summary/Abstract**
 - Has the Project Summary PDF been attached to this form in Field 7?
 - Does this section adhere to the format and content?
 - ❑ **Project Narrative**
 - Has the Project Narrative PDF been attached to this form in Field 8?
 - Are responses provided for all Sections of the Project Narrative in the RFA for this section (Field 8, Sections 1through 9)?
 - Does this section adhere to the format and page limitations?
 - Is the Table of Contents attached?
 - ❑ **Response to Previous Review (for resubmitted applications only)**
 - Only include if you are resubmitting an application that was previously not funded.
 - Include as a one-page attachment (PDF) in Field 12 Has the resubmitted application briefly addressed comments from the previous review?
 - ❑ **Letters of Commitment**
 - Have the signed Letters of Commitment PDF been attached to this form in Field 12?
 - ❑ **Appendices to Project Narrative**
 - Has the Appendix to Project Narrative PDF been attached to this form in Field 12?

Fellowships/Scholarships Entry/Exit Form (ONLY where SEL funding is requested for current eligible MSP Scholars)

- Has the Fellowships/Scholarships Entry and Exit Form been attached to this form in Field 12?

◆ **R&R Senior/Key Person Profile (Expanded)**

Biographical Sketch

- Has the biographical sketch (vitae) PDF for the PD, senior associate, and other professional personnel been attached?

Current and Pending Support

- Has the current and pending support PDF for all key personnel been attached?
- Have all current and pending projects been listed and summarized, including this application?

◆ **Personal Data DO NOT PROVIDE THE SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER OF THE PROJECT DIRECTOR/PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR.**

- Have all fields been completed except for the social security number?

◆ **R&R Budget**

- Have all fields been completed?

- Has the Cost of Education Allowance been identified on line 5, Other, of Section E of the Budget?

- Request for SEL funds identified on the Budget form?

- Are trainee stipends identified on line 2, of in Section E of the Budget form?

- Has the number of trainee stipends the applicant proposes been included?

Budget Justification

- Has the Budget Justification PDF been attached to this form in Field K?
- Are budget items individually justified?
- For multi-institutional applications, has a budget justification been included for each institution involved (Only required if submitting an Award Category No. 2 Project Proposal)?
- For SEL, have the budgeted funds identified been justified?

◆ **Supplemental Information Form**

- Does Field 2 indicate the Program Code Name and Program Code to which you are applying?

Have you included the required Conflict of Interest List (PDF) attachments for key personnel **identifying full names (first, middle initial, last) and organizational affiliation?** (See format in NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide, Section VI, 1.8, p.47, for instructions.) Include this one-page attachment even if your responses to the questions are “N/A”.