Congress funds project to entice college grads to government service

By Stephen Burr

The Washington Post

 Worried that too many young Americans are turned off by the idea of working in government, Congress has provided $600,000 for a research project to develop strategies to raise interest among college students in federal service.

The "Call to Service Recruitment Initiative" will be run by the Office of Personnel Management and the Partnership for Public Service, according to the fiscal 2006 spending bill that covers OPM operations.

"The war for talent is a real war," Max Stier, president of the partnership, said. "The public sector is losing that war, and the consequences are going to become more severe."

The project will use surveys and other research efforts to test and evaluate various methods of reaching out to college students and to understand what messages or outreach activities might sway top-notch graduates to seriously consider a federal job.

Or, as Stier put it, "Can we move the needle on students' interest in government as an employer of first choice?"

He noted that "the military has spent millions upon millions of dollars on understanding what talent they need to succeed, but virtually no research has been done on the civil service side of the house."

OPM and the partnership, a nonprofit group, launched the Call to Serve campaign in 2002 in an effort to educate young Americans about federal careers. The campaign has enlisted the help of 565 colleges and 62 federal agencies.

According to the partnership, six universities have volunteered for the research project: Clark Atlanta, George Washington, Louisiana State, Ohio State, Stanford, and the University of New Mexico.

Part of the project will focus on hard-to-fill occupations in the government, Stier said. For example, Stanford will look at how best to recruit engineering students; Ohio State will see what should be done to improve foreign language skills in the government; and New Mexico will examine new ways of attracting Hispanics to federal service, Stier said.

The partnership and OPM will produce reports that will hopefully help federal agencies improve their recruitment of college students and other young Americans.

A 2004 survey sponsored by the Council for Excellence in Government found that only 23 percent of young Americans were extremely likely or very likely to pursue a government career. By contrast, 35 percent said they were interested in working for a "community service organization."

Previous research by the partnership and Paul C. Light, a New York University professor, found that many Americans view federal careers as unappealing or believe that the government needs to be reformed, making it difficult for agencies to attract and keep talented employees.
Opinions

Phoenix January 9, 2006

Looking forward...

By Kathy Davis

It is with an incredible sense of responsibility and a great deal of pride that I become the first person in my family to graduate from college. By family, I mean all of my ancestors: not just my parents, siblings, and children. It is because of my background that I deeply value education and will never take it for granted.

I remember vividly my very first class on my very first day of college. I felt like an impostor. I was not only nervous, but I was completely sure that I was anything but college material. I was excited, but timorous. The professor was younger than I, as were the majority of the students. I spent much of the class talking to myself and second guessing whether I should even be there. I had almost convinced myself that I should reconsider this experiment, when the professor asked my opinion about the topic we were discussing, and to my amazement, I actually answered. That’s when it hit me: I belong here!

For the past four years I have been what I always wanted to be: a college student. As a non-traditional student, I have been able to see from a perspective that most young people cannot; one that includes years of life experience.

At some point it occurred to me that the things I have seen and experienced over a lifetime would serve me well, and I understood that this was much more important than the youth my fellow students possessed.

My love for learning has not subsided over time. I have kept in touch with that young professor and I consider him a mentor and a friend.

When I came to GSU, I had no idea what I wanted to study. I chose Media Communication because I thought it would be fun. And I was right. I have enjoyed my classes with Dan and Eli. I must thank them both. They have made this experience so enjoyable, and I have learned so much from each of them.

I will miss everyone who helped make the past two years bearable. Bonnie, Pierre, Jodi, Karin, Steve, and too many others to enumerate with whom I have commiserated and compared notes. To these people go my thanks for laughing with me and diminishing my stress level so many times.

I am a different person than I was the day I arrived here. I know more about myself and am more confident in my future.

The gift of an education has made me acutely aware of my responsibility as a citizen of the world. I envy those who know from a young age exactly what they want to do or be. I have not been so fortunate; it has never been the case that I have truly understood where my passion lies.

I believe in public service and am looking forward to starting my graduate school education in political science. I don't know what my future holds, but I embrace it as I leave this place.

In the words of Winston Churchill, "I know history will be kind to me for I intend to write it." Well, my own at least.

Kathy Davis receives her bachelor's degree in Communications, graduating with GSU's Winter 2005 class. She has contributed significantly to the Phoenix, especially as a writer and copy editor. This issue features some of her photographs on pages 4 and 5.

Looking back...

By Nancy LaLantas

Serving as the editor for the past year and a half has been an incredibly rewarding experience! But alas, it's time to move on and make room for new blood.

I have kept in touch with that young professor and I consider him a mentor and a friend.

Just as the Phoenix has been an incredible symbol of resurrection from the ashes, it still burns brightly as a symbol of the human spirit.

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Ever wonder who you are?

(continued from page 1)

Hone your listening skills: learn better, earn better

By Michael Purdy

A crazy thing about communication in American society is the strange power of the listener. A song isn’t good unless the listener says it is good; audiences determine the outcome of a movie; the success of a book depends on whether people like what they read.

It’s equally true that we aren’t serious listeners until we have elected our own. If we don’t critically train our listening tastes, we could be a mindless consumer of whatever the music industry pushes our way with big ad budgets and slick promotions.

As in music, good listening counts in business. Donald Carstensen, vice president for educational services at ACT*, surveyed a group of business leaders about the five skills they expect employees to have. Naturally, listening is critical in the business environment where a mistake in understanding can cost thousands or millions of dollars.

A good listener:
1. Uses eye contact appropriately.
2. Is attentive and alert to a speaker’s verbal and nonverbal behavior.
3. Is patient and doesn’t interrupt (waits for the speaker to finish).
4. Is responsive, using verbal and nonverbal expressions.
5. Asks questions in a non-distracting tone.
6. Paraphrases, restates or summarizes what the speaker says.
7. Provides constructive (verbal or nonverbal) feedback.
8. Is empathic (works to understand the speaker).
9. Shows interest in the speaker as a person.
10. Demonstrates a caring attitude and is willing to listen.
11. Doesn’t criticize, is nonjudgmental.
12. Is open-minded.

A poor listener:
1. Interrupts the speaker (is impatient).
2. Doesn’t give eye contact (eyes wander).
3. Is distracted (fidgeting) and does not pay attention to the speaker.
4. Is not interested in the speaker (doesn’t care; daydreaming).
5. Gives the speaker little or no (verbal or nonverbal) feedback.
6. Changes the subject.
7. Is judgmental.
8. Is closed-minded.
10. Is self-preoccupied.
12. Too busy to listen.

Similar studies done over the last two decades by Fortune 500 trainers and business consultants have found similar results.

Be Active

On the way up the career ladder, your listening skills should improve. Hourly employees may spend 30 percent of their time listening, while managers often spend 60 percent, and executives 75 percent or more.

Does effective listening lead to promotion, or do high- ups learn to listen better because they must? It is probably a combination. Essentially, to be more successful, you must be a better listener. Better listening is also active listening.

To be an active listener, you must begin with awareness. When do others get angry with you for poor communication? When do you have problems communicating? How were you listening at these times?

It takes guts, but ask others what you could do to become a better listener. Others see our faults much better than we do. Learn about effective listening: Read books, visit the International Listening Association’s Web site (www.listening.org) for tips, or use a workshop or class on effective listening. Then be sure to practice what you learn.

Power Listening

To be a successful listener, you must also believe that listening is power. Because our society places so much emphasis on speaking as the way to win friends and influence people, good listeners can quietly have a powerful and persuasive impact.

You should also remember that speakers have little power without listeners. Speakers share their wisdom and try to persuade, but listeners make meaning of what is being said -- they make the ultimate decision to act on what they hear.

Michael Purdy, Ph.D., is GUS professor of communications and co-editor of the book, “Listening in Everyday Life.” This article originally appeared on monster.com.
A window on winter

Photos by Kathy Davis
Opportunities for student involvement

Students who put more time and energy into the activities that matter to their education, both inside and outside the classroom, learn more during college than those who are not as involved. Research has shown this to be true.

Described below are some of the opportunities available for student involvement at GSU. Please consider becoming a part of the GSU governance through your participation.

Student Conduct Committee

Students, faculty members, and administrators conduct hearings regarding violations of the Student Conduct Code. After deliberations, the committee makes recommendations to the Student Co-Curricular Activities and Services dean regarding sanctions. Requirements for this committee call for four students and one student alternates. Contact Sara Appel in room A2132, ext. 4552.

Student Communications Coordinating Committee

The SCCC serves as the publisher for those GSU student communications media which are funded, in whole or in part, by student activity fees. As such, the SCCC is a recommending body responsible to the executive director of Student Life in any and all matters dealing with student communications media. Any decision of the executive director of Student Life may be appealed to the dean for Student Co-Curricular Activities and Services, or her designee. Requirements call for five students, including at least one graduate and one undergraduate student. Contact Vanessa Newby in room A2130, ext. 4551.

Career Services and Counseling Fee Board

The Division of Student Development, with student recommendations, is charged with using the Career Services and Counseling fee (included in student fees) to support these specific counseling needs of GSU students. Contact Vanessa Newby in room A2130, ext. 4551.

Student Handbook Revision Committee

The current edition of the GSU Student Handbook covers academic years 2004-2006. A revised edition should be developed, published, and available for distribution at the beginning of the Fall 2006 trimester. Students are needed to review the current handbook (text/content, pictures, and layout) and suggest changes, if appropriate, to be implemented and included in the new edition. Students may choose to work on a particular section or area of the handbook. Contact Vanessa Newby in room A2130, ext. 4551.

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Student, author looks at computers in Chicago schools

By Marina Huizar

Deans of computer science students assembled into a classroom at GSU to hear a lecture on the most unlikely of topics for their field –The Chicago Public School System. Theresa Banks, a fellow computer science major, was to present her thesis project. She has been attending GSU intermittently since ‘96, and decided to come back to pursue her master’s in computer science.

For someone who is an accomplished writer and works at Bank One as a business analyst, computer science was an unusual field for her to get into. Banks is undaunted by the seemingly bleak opportunities in computer science, noted to be especially bleak for women. Banks asserts that you have to constantly reinvent yourself, because your skills may become obsolete as quickly as you acquired them. With pervasive lay-offs in today’s economy, you can’t rely on that secure job of the recent past that pretty much guaranteed a pension. “You need to have a Plan B, and even a Plan C,” she advises. “You have to constantly be flexible. People also aren’t furthering their education to a masters degree level, which puts them at a disadvantage with the risk of offline shoring.”

Banks intends to incorporate computer programming into her publishing ventures. She currently owns a publica tion company with her husband. In addition, she teaches a course on how to get published at GSU. She finds that teachers in Chicagoland use hardware and software in various ways to reach their students. These uses include security, attendance, administration, education and training. At Penn High School, for example, attendance is checked when each child enters and has their ID card scanned.

“An Institute can be an advocate for teachers like they used to be,” says GSU Professor Zhao introduced Banks as she was about to conduct her thesis presentation. “She is our student,” he gushes. “She is a product of GSU, and I’m really proud of her.”

Banks has been working on her master’s thesis with Zhao since early 2005, and collaborated with Dr. Harry K. Wong (expert in K-12 education), author of “What it Takes to Actually Teach.” For the duration of the 40-minute long thesis, she discussed technology usage in Chicago Public Schools for grade levels K-12. She went on to explain that in computer science, students have the option of doing a thesis project or doing a computer science program or website. She chose to write a thesis because writing is what she does best (as evidenced by the three successful books she has written).

Banks also chose to do that thesis topic because of her interests education. She had to go through to different schools and do presentations there. With diversity, she wanted to bear witness; to see first hand how computers are being used in the classroom. Her research was facilitated by the free bus tours conducted by the city of Chicago that take you to different schools.

“I had a ball,” relates Banks, “with the opportunity to see four schools each day and to interact with them. From early school days, with less reading going on nowadays, and much more visual.”

Banks found that teachers in Chicagoland use hardware and software in various ways to reach their students. These uses include security, attendance, administration, education and training. At Penn High School, for example, attendance is checked when each child enters and has their ID card scanned.

“At Sullivan High School, you get the sense that you’re in a hospital,” she says. “I thought I was going into a computer health fair, which actually turned out to be checking for viruses in computers, and for maintenance. It had nothing at all to do with the health of people.”

She also found that more than 1,100 teachers who were recently laid off in Chicago because of a “No Child Left Behind” rule that dictates a teacher must be highly qualified. Teachers must now submit to tests and incur some fees.

Banks learned from her collaborator, Dr. Wong, that teachers are forced to be social workers. He claims that unless discipline is under control, you can’t begin to teach.

Many other factors also come into play, such as the weakening of children’s eyesight, poor posture, radiation hazards, weight gain, and sitting in front of a computer screen instead of going out to the playground.

An author of both fiction and nonfiction, Banks’ three books include, “Woman of Integrity,” “Barronbrook,” and “Internal Structured Instruction.” “Woman of Integrity” is a mainstream novel, about the life of Tantra Mathews. It’s the story of how one woman endures life’s most difficult challenges... including the death of her mother, exit of a tridget boyfriend, and entrance of a father who deserted the family.

She is now pondering working on a Ph.D., and since she has a passion for academic work she figures, why not? Some of her other interests include teaching computer programming and networking. With computer science, her goal is to have a break-out role with publishing and teaching.

Feel secure, but exercise caution

By Farha Behlim

Governors State’s campus is one of the safest campuses in the nation. In years 2002 through 2004, there has been only one report of aggravated assault (2002), and one motor vehicle theft report (2004) on campus.

However, because we work and go to class in a safe environment, we often don’t give campus safety a second thought. Safety and security should not be taken for granted.

In 2004, there were 37 reports of theft on campus. Most thefts result from students and faculty becoming too at ease with their belongings, leaving personal items unattended in the cafeteria or unlocked car, or leaving an office door unlocked while stepping away, according to Sgt. Debra Boyd of the Department of Public Safety (DPS).

With safety a primary concern, the university recently installed emergency phones in the parking lots. The blue light on top of the pole on which the phone is mounted identifies these. These phones are similar to the yellow call-boxes located at the entrances to campus buildings, and are to be used in emergencies. A person can be connected directly to campus police (DPS), or a call to another department on campus can also be made from these phones. The DPS wants to remind us these phones are for emergencies or extraordinary circumstances, and not to call to check on the temperature in G wing or if Gummy can break a twenty in the cafeteria.

Within all campus buildings, there are well-maintained emergency red phones that will call DPS directly when the receiver is picked up. [The department] also handles all emergency calls that are medical, hazardous material, and fire,” said Sgt. Debra Boyd of the DPS. “We only ask that the GSU community be our eyes and ears on campus.”

One concern the university has is the fact of students walking to their cars at night – especially after the 7:30 classes let out around 10 p.m. or so. Boyd recommends developing a buddy system, and making a point to leave with a friend or someone you know when walking out of the campus buildings at night. If needed, DPS offers a visual escort service for any persons walking to their cars at night.

Safecide is a service that runs a shuttle service between the University Park Metra station and the GSU campus. This service runs four times a night Monday thru Friday, and twice on Saturday. Special requests are also available for the last 9-20 p.m. shuttle service.

DPS can help motorists in the event of a dead battery by providing a free battery jump, and they can provide lockout service (free) if you leave your keys in the car. And they’ll call a commercial service to provide flat tire assistance if needed, but that’s at your own cost.

The Department of Public Safety will be present during Welcome Week and offer blood pressure screening, a service they regularly provide in their office. The campus police are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

If anyone notices an incident in question, please look out for one another and our community, and report it.

Further information on campus safety can be found at www.govest.edu/csp and click on "Go to Campus Police." There are also links to other sites, like local weather (enter GSU’s zip code [60466] and you will see a menu of local schools. Click on Governors State and the weather for GSU appears), Chicagoland expressway congestion, and Illinois State Crime Stoppers.
WHAT'S HAPPENING

Monday Jan. 9
WINTER TRIMESTER BEGINS

Monday Jan. 9 thru Thursday Jan. 14
Welcome Week

Make the most of Student Life! Join a club, make a difference, be a part of what's happening! Free refreshments, raffles, and giveaways too! Enjoy "Welcome Week" activities 10:30 to 7:30 p.m. in the Atrium and Hall of Governors. Additionally, Bruce Carleveto draws caricatures from noon to 2 p.m. on Monday. Make bracelets or candles at the Craft Corner from noon to 2 p.m. and 5:30 to 9:30 p.m. Tuesday; and "Mosaic" performs 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Wednesday.

Martin Luther King, Jr. Brief remarks will be made in Dr. King's honor, followed by the lighting of candles as the GSU congregation sings the infamous spiritual, "We Shall Overcome." Noon in the Hall of Governors.

Saturday Jan. 21
Especially for Kids: Eric Carle's
'The Very Hungry Caterpillar'


Saturday Jan. 21
'ABBA Celebration'

A tribute to one of the most successful groups in pop music history, ABBA, at 8 p.m. at The Center. Sing along with the hits! Tickets are $33 to $42. Call The Center at 708.534.4552.

Monday Jan. 23
"Making the Dream a Reality"

A formal program honoring the life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., will be celebrated in music, dance, and the spoken word from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at The Center. Call Sara Appel at 708.534.4552.

Monday Jan. 23
100% refund deadline
for Blocks 1 & 2

Saturday Jan. 28
'ABBA Celebration'

Warm soothing sounds of the cello, reminiscent of a scrumptious and smooth truffle. This decadent concert is covered with Tchaikovsky and a centerstage performance at 3 p.m. at The Center by acclaimed soloist Zuill Bailey. Call The Center at 708.534.5553.

Martin Luther King, Jr. Brief remarks will be made in Dr. King's honor, followed by the lighting of candles as the GSU congregation sings the infamous spiritual, "We Shall Overcome." Noon in the Hall of Governors.

Tuesday Jan. 23
100% refund deadline

Tuesday Jan. 17
Hands Across GSU

Participate in a brief ceremony honoring the late Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Brief remarks will be made in Dr. King's honor, followed by the lighting of candles as the GSU congregation sings the infamous spiritual, "We Shall Overcome." Noon in the Hall of Governors.

Wednesday Feb. 1 & Thursday Feb. 2
Arts & Crafts

Black History Month is hosting Arts and Crafts from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. in the Hall of Governors. We are also looking for Arts & Crafts vendors. Payment and registration is due by January 23. No refunds will be issued after January 23. Call Sara Appel at 708.534.4552.

Friday Feb. 3
'Flanagan's Wake'

Noble Fool Theatre Company presents a Chicago favorite! Experience a wake like no other with this hilarious and wacky interactive show at 8 p.m. at The Center. Discover your Celtic roots by participating in the ruminations on the life of Flanagan lived and how he died. Tickets are $28 to $37. Call The Center at 708.235.2222.

Friday Feb. 4
Especially for Kids:
'Little House on the Prairie'

Of one of America's most endearing authors, whose classic books have inspired young people to discover their own pioneering spirit for more than 50 years. Arts Power's popular musical tells the uplifting story at 11 a.m. at The Center. Tickets are $9 to $14. Call The Center at 708.235.2222.

Saturday Feb. 11
David Sanborn

Enjoy an evening of smooth jazz with Grammy Award-winner David Sanborn. Back by popular demand, Sanborn will perform selections from his Grammy Award winning albums, "Inside," "Double Vision," "Nouveau," and others. Tickets are $48 to $57. Call The Center at 708.235.2222.

Tuesday Feb 7
Film: 'The Murder of Emmet Till'

Student Life hosts this documentary film at noon and again at 4 p.m. in Engbretson Hall. In honor of Black History Month. Call Sara Appel at 708.534.4552.

Tuesday Jan. 10 & Thursday Jan. 12
Voter Registration

Are you registered to vote? The GSU Student Senate invites the League of Women Voters to register for the March 28th Primary Election from 1 to 3 p.m. in the Hall of Governors. Call Sara Appel at 708.534.4552.

Sunday Jan. 15
The Russian National Ballet in
'The Sleeping Beauty'

Back by popular demand after an outstanding performance of Swan Lake here last year! This acclaimed Russian troupe returns at 4 p.m. in the Center with an exquisite rendition of the classic tale of Sleeping Beauty set to Tchaikovsky's thrilling score. A favorite among all generations. Tickets are $9 to $14. Call The Center at 708.235.2222.

Sunday Jan. 29
Illinois Philharmonic Orchestra
'A Tchaikovsky Truffle'

Illinois Philharmonic Orchestra performs a scrumptious variety of Tchaikovsky's finest works, including his ever-popular Nutcracker Suite and the world's most famous symphony, the 1812 Overture. Enjoy an evening of smooth jazz with Grammy Award-winner David Sanborn. Back by popular demand, Sanborn will perform selections from his Grammy Award winning albums, "Inside," "Double Vision," "Nouveau," and others. Tickets are $48 to $57. Call The Center at 708.235.2222.

Tuesday Jan. 16
Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday UNIVERSITY CLOSED

Monday Jan. 16
Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday UNIVERSITY CLOSED