

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 1257

To establish a Federal artificial intelligence scholarship-for-service program.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

APRIL 20, 2021

Mr. PETERS (for himself and Mr. THUNE) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation

A BILL

To establish a Federal artificial intelligence scholarship-for-service program.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “AI Scholarship-for-
5 Service Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FEDERAL ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE SCHOLAR-**
7 **SHIP-FOR-SERVICE PROGRAM.**

8 (a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

9 (1) ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE.—The term “ar-
10 tificial intelligence” or “AI” has the meaning given

1 the term “artificial intelligence” in section 238(g) of
2 the John S. McCain National Defense Authorization
3 Act for Fiscal Year 2019 (10 U.S.C. 2358 note).

4 (2) EXECUTIVE AGENCY.—The term “executive
5 agency” has the meaning given the term “Executive
6 agency” in section 105 of title 5, United States
7 Code.

8 (3) REGISTERED INTERNSHIP.—The term “reg-
9 istered internship” means a Federal Registered In-
10 ternship Program coordinated through the Depart-
11 ment of Labor.

12 (b) IN GENERAL.—The Director of the National
13 Science Foundation, in coordination with the Director of
14 the Office of Personnel Management, the Director of the
15 National Institute of Standards and Technology, and the
16 heads of other agencies with appropriate scientific knowl-
17 edge, shall establish a Federal artificial intelligence schol-
18 arship-for-service program (referred to in this section as
19 the “Federal AI Scholarship-for-Service Program”) to re-
20 cruit and train artificial intelligence professionals to lead
21 and support the application of artificial intelligence to the
22 missions of Federal, State, local, and Tribal governments.

23 (c) QUALIFIED INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDU-
24 CATION.—The Director of the National Science Founda-
25 tion, in coordination with the heads of other agencies with

1 appropriate scientific knowledge, shall establish criteria to
 2 designate qualified institutions of higher education that
 3 shall be eligible to participate in the Federal AI Scholar-
 4 ship-for-Service program. Such criteria shall include—

5 (1) measures of the institution’s demonstrated
 6 excellence in the education of students in the field
 7 of artificial intelligence; and

8 (2) measures of the institution’s ability to at-
 9 tract and retain a diverse and non-traditional stu-
 10 dent population in the fields of science, technology,
 11 engineering, and mathematics, which may include
 12 the ability to attract women, minorities, and individ-
 13 uals with disabilities.

14 (d) PROGRAM DESCRIPTION AND COMPONENTS.—

15 The Federal AI Scholarship-for-Service Program shall—

16 (1) provide scholarships through qualified insti-
 17 tutions of higher education to students who are en-
 18 rolled in programs of study at institutions of higher
 19 education leading to degrees or concentrations in or
 20 related to the artificial intelligence field;

21 (2) provide the scholarship recipients with sum-
 22 mer internship opportunities, registered internships,
 23 or other meaningful temporary appointments in the
 24 Federal workforce focusing on artificial intelligence

1 (referred to in this section as “AI”) projects or re-
2 search;

3 (3) prioritize the employment placement of
4 scholarship recipients in executive agencies;

5 (4) identify opportunities to promote multi-dis-
6 ciplinary programs of study that integrate basic or
7 advanced AI training with other fields of study, in-
8 cluding those that address the social, economic,
9 legal, and ethical implications of human interaction
10 with AI systems; and

11 (5) support capacity-building education re-
12 search programs that will enable postsecondary edu-
13 cational institutions to expand their ability to train
14 the next-generation AI workforce, including AI re-
15 searchers and practitioners.

16 (e) SCHOLARSHIP AMOUNTS.—Each scholarship
17 under subsection (d) shall be in an amount that covers
18 the student’s tuition and fees at the institution for not
19 more than 3 years and provides the student with an addi-
20 tional stipend.

21 (f) POST-AWARD EMPLOYMENT OBLIGATIONS.—
22 Each scholarship recipient, as a condition of receiving a
23 scholarship under the program, shall enter into an agree-
24 ment under which the recipient agrees to work for a period

1 equal to the length of the scholarship, following receipt
2 of the student's degree, in the AI mission of—

3 (1) an executive agency;

4 (2) Congress, including any agency, entity, of-
5 fice, or commission established in the legislative
6 branch;

7 (3) an interstate agency;

8 (4) a State, local, or Tribal government, which
9 may include instruction in AI-related skill sets in a
10 public school system; or

11 (5) a State, local, or Tribal government-affili-
12 ated nonprofit that is considered to be critical infra-
13 structure (as defined in section 1016(e) of the USA
14 Patriot Act (42 U.S.C. 5195c(e))).

15 (g) HIRING AUTHORITY.—

16 (1) APPOINTMENT IN EXCEPTED SERVICE.—

17 Notwithstanding any provision of chapter 33 of title
18 5 governing appointments in the competitive service,
19 an executive agency shall appoint in the excepted
20 service an individual who has completed the eligible
21 degree program for which a scholarship was award-
22 ed.

23 (2) NONCOMPETITIVE CONVERSION.—Except as
24 provided in paragraph (4), upon fulfillment of the
25 service term, an employee appointed under para-

1 graph (1) may be converted noncompetitively to
 2 term, career-conditional or career appointment.

3 (3) TIMING OF CONVERSION.—An executive
 4 agency may noncompetitively convert a term em-
 5 ployee appointed under paragraph (2) to a career-
 6 conditional or career appointment before the term
 7 appointment expires.

8 (4) AUTHORITY TO DECLINE CONVERSION.—An
 9 executive agency may decline to make the non-
 10 competitive conversion or appointment under para-
 11 graph (2) for cause.

12 (h) ELIGIBILITY.—To be eligible to receive a scholar-
 13 ship under this section, an individual shall—

14 (1) be a citizen or lawful permanent resident of
 15 the United States;

16 (2) demonstrate a commitment to a career in
 17 advancing the field of AI;

18 (3) be—

19 (A) a full-time student in an eligible degree
 20 program at a qualified institution of higher
 21 education, as determined by the Director of the
 22 National Science Foundation;

23 (B) a student pursuing a degree on a less
 24 than full-time basis, but not less than half-time
 25 basis; or

1 (C) an AI faculty member on sabbatical to
 2 advance knowledge in the field; and

3 (4) accept the terms of a scholarship under this
 4 section.

5 (i) CONDITIONS OF SUPPORT.—

6 (1) IN GENERAL.—As a condition of receiving a
 7 scholarship under this section, a recipient shall agree
 8 to provide the qualified institution of higher edu-
 9 cation with annual verifiable documentation of post-
 10 award employment and up-to-date contact informa-
 11 tion.

12 (2) TERMS.—A scholarship recipient under this
 13 section shall be liable to the United States as pro-
 14 vided in subsection (k) if the individual—

15 (A) fails to maintain an acceptable level of
 16 academic standing at the applicable institution
 17 of higher education, as determined by the Di-
 18 rector of the National Science Foundation;

19 (B) is dismissed from the applicable insti-
 20 tution of higher education for disciplinary rea-
 21 sons;

22 (C) withdraws from the eligible degree pro-
 23 gram before completing the program;

1 (D) declares that the individual does not
 2 intend to fulfill the post-award employment ob-
 3 ligation under this section; or

4 (E) fails to fulfill the post-award employ-
 5 ment obligation of the individual under this sec-
 6 tion.

7 (j) MONITORING COMPLIANCE.—As a condition of
 8 participating in the program, a qualified institution of
 9 higher education shall—

10 (1) enter into an agreement with the Director
 11 of the National Science Foundation, to monitor the
 12 compliance of scholarship recipients with respect to
 13 their post-award employment obligations; and

14 (2) provide to the Director of the National
 15 Science Foundation, on an annual basis, the post-
 16 award employment documentation required under
 17 subsection (i)(1) for scholarship recipients through
 18 the completion of their post-award employment obli-
 19 gations.

20 (k) AMOUNT OF REPAYMENT.—

21 (1) LESS THAN 1 YEAR OF SERVICE.—If a cir-
 22 cumstance described in subsection (i)(2) occurs be-
 23 fore the completion of 1 year of a post-award em-
 24 ployment obligation under this section, the total

1 amount of scholarship awards received by the indi-
 2 vidual under this section shall—

3 (A) be repaid; or

4 (B) be treated as a loan to be repaid in ac-
 5 cordance with subsection (l).

6 (2) 1 OR MORE YEARS OF SERVICE.—If a cir-
 7 cumstance described in subparagraph (D) or (E) of
 8 subsection (i)(2) occurs after the completion of 1 or
 9 more years of a post-award employment obligation
 10 under this section, the total amount of scholarship
 11 awards received by the individual under this section,
 12 reduced by the ratio of the number of years of serv-
 13 ice completed divided by the number of years of
 14 service required, shall—

15 (A) be repaid; or

16 (B) be treated as a loan to be repaid in ac-
 17 cordance with subsection (l).

18 (l) REPAYMENTS.—A loan described in subsection (k)
 19 shall—

20 (1) be treated as a Federal Direct Unsubsidized
 21 Stafford Loan under part D of title IV of the High-
 22 er Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1087a et seq.);
 23 and

24 (2) be subject to repayment, together with in-
 25 terest thereon accruing from the date of the scholar-

1 ship award, in accordance with terms and conditions
2 specified by the Director of the National Science
3 Foundation (in consultation with the Secretary of
4 Education).

5 (m) COLLECTION OF REPAYMENT.—

6 (1) IN GENERAL.—In the event that a scholar-
7 ship recipient is required to repay the scholarship
8 award under this section, the qualified institution of
9 higher education providing the scholarship shall—

10 (A) determine the repayment amounts and
11 notify the recipient and the Director of the Na-
12 tional Science Foundation of the amounts owed;
13 and

14 (B) collect the repayment amounts within
15 a period of time as determined by the Director
16 of the National Science Foundation, or the re-
17 payment amounts shall be treated as a loan in
18 accordance with subsection (l).

19 (2) RETURNED TO TREASURY.—Except as pro-
20 vided in paragraph (3), any repayment under this
21 subsection shall be returned to the Treasury of the
22 United States.

23 (3) RETAIN PERCENTAGE.—A qualified institu-
24 tion of higher education may retain a percentage of
25 any repayment the institution collects under this

1 subsection to defray administrative costs associated
2 with the collection. The Director of the National
3 Science Foundation shall establish a fixed percent-
4 age that will apply to all eligible entities, and may
5 update this percentage as needed, in the determina-
6 tion of the Director of the National Science Founda-
7 tion.

8 (n) EXCEPTIONS.—The Director of the National
9 Science Foundation may provide for the partial or total
10 waiver or suspension of any service or payment obligation
11 by an individual under this section whenever compliance
12 by the individual with the obligation is impossible or would
13 involve extreme hardship to the individual, or if enforce-
14 ment of such obligation with respect to the individual
15 would be unconscionable.

16 (o) PUBLIC INFORMATION.—

17 (1) EVALUATION.—The Director of the Na-
18 tional Science Foundation, in coordination with the
19 Director of the Office of Personnel Management,
20 shall annually evaluate and make public, in a man-
21 ner that protects the personally identifiable informa-
22 tion of scholarship recipients, information on the
23 success of recruiting individuals for scholarships
24 under this section and on hiring and retaining those

1 individuals in the public sector AI workforce, includ-
2 ing information on—

3 (A) placement rates;

4 (B) where students are placed, including
5 job titles and descriptions;

6 (C) salary ranges for students not released
7 from obligations under this section;

8 (D) how long after graduation students are
9 placed;

10 (E) how long students stay in the positions
11 they enter upon graduation;

12 (F) how many students are released from
13 obligations; and

14 (G) what, if any, remedial training is re-
15 quired.

16 (2) REPORTS.—The Director of the National
17 Science Foundation, in coordination with the Office
18 of Personnel Management, shall submit, not less fre-
19 quently than once every 3 years, to the Homeland
20 Security and Governmental Affairs Committee of the
21 Senate, the Committee on Commerce, Science, and
22 Transportation of the Senate, the Committee on
23 Science, Space, and Technology of the House of
24 Representatives, and the Committee on Oversight
25 and Reform of the House of Representatives a re-

1 port, including the results of the evaluation under
2 paragraph (1) and any recent statistics regarding
3 the size, composition, and educational requirements
4 of the Federal AI workforce.

5 (3) RESOURCES.—The Director of the National
6 Science Foundation, in coordination with the Direc-
7 tor of the Office of Personnel Management, shall
8 provide consolidated and user-friendly online re-
9 sources for prospective scholarship recipients, includ-
10 ing, to the extent practicable—

11 (A) searchable, up-to-date, and accurate
12 information about participating institutions of
13 higher education and job opportunities related
14 to the AI field; and

15 (B) a modernized description of AI ca-
16 reers.

17 (p) REFRESH.—Not less than once every 2 years, the
18 Director of the National Science Foundation, in coordina-
19 tion with the Director of the Office of Personnel Manage-
20 ment, shall review and update the Federal AI Scholarship-
21 for-Service Program to reflect advances in technology.

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