

SCHOLARSHIPS *for* SERVICE



Bridge to Civic Participation

An AmeriCorps Education Award Only
Program

Student Orientation Guide 2008-2009



Rhode Island | Campus Compact



Welcome to the Scholarships for Service Program!

Congratulations on your entrance into the Scholarships for Service (SFS) Program, and welcome as you enter a network of diverse but like-minded people devoted to strengthening their communities. As a SFS AmeriCorps member you are given the opportunity to:

- Work with a cohort of students within your own campus to actively participate in strengthening your community.
- Commit to 300 hours of service and the recruitment of 5 volunteers throughout one calendar year.
- Become a part of a larger initiative that is active statewide and will engage college students in service to local communities.

Who is the Rhode Island Campus Compact?

The Rhode Island Campus Compact is a coalition of college and university presidents committed to teaching the values of public leadership. Rhode Island Campus Compact (RICC) actively promotes public and community service as vital components of higher education. Founded in 1992, RICC is one of 31 state chapters of the National Campus Compact. There are 11 two year, four year, public and private institutions in the state of Rhode Island, and all 11 are member institutions of RICC.

RICC is housed at the Rhode Island School of Design in the Center for Integrated Technologies (CIT) Building at 169 Weybosset St. in downtown Providence.

What is the Scholarships for Service Program?

Scholarships for Service (SFS) is a program of Rhode Island Campus Compact involving our member campuses. Member campuses in Rhode Island have a deep commitment to the value of service in education and to fulfilling their public trust by graduating people who are active participants in civic life. SFS is designed to both acknowledge and advance their efforts, placing students at the core.

To encourage student ownership of public service as a way of teaching, learning and living, we offer a program that will involve students as active participants in the institutionalization of service-learning, as advocates for strong community-campus partnerships, and as direct providers of service in the areas of education, children and families, the environment, public health, and other human needs.

What is AmeriCorps?

AmeriCorps is a network of national service programs that engage more than 70,000 Americans each year in intensive service to meet critical needs in education, public safety, health, and the environment. AmeriCorps members serve through more than 2,000 nonprofits, public agencies, and faith-based organizations. They tutor and mentor youth, build affordable housing, teach computer skills, clean parks and streams, run after-school programs, and help communities respond to disasters. Created in 1993, AmeriCorps is part of the Corporation for National and Community Service, which also oversees



Senior Corps and Learn and Serve America. Together these programs engage more than 1.5 million Americans of all ages and backgrounds in service each year.

- **Getting Things Done** AmeriCorps members help communities solve problems in the areas of education, public safety, the environment, and other human needs (like health and housing) by serving directly and by recruiting other people to serve as volunteers.
- **Strengthening Communities** AmeriCorps members help unite individuals from all different backgrounds—and organizations of all kinds - in a common effort to improve communities.
- **Encouraging Responsibility** AmeriCorps members explore and exercise their responsibilities to their communities, their families, and themselves during their service experience and throughout their lives.
- **Expanding Opportunity** AmeriCorps members receive awards to further their education or to pay back student loans. They also gain valuable job experience, specialized training, and other skills.

Scholarships for Service Member Responsibilities

To successfully earn an AmeriCorps Education Award, SFS members must satisfactorily complete program requirements and a full term of service. Satisfactory service includes:

- Completing the required number of AmeriCorps hours (minimum of 300) as verified by your service site supervisor and Campus Supervisor;
- Comply with applicable rules and complete all required enrollment and exit paperwork, including signing a member contract that states rights and responsibilities while in the Scholarships for Service Program. Members must abide by this contract and follow the rules of the program. You may be suspended or terminated if you violate the stated rules of behavior.
- Submit monthly timesheets to your Campus Supervisor within allotted time, as stated in member contract.
- Maintain a positive attitude, quality service, and respect toward others in the program.
- Attend all Scholarships for Service Program related leadership, training, and enrichment activities, including a mandatory orientation session.

Logging Your Time

As stated above, SFS members must submit monthly timesheets to their respective Campus Supervisor in order to verify completion of service hours. It is the responsibility of each SFS member to hand in monthly timesheets within timeframe in order to process timesheets and submit to Rhode Island Campus Compact office.

Monthly Timesheets

- SFS members are required to submit timesheets to respective Campus Supervisor within 1 week following the end of each month (e.g. June 2008 timesheet is due by July 10, 2008).
- Failure to submit timesheets within allotted timeframes will result in disciplinary action.
- Hours will be verified and signed off by Campus Coordinator NOT the non-profit agency staff.
- We recommend keeping track of your own hours as well, to avoid any discrepancies.
- Monthly timesheets can be found online at the SFS Website:
<http://www.compact.org/ricompact/sfs>



Prohibited Activities

There are certain activities including lobbying, political, religious or advocacy activities that AmeriCorps Members and staff may not perform in the course of their duties while charging time to the AmeriCorps program, or at the request of program staff. Furthermore, members and staff may not engage in any conduct in a manner that would associate the National Service Program or the Corporation with the prohibited activities. Programs must become familiar with the specific prohibitions in the Corporation's formal regulations (45 C.F.R. B2520.30) and the grant provisions. The list of prohibited activities includes:

- Participating in efforts to influence legislation, including lobbying for your program.
- Organizing a letter-writing campaign to Congress.
- Engaging in partisan political activities, or other activities designed to influence the outcome of an election to any public office.
- Participating in, or endorsing, events or activities that are likely to include advocacy for or against political parties, political platforms, political candidates, proposed legislation, or elected officials.
- Printing politically charged articles in a Corporation-funded newsletter or listserv.
- Taking part in political demonstrations or rallies.
- Engaging in any efforts to influence legislation, including state or local ballot initiatives.
- Voter registration drives.
- Organizing or participating in protests, petitions, boycotts, or strikes.
- Assisting or deterring union organizing.
- Impairing existing contracts or collective bargaining agreements.
- Religious activities, including engaging in religious instruction; conducting worship services; providing instruction as part of a program that includes mandatory religious instruction or worship; constructing or operating facilities devoted to religious instruction or worship; maintaining facilities primarily or inherently devoted to religious instruction or worship; or engaging in any form of religious proselytization.
- Activities that pose a significant safety risk to participants.
- Assignments that displace employees.
- Placement of members into internships with for-profit business as part of the education and training component of the program.
- Providing assistance to a business organized for profit.
- Raising funds for an AmeriCorps stipend.
- Raising funds for an organization's operating expenses or endowment.
- Writing grant applications for AmeriCorps funding or for any other funding provided by the Corporation for National and Community Service.
- Writing grant applications for funding provided by any other federal agencies.
- Administrative work, unless it benefits the member's approved direct service activities.



There are also several types of activities that programs may not assign to you as a Scholarships for Service member, such as:

- Activities that pose a significant risk to AmeriCorps members or others;
- Internships with for-profit business as a part of the training component of the program;
- Assignments that displace employees;
- Administrative work, unless it benefits your approved direct service activities; or
- Any of the prohibited activities mentioned above.

Like other private citizens, you may participate in the above-listed activities on your own time, at your own expense, and at your own initiative. However, AmeriCorps t-shirts or other service gear may not be worn in such instances.

Drug Free Workplace Policy

During the term of service, members may be released from the terms of service with no compensation if a member has:

1. Unlawfully manufactured, distributed, dispensed, possessed, or used any controlled substance or illegal drugs;
2. Consumed alcoholic beverages during the performance of service activities;
3. Was under the influence of alcohol or any illegal drugs during the performance of service activities.

Scholarships for Service Program Procedures and Guidelines

- A. *Compliance as a condition of participation.* All SFS members will, as a condition of participation in the program, abide by the terms in this policy.
- B. *Program member obligation for notification of conviction.* The program member must notify the SFS Program Coordinator within five (5) calendar days if he or she is convicted of a criminal drug violation in the workplace.
- C. *Program obligation for notification of conviction.* Within 10 days of receipt of a criminal drug conviction the SFS Program Coordinator will determine whether reporting the conviction to any federal contracting agency is required by the Drug-Free Workplace Act.
- D. *Sanctions for violation or noncompliance.* Violations of this policy will result in personnel action against the program member, up to and including dismissal pursuant to the SFS Program procedures relating to program member discipline.
- E. *Maintenance of a Drug-Free Workplace.* The SFS Program will make a good faith effort to maintain a drug-free workplace at program sites, including having a policy statement and a drug-free awareness program.



Grievance Procedures

A. The member understands that the SFS Program has a grievance procedure to resolve disputes concerning the member's suspension, dismissal, service evaluation or proposed service assignment.

B. The member understands that, as a participant of the program, he/she may file a grievance in accordance with the Program's grievance procedure.

C. In the event that informal efforts to resolve disputes are unsuccessful, AmeriCorps members, labor unions, and other interested individuals may seek resolution through the following grievance procedures. These procedures are intended to apply to service-related issues, such as assignments, evaluations, suspensions, or release for cause, as well as issues related to non-selection of members, and displacement of employees, or duplication of activities by AmeriCorps.

1. **OPTIONAL ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION (ADR):** ADR is available, but must be selected within 45 days of the underlying dispute. If an aggrieved party chooses ADR as a first option, a neutral party designated by the program will attempt to facilitate a mutually agreeable resolution. The neutral party must not have participated in any previous decisions concerning the issue in dispute. ADR is confidential, non-binding, and informal. No communications or proceedings of ADR may be referred to at the grievance hearing or arbitration stages. The neutral party may not participate in subsequent proceedings. If ADR is chosen by the aggrieved party, the deadlines for convening a hearing and of a hearing decision, 30 and 60 days respectively, are held in abeyance until the conclusion of ADR. At the initial session of ADR, the neutral party must provide written notice to the aggrieved party of his or her right to request a hearing. If ADR does not resolve the matter within 30 calendar days, the neutral party must again notify the aggrieved party of his or her right to request a hearing. At any time, the aggrieved party may decline ADR and proceed directly to the hearing process.
2. **GRIEVANCE HEARING:** An aggrieved party may request a grievance hearing without participating in ADR or, if ADR is selected, if it fails to result in a mutually agreeable resolution. The aggrieved party should make a written request for a hearing to SFS Program Coordinator. A request for a hearing must be made within one year after the date of the alleged occurrence. At the time a request for a hearing is made, the program should make available to the aggrieved party information that it relied upon in its disciplinary decision. The program will arrange for one or more pre-hearing conferences at a time mutually convenient to the parties. Pre-hearing conferences are not a substitute for a hearing. They are intended to facilitate a mutually agreeable resolution of the matter to make a hearing unnecessary or to narrow the issues to be decided at the hearing. The format of the pre-hearing conference may be flexible, involving meetings with one party at a time and/or with both parties together. Pre-hearing conferences are conducted by the campus fellowship coordinator. The hearing will be conducted by the SFS Program Coordinator. The person conducting the hearing may not have participated in any previous decisions concerning the issue in dispute. (Note: To ensure impartiality in the hearing, programs may choose to designate someone other than the program director to approve disciplinary actions regarding members, leaving the director available to conduct grievance hearings.) A hearing must be held no later than 30 calendar days after the



filing of the grievance, and a written decision must be made no later than 60 calendar days after filing.

3. **BINDING ARBITRATION:** An aggrieved party may request binding arbitration if a grievance hearing decision is adverse or if no decision is made within 60 days of the filing of the grievance. The arbitrator must be independent and selected by agreement of the parties. If the parties cannot agree on an arbitrator, the Corporation's Chief Executive Officer will appoint one within 15 calendar days after receiving a request from one of the parties. An arbitration proceeding will be held no later than 45 calendar days after the request for arbitration, or no later than 30 calendar days after the appointment of an arbitrator by the Corporation's CEO. An arbitration decision will be made no later than 30 calendar days after the commencement of the arbitration proceeding. The cost of arbitration will be divided evenly between the parties, unless the aggrieved party prevails, in which case the program will pay the total cost of the proceeding as well as the prevailing party's attorneys' fees.



Tips and Resources: Having a Successful College Experience

The SFS Program is purposely designed as a minimum-service Education Award program with your personal success in mind. We care about you completing your service for others; however we feel that your personal achievement in college is also an essential piece of the SFS experience.

Various tools have been listed below, that may be helpful in learning more about yourself and the way that you operate. Remember school isn't just about reading, studying, and going to class, it's also about staying healthy, meeting people, and learning more about yourself.

Time Management Tools:

Visit <http://www.muskingum.edu/%7Ecal/database/general/time.html>. This website put up by Muskingum College in Ohio provides some wonderful tools that allow you to do a personal inventory of how you currently manage your time, as well as some helpful resources that you can actually print out and use on a daily basis to keep track of your upcoming tests, assignments, and due dates. The pointers that this website offers are great to keep in mind for all people who struggle with the issue of time and never seeming to have enough of it!

Study Skills:

Visit <http://www.ucc.vt.edu/stdysk/studydis.html> to do an exercise that will help you look critically at the places which you study to make see how effectively they are helping your remember information. If you have a hard time delineating your time most appropriately try utilizing the study schedule at <http://www.tulsa.oklahoma.net/~jnichols/StudySchedule.html> and map out your time for each week to get a sense of the tasks you must complete and how long they may take.

Memory Development:

If you have a difficult time remembering information for tests, the Mind Tools website <http://www.mindtools.com/memory.html> has outlined different techniques that may help you better retain more of the information that you need for tests.

Test-Taking Skills:

This brief website <http://www.ncsu.edu/felder-public/Papers/testtaking.htm>, gives some pointers on how to best prepare for college exams, as well as some effective ways to maintain control and perform most effectively during the time a test is being administered.

Stress Management:

Visit <http://stress.about.com/> and take some time to think about what triggers your stress-related feelings. Learn about some techniques that may help you with relaxation, and help keep you healthy.

Learning Styles:

Take a brief survey at http://www.metamath.com/multiple/multiple_choice_questions.html and get some insight into what style of learning best suits you.



Goal Setting:

Don't forget to remind yourself that you are in college to achieve your goals. If you don't know exactly what these goals are try sitting down and making a map of where you want to go. Even if your goals change it is good reflection to think of what motivates you and where you would like to go. Get some help in doing this by visiting <http://www.coun.uvic.ca/learn/program/hndouts/goals.html>.

Additional resources on these topics as well as general college success skills:

- *First Year Focus:* <http://www.abacon.com/firstyearfocus/index.html>, offering tips on surviving your first year of college.
- *Student Success:* <http://www.prenhall.com/success/index.html> centered on exploring majors, career paths, money management, and fitness and well-being.
- *Student Success Handouts:* <http://www.cla.purdue.edu/asc/studentssupport/handouts/> give you tools to manage your schedule, stay focused, and study effectively.



AmeriCorps Education Award

What is an Education Award and what can it be used for?

After successfully completing a term of service (minimum 300 hours within time stated in member contract) and submitting the required exit paperwork to the SFS Program Director within 30 days of their exit date, SFS members are enrolled in the National Service Trust and are then eligible to receive an Education Award. The Education Award can be used to pay education costs at qualified institutions of higher education or to repay qualified student loans. You may use the Education Award in the following ways, or a combination of them:

- To repay qualified existing or future student loans;
- To pay all or part of the current cost of attending a qualified institution of higher education (including certain vocational programs); or
- To pay current expenses while participating in an approved school-to-work program.

MY AMERICORPS and the Education Award

After successfully completing a term of service each member is entered into the My AmeriCorps Web Portal. You will receive a letter that explains how you access and manage your My AmeriCorps site. On this site you are able to manage your AmeriCorps Education Award. You can manage your Ed award requests, disbursements, and view your award balance. <http://my.americorps.gov>

What Types of Loans Can the Education Award Repay?

Most post-secondary loans that are backed by the federal government are qualified for repayment with an AmeriCorps Education Award. The lender should be able to tell you if the loan is qualified. Qualified loans include:

- Stafford Loans
- William D. Ford Direct Loans
- Supplemental Loans for Students
- Nursing Student Loans
- Loans issued to AmeriCorps members by the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education
- Perkins Loan
- Federal Consolidated Loans
- Primary Care Loans
- Health Education Assistance Loans

If you are unsure if your lender will not honor the Education Award, call them, ask, and get written confirmation that if they will honor the award!

What Types of Expenses Are Considered Part of the Current “Cost of Attending” an Institution?



“Cost of attending” may include tuition, room and board, books, supplies, transportation, and other various expenses. The financial aid office at your school has information on expenses for specific academic programs, and that office determines the cost of attendance for your particular school.

When Can Education Awards Be Used?

The Education Award can be used any time after you receive your voucher for up to **seven (7) years** after the date you ended your service.

The member must fill out the AmeriCorps Exit Form and SFS Exit Survey and turn it in the SFS Campus Supervisor. Once all required paperwork has been completed and entered into the Corporation for National & Community Service’s database, they will send a voucher directly to the members’ permanent address noted on the exit form. Again, members have seven years to use their Education Award.

What if a member loses the voucher or never received one after being exited?

It’s best to first check with the SFS Program Director to ensure all paperwork was completed and to verify the Social Security number as well as the permanent address of the member. Once the paperwork has been processed the Corporation for National & Community Service handles the voucher and sends it directly to the member.

The quickest way to obtain a new voucher is to visit http://www.americorps.gov/for_individuals/benefits/benefits_ed_award.asp. You may also choose to simply find this by going to www.americorps.gov. But here at this web site, one can check on the balance of their Education Award, find out how to use the Education Award, request a duplicate voucher, and more!

They can be reached by phone at 1-888-507-5962 or by email at **edawardvoucher@cns.gov**.

Is the Education Award Taxable?

Yes. The Education Award is taxed in the year it is used. The Corporation for National Service does not deduct taxes from the award, but in late January it sends 1099 Forms to all AmeriCorps members who have made payments from their Education Award. The 1099 Form does not need to be included in your tax return, but it reflects the amount that the National Service Trust reports to the IRS as taxable miscellaneous income. If you have questions about how to file taxes for your award, contact your local IRS office.

Remember, you can split up the use of your award to pay a combination of student loans and/or educational expenses. And, you can split up the allocation of your award over multiple calendar years, as well, to divide up the tax costs.

Must the Education Award be used all at once?

No. It is completely up to the member as to how the Education Award is used. It may be used all at once or in increments. A new voucher will be sent showing the current balance each time one is submitted. If it is used in increments we recommend the member visit www.americorps.gov and follow links to Alumni information. There, the member will be allowed to sign up for a login to view their



account and how much has been processed. We also recommend that members keep copies of everything.

How Many Education Awards Can I Receive?

You may receive up to two Education Awards in your life-time, and only for the first two terms of service, regardless of whether they are for full-time, part-time or reduced part-time terms. Even if you do not complete one of the first two terms of service, you cannot receive an Education Award for a third term. You may, however, serve two AmeriCorps terms (receiving the Education Award) and one term as an AmeriCorps*VISTA, where you can receive the end of term cash grant instead of the end of term Education Award.

What if I Need to Transfer to Another College?

In some cases, students need to transfer from one school to another. If these circumstances arise during your term of service, they will be reviewed by campus supervisor and the SFS Program Coordinator on an individual basis. By working together we will find a resolution that will best suit the needs of all involved parties.

If I have already paid for some education expenses out of my own pocket, can the check be sent to me?

By law, the National Service Trust can only send checks to qualified schools and loan holders. Checks cannot be sent to others, such as landlords, parents, or mortgage companies. However, your school can reimburse you for the expenses included in the “cost of attendance” that you paid for yourself. See your financial aid office for more information about how they handle reimbursement and disbursements.

What kinds of courses can I use my Education Award for?

You may use your Education Award to pay for all courses in which you are enrolled as a student in a Title IV educational institution. You are not limited to courses that are part of a degree, certificate or credential program.

Is my award transferable?

No. Only AmeriCorps-approved Members are eligible for Education Awards. You may not transfer it to a relative or any other individual under any circumstances.

Questions about the Education Award?

If you have exited the program and have questions concerning using or attaining your education award, feel free to contact the Rhode Island Campus Compact Office, or you can contact the National Service Trust at 1-800-507-5962. The help line is staffed from 8am – 6pm (EST). For duplicate vouchers and to report a change of address, members should e-mail edawardvoucher@cncs.gov.



Additional Resources:

How can I stay involved in service after I graduate?

Here are several options and resources for you to consider after graduation if you are interested in continuing to serve:

- Serving a full-time term as an AmeriCorps member; visit the AmeriCorps website **www.americorps.gov**
- Applying to the Peace Corps; visit **www.peacecorps.gov** or call 1-800-254-8540
- Volunteering in your community; call the Voluntary Action Centers at 1-800-879-5400

If you have any questions throughout the course of the year, contact:

Emily Ustach, Program Coordinator, Rhode Island Campus Compact
(401) 427-4841, or eustach@risd.edu

**Thank you for your participation in the
Scholarships for Service Program.
We look forward to working with you!**



2008-2009 SFS Monthly Hours

It is recommended that members keep track of hours as well to avoid any discrepancies

Month	Service	Training	Total
September 2008			
October			
November			
December			
January 2009			
February			
March			
April			
May			
June			
July			
August			
September			