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COMDTINST 12300.9
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COMMANDANT INSTRUCTION 12300.9

Subj: CAREER ENTRY-LEVEL OPPORTUNITY (CEO) PROGRAM

- Ref: (a) Coast Guard Permanent Change of Station (PCS) Travel for Civilian Employees, COMDTINST 12570.5 (series)
 (b) Federal Career Intern Program, COMDTINST 12361.1 (series)
 (c) Coast Guard Merit Promotion Program and National Merit Promotion Plan, COMDTINST 12335.4A (series)
 (d) Coast Guard Mentoring Program, COMDTINST 5350.24 (series)

- PURPOSE.** This Instruction establishes a Coast Guard program under which Headquarters Program Managers may compete for centrally funded billets allocated for a 2 to 3-year period to develop candidates to meet future workforce needs.
- ACTION.** Area and District Commanders, Commanders of Maintenance and Logistics Commands, Commanding Officers of Integrated Support Commands, Commanding Officers of Headquarters Units, Assistant Commandants for Directorates, Chief Counsel and special staff elements at Headquarters shall ensure compliance with the provisions of this Instruction.
- DIRECTIVES AFFECTED.** None.
- COVERAGE.** This Instruction applies to appropriated fund positions in the competitive and excepted service.
- BACKGROUND.** To achieve the Coast Guard’s vital missions, it is critical to undertake succession planning, a component of which is to systematically replenish the pipeline with critical skills through entry-level hiring. The percentage of entry-level positions is limited, and the Coast Guard civilian workforce diversity is inadequate in many areas. These factors, coupled with growing skill gaps, contribute significantly to Coast Guard human capital management challenges. The Coast Guard

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recognizes, and by this Instruction, establishes a process to submit requests for centrally funded entry-level billets. In addition, this Instruction describes the hiring authorities that may be used to recruit and attract talented candidates as well as current employees into a variety of occupations at the entry-level.

6. POLICY. The Commandant allocates centrally funded billets for CEO program use. These allocations reflect the Commandant's policy to support the effective use of entry-level hiring as a mechanism for meeting future mission requirements with a skilled and diverse workforce. These billets are treated as Coast Guard "corporate" assets and are administered by CG-121. Headquarters program managers should review the needs of their specific program area from a Coast Guard-wide perspective to determine if a centrally funded billet would be a valuable tool for developing candidates for placement in permanent positions as they become vacant. All costs, including training and rotational assignments, are centrally funded. Each centrally funded billet is authorized for a period of 2 to 3 years. These billets are not counted against the organization's Personnel Allowance List (PAL). To ensure that this program is used for entry-level hiring, CEO billets must be established at least two grade levels below the anticipated full performance level. Participants will remain on a centrally funded billet, not to exceed 3 years, as long as they meet the requirements of the CEO program. Movement into the organization's permanent billet ceiling is expected upon successful completion of the program, e.g., obtaining full performance level (FPL), but not later than 3 years from hiring.

7. BILLET ALLOCATION PROCEDURES.

- a. General. Allocation to specific program areas will be accomplished through a nomination and evaluation process. Program managers must submit nominations. In each case, the servicing Human Resources Specialist/Command Staff Advisor should be consulted before forwarding nominations. Nominations will be submitted in response to specific solicitations put forth by Commandant (CG-121), which will include a specific deadline for submission.

b. Nomination Format.

(1) Unless the criteria and circumstances for two or more billets are identical, each nomination should be made for a single billet. When multiple billet requests are forwarded for consideration, the requests should be submitted in priority order. Program managers will review the needs of their specific program area from a Coast Guard-wide perspective to determine if a CEO billet can be used to develop candidates for placement in future permanent positions as they become vacant. Nominations from each program manager must be consolidated to form a single submission and shall be made in the form of memoranda, which contain the following:

- (a) A statement, in terms understandable to a neutral observer, clearly justifying the need for a billet that will be responsive to Coast Guard mission requirements, the need to maintain a balanced workforce in which women, members of racial and ethnic minority groups, and individuals with disabilities are appropriately represented in the civilian workforce, and will represent an improved use of human resources within the organization. This statement should generally be confined to one-half page in length;

- (b) The entry-level hiring program(s) desired under which this centrally funded billet will be used (Student Career Experience Program, CG Federal Career Intern Program, Presidential Management Fellows Program, Employment of Persons with Disabilities Hiring Authority, etc.);
- (c) The expected ending date for the resource requirement, with the intended organization placement, and certification that permanent placement for any proposed selectee will be made within 2 to 3 years; and
- (d) Any other relevant information.

c. Allocation Conditions.

- (1) Centrally funded billets authorized for a 2 to 3-year period represent a commitment against the total CEO program allocation for both the current and succeeding years. Upon successful completion of the program, using normally available resources, it is the responsibility of the sponsoring program manager to place the employee in a permanent billet with a full performance level consistent with the requirements of the program. The program manager will work cooperatively with the servicing Human Resources Specialist/Command Staff Advisor to ensure permanent placement at the completion of the program, and the CEO billet will be freed for re-allocation.
- (2) Employees who cannot be placed upon successful program completion must be absorbed in another position in the sponsoring program area. In consultation with the servicing Human Resources Specialist/Command Staff Advisor, every attempt possible will be made to permanently place the employee within the Coast Guard, before consideration is given to terminating employment.
- (3) A Mobility Agreement will be executed by CG-1211, the program manager, and the selectee acknowledging that he or she may be relocated with relocation benefits allowable under the Federal Travel Regulation and reference (a), if the final placement/conversion location is different than the training location.

8. EVALUATIONS AND APPROVALS. All nominations submitted in accordance with this Instruction shall be reviewed by Commandant (CG-121) for selection. Such nominations shall be evaluated against the criteria addressed in paragraph 7.b. above. Allocations will be based on availability and needs of the sponsoring program manager.

9. ENTRY-LEVEL HIRING PROGRAMS. The following entry-level hiring programs have been designated for CEO program use:

- a. The Student Career Experience Program (SCEP). More commonly known as the Co-Op program, this entry-level “work study” program is a structured year-round program that requires students at various educational levels (high school, college, graduate school) to perform work related to their academic program. There are a number of colleges, universities, and high schools whose students meet eligibility requirements. Students must be enrolled in school, and may work for the Coast Guard on a part-time or full-time basis. Upon completion of the educational

and work requirements, students may be non-competitively converted to permanent Federal civilian employee status. Recruitment is targeted, and an organization's needs are matched to an educational institution. Students are federal employees and are hired at a grade level appropriate to their study level and work experience. For example, students at the university level are typically hired at the GS-4 through GS-9 level. Key features are:

- (1) Improved diversity of candidates;
- (2) Students are appointed in the excepted service;
- (3) Initial appointments may be made at any time of the year;
- (4) Work must be related to the student's academic program;
- (5) Open to all students who are enrolled in at least a half-time academic course load;
- (6) Written agreement among all parties (student, school, Coast Guard);
- (7) Flexible scheduling of work assignments; and
- (8) Conversion to a career/career-conditional appointment after work/school requirements are met.

This entry-level hiring program may also be utilized under the Non-Ceiling Employment program in which CG-831 issues positions/FTE for Coast Guard-wide use. The Non-Ceiling Employment program covers a wide variety of needs, which includes other temporary employment programs in addition to the SCEP.

- b. The Presidential Management Fellows (PMF) Program. The PMF program is an entry-level career development and training program designed to attract outstanding individuals at the graduate degree level who have a clear interest in and a commitment to a career in the analysis and management of public programs. Candidates are nominated by the dean, director, or chair of their academic program during their year of graduation and undergo a rigorous application and screening process conducted by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). Once candidates are finalists, they are eligible to be appointed quickly and directly by any federal agency. A PMF is hired at the GS-9 level and rotated through federal agencies to develop their management and leadership skills. A PMF is eligible for non-competitive conversion to career/career-conditional status after 2 years and is eligible for promotion to GS-12. Key features are:
 - (1) Candidates must have received or be scheduled to receive a graduate degree and have demonstrated exceptional ability and personal interest in a career in public service;
 - (2) PMF finalists are appointed between the spring and December 31st of the year in which they are selected as finalists;
 - (3) PMF's are appointed into the excepted service and may be converted to career/career-conditional appointments after successful completion of program and work requirements;

- (4) PMF's must engage in at least 80 hours of formal training per year during the 2-year program and must be provided with at least one rotational assignment; and
 - (5) OPM must be reimbursed (as part of the centrally funded cost) a fee to cover the costs of recruitment, selection, placement orientation, and graduation of PMF's.
- c. The Coast Guard Federal Career Intern Program. As indicated in reference (c), this excepted service hiring authority is designed to help federal agencies recruit and attract talented candidates as well as current employees into a variety of professional and administrative positions at the entry level. Intended for positions at the GS-5, 7 and 9 levels, this 2-year excepted service authority was designed for use with entry-level hiring and developmental programs. It provides maximum flexibility in recruitment strategy design, targeted recruitment, hiring ease, and conversion to permanent appointment after completion of program requirements. Key features are:
- (1) Appointments are in the excepted service that may be made year round, but cannot exceed two years without CG-121 extension approval not to exceed 120 days;
 - (2) There is no public notice requirement, but there must be a link between a recruiting event and applications received;
 - (3) A written test is required for filling certain two-grade interval positions;
 - (4) Requires a 2-year formal training and individual development plan and assignment of a mentor;
 - (5) Although there is no grade ceiling on promotion potential, billets must be established at least two grade levels below the anticipated full performance level, and the promotion potential of the position must be made known to all candidates when hiring; and
 - (6) Appointment authority provides for a return right for current career/career-conditional employees and certain excepted service employees with equivalent status.
- d. The Upward Mobility Program. Upward mobility is a systematic management effort that focuses federal personnel policy and practice on the development and implementation of specific career opportunities for employees who are in positions or occupational series that do not enable them to realize their full work potential. The Upward Mobility Program will provide an opportunity for employees who are in dead-end positions, to advance to positions of greater responsibility, enabling them to perform at their highest potential. Key features are:
- (1) Career advancement opportunities for employees whose current assignments do not provide for advancement beyond grade GS-9 or equivalent;
 - (2) Development of trainee position, target position (first rung of the career ladder), and full performance level position. Upon selection, the candidate will be placed in a trainee position, given accelerated training, and upon completion will be placed in the target position;

- (3) The Upward Mobility Program is restricted to current Coast Guard employees;
 - (4) Requires a training agreement, formal training and individual development plan, and assignment of a mentor;
 - (5) Upward mobility opportunities must be advertised through merit promotion procedures in accordance with reference (d) to ensure all qualified candidates are eligible to compete.
- e. People with Disabilities Excepted Service Appointment Hiring Authorities. This refers to a special excepted service appointment hiring authority for people with disabilities (those who have severe physical, cognitive, or psychiatric disabilities, or who have a history of or who are regarded as having such disabilities). These authorities, which can be used to fill jobs at any grade level, provide a unique opportunity for the individual to demonstrate the potential to successfully perform the essential duties of the position with or without reasonable accommodation in the workplace. People with disabilities may be hired if they can be verified as likely to succeed by the State Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies or the Department of Veterans Affairs. Individuals hired under this authority may be converted to career/career-conditional status after successful completion of 2 years of satisfactory service.
 - f. Other Excepted Appointment Hiring Authorities. This refers to hiring authorities such as the Veterans' Recruitment Act (VRA), which allows eligible veterans to be hired directly into a permanent position under an excepted appointment. After two years of satisfactory performance, they may be converted to career or career-conditional appointments. In addition, the Coast Guard has excepted service appointment authorities that are only for Coast Guard Academy use in recruiting and developing highly qualified faculty staff.
 - g. Merit Promotion Program. In accordance with reference (c), the Merit Promotion Program outlines policies and procedures for considering the internal movement of permanent civilian employees into positions of greater promotion potential through a competitive process that ensures selection from among the best-qualified candidates, based solely on job-related criteria, consistent with merit principles.
 - h. Open Competitive Examining Program (Career or Career-Conditional). Open competitive examining is the process used to fill permanent civilian positions with candidates typically applying from outside the federal civilian workforce. It can also be used to enable employees who do not have civil service status to compete for a permanent appointment and to enable employees with civil service status to compete for other jobs. Positions are open to all segments of society and selection is based on competencies or knowledge, skills, and abilities, and veteran's preference after fair and open competition.

10. RESPONSIBILITIES.

- a. Commandant (CG-8) is responsible for:
 - (1) Authorizing a specific number of centrally funded billets in support of the program. Each centrally funded billet under the CEO Program will be authorized for a period of 2 to 3 years;

- (2) Providing funds for standard personnel costs, including benefits, and training associated with a position at the indicated grade level; and
 - (3) Issuing positions/FTE under non-ceiling employment program.
- b. Commandant (CG-121) is responsible for:
- (1) Administering centrally funded billets, including training costs, and rotational assignments.
 - (2) Reviewing and evaluating nominations for centrally-funded billets; and
 - (3) Allocating billets under the CEO program.
- c. Commandant (CG-1212) is responsible for:
- (1) Developing the CEO program to ensure compliance with law and merit system principles;
 - (2) Measuring and evaluating the quality and effectiveness of the CEO program;
 - (3) Managing a corporate recruiting process, which includes initiating, developing and maintaining contacts with colleges, universities, minority/non-minority professional organizations, and other recruitment sources; and
 - (4) Developing corporate marketing and recruiting materials.
- d. Commandant (CG-1211) is responsible for:
- (1) Implementing the CEO program;
 - (2) Providing advice and assistance to supervisors and employees regarding the CEO program;
 - (3) Assisting management in identifying the competencies needed in order for an individual to perform the work of the position; identifying appropriate targeted recruitment sources of candidates with appropriate background, skills, or education; and developing an individual training and development plan to identify the core competencies and technical skills needed to perform the work of the position;
 - (4) Making final determinations as to eligibility, qualifications, grade level and effective date of appointment for selected interns;
 - (5) Making employment offers;
 - (6) Determine travel and relocation benefits and process travel orders;
 - (7) Prepare and execute required condition of employment agreements prior to entrance on duty, e.g., Mobility Agreement, Training Agreement, etc;
 - (8) Maintaining case files; and

(9) Staying current with potential change to federal law and regulations that could affect the Coast Guard's ability to successfully attract needed talent.

e. Headquarters Program Managers (i.e., Assistant Commandant or equivalent for programs under their control) are responsible for:

- (1) Nominating positions to be filled as centrally funded billets under the CEO program; and
- (2) Ensuring placement upon completion of the 2 to 3-year period.

f. Supervisors are responsible for:

- (1) Identifying the competencies need in order for an individual to perform the work of the target position; identifying targeted recruitment sources; and developing the individual training and career development plan the employee will need to follow in order to develop the necessary core competencies and technical skills needed to perform the work of the target position;
- (2) Finalizing the employee's individual training and career development plan and communicating to the employee the developmental assignments and performance requirements within 30 days of the appointment;
- (3) Upholding merit principles in interviewing/selecting candidates for positions; and
- (4) Assigning a mentor as soon as possible but no later than the selectee's entrance on duty date. Additional information regarding the mentoring program can be found in reference (d).

11. CURRENTLY AVAILABLE RECRUITMENT FLEXIBILITIES. Recruitment tools available by regulation, including recruitment bonuses, superior qualifications, and student loan repayments, may be used where appropriate.

12. ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECT AND IMPACT CONSIDERATION. Environmental considerations were examined in the development of this instruction and have been determined to be not applicable.

13. FORMS AVAILABILITY. None.

Stephen W. Rochon /s/
Rear Admiral, U.S. Coast Guard
Director of Personnel Management