

Statement of
Michael C. Kane
Chief Human Capital Officer
U.S. Department of Energy

Before the

**Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, the Federal Workforce, and the
District of Columbia**

Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs

United States Senate

June 21, 2011

“Inspiring Students to Federal Service”

Chairman Akaka, Ranking Member Johnson, Members of the Subcommittee, thank you very much for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am Michael Kane, Chief Human Capital Officer at the U.S. Department of Energy. We appreciate your invitation to discuss college recruitment, and most notably the Department of Energy's Student Ambassador Program.

In my statement, I will share the Department's corporate strategy in recruiting students, highlight some of the barriers and the practices the agency has implemented to address those challenges, and provide an overview and metrics on the DOE Student Ambassador Program.

Corporate Strategy

The Department of Energy (DOE) has eighteen (18) servicing human resources offices nationwide. Some of the locations are in remote parts of the country while others are in metropolitan areas. To determine how we can improve university recruitment and enhance partnership building, my Office conducted an internal assessment three (3) years ago. The results showed that our Offices have an effective regional presence at local colleges and universities. Recruiters are engaged with students and university staffs. For example, in Fiscal Year (FY) 2010, the Department attended 182 university and college events that included information sessions, job fairs, and on-campus interviews. Approximately 41% of these events were on the West coast, 23% were in the Midwest, and 27% in the Northeast. Sixty-seven percent (67%) of all these regional events were university job fairs and almost 20% were information sessions and discussions with student groups. All of these events were managed directly by our regional recruiters. Through our study, we discovered students and university staffs want agency representatives, who are easily accessible and readily available to attend campus events at any given time in their area.

To be effective and efficient, we needed to brand our jobs at the regional level while creating a corporate network with a single message. The piece that we were missing was a corporate strategy that drove our vision and employment values. Today, my Office collaborates and educates our recruiters on the job opportunities available nationwide and develops an annual talent acquisition strategy that highlights where we have attended events and from which schools we hired. We work with the regional recruiters to ensure they have an understanding of the corporate vision and employment values and have the skills needed to educate perspective applicants about energy jobs anywhere at any time regardless of the geographic location.

Students are mobile and want to learn about career opportunities not only in their local area, but also about jobs in different parts of the country. They are willing to relocate for that dream job, and they desire a career that complements their lifestyle. We seek to match their career aspirations to those geographic areas that match their particular lifestyle, whether it's in a rural setting or a metropolitan area. In February, we conducted a workshop at The Washington Center titled "*I Need a Job...Now! Tips on Landing a Federal Career and How to Navigate to the Top*". The session targeted college students and provided insights on our employment values and how to match their lifestyles with their careers. We discussed the corporate points that I mentioned earlier as well as gave tips on social media and career progression. Almost 50 students attend this one workshop alone. The fact is many students who are interested in a career at the Department of Energy are very passionate about our missions and are well versed in the

agency's accomplishments. The goal is not just to recruit but also to retain students, and to do so, we need to ensure that our jobs and geographic locations compliment student personal lifestyles and professional aspirations.

Barriers and Solutions

Many of our challenges relate to attitudes and perceptions. Although the Department of Energy has been successful in recruiting students, there is a difference among generational lines in terms of motivators, career attitudes, and the desire to make a difference. Students want a career, not a job. They want to make a difference and be given the opportunity to be part of something greater while contributing to the mission. As applicants' attitudes and needs shift, so has our strategy. Our recruiting approach and hiring techniques have become more fluid, so that we can succeed at hiring and retaining top talent. We've learned to adopt and have started to educate our recruiters on these very values and principles. For example, we are launching a "*How to Sell a Job*" training course for all of our human resources professionals. Since the student labor market has changed, so has our recruitment techniques and interpersonal skills must also change. Both recruiters and managers need to adapt to the changing environment in order to be competitive and to attract and to retain top talent.

We also use social media for recruiting purposes. We tweet about job openings, including senior executive positions. Since we have 18 servicing human resources offices nationwide, we are in the process of finalizing a Departmental social media strategy for human resources professionals. To be effective and to maximize student engagement, our social media recruitment tools are centralized and are integrated under a corporate framework which includes our central careers website the Energy Jobs One Portal. This approach allows us to accommodate our recruiters' needs while centralizing our job brand and message to students. It enables us to quickly get the information out to the public while ensuring accuracy and establishing a dialogue. Transparency and engagement are key if any agency wants to succeed at hiring students.

Department of Energy Student Ambassadors Program

Through a collaborative effort with the Partnership for Public Service, we established the Department of Energy Student Ambassadors Program in calendar year 2009. The program objective is to enhance the Department's brand recognition on targeted college campuses through peer-to-peer marketing. Our Student Ambassadors have diverse backgrounds from undergraduate and graduate programs in engineering, business, statistics, and international relations, to mention a few. They all previously worked at either a DOE field office or at a National Lab. As a result, they have first-hand knowledge of our diverse missions and can easily speak to other students about what we do and what it's like to work at DOE. Today's students want to hear from other students about their experiences and what they accomplished and how and where they fit at the Department of Energy. This identifier is one of the most influential job search resources.

We started the Student Ambassadors Program with six Student Ambassadors, half of which were located in the greater Washington, DC/Baltimore metropolitan area. The six were selected

through a competitive application and interview process that helped us identify the most passionate and best qualified students; with skills and abilities in communications, marketing and/or community organizing. We received over 80 applications the first year, and over 100 the second year representing 6% to 8%. The program was a great success on several fronts. First of all, we managed to brand our jobs on-campus directly to students. The Student Ambassadors were engaged with faculty, career services, university staffs, and most importantly, the student body. Within a seven month period, they collected contact information from 441 students interested in a career or internship at DOE; promoted 164 Energy jobs; created a network of 71 faculty and student leaders on their campuses; held 54 job information sessions; and generated about 81,885 gross impressions through print media, physical events, and online marketing.

Secondly, as a service, we provided technical and non-technical webinars to the Student Ambassadors, faculty, and student body. The technical sessions provided insight on renewable energy technology while the non-technical workshops focused on educating students about the various field offices, integrating DOE careers with geographic location and lifestyle expectations, and how to apply for a job at those locations.

For academic year 2010-2011, we expanded the program to eight Student Ambassadors and focused on greater diversity. Half of our Student Ambassadors are from a Historically Black College or University (HBCUs) or universities with a high concentration of minority students. They are geographically dispersed across the country and range from undergraduate to graduate studies. Like the previous academic year, this cohort of Student Ambassadors worked at a DOE office or Lab and has a diverse field of study from business and finance to nuclear engineering and international relations. So far, these Student Ambassadors have established a network of 1,718 students and faculty; promoted 24 jobs; held 50 promotional and informational events; and generated over 10,000 application visits from the web links they provided. These figures are preliminary since the program just concluded on April 29, 2011.

So far for this year, we have found that about 100 targeted applications resulted from 8 jobs that were promoted by the Ambassadors. We are still in the process of gathering the data and more importantly setting up the internal IT systems and processes necessary to seamlessly gather and analyze the data in the future. Just like other government agencies, our challenge has been to gather data across the recruitment and hiring lifecycle. From career fairs to on-boarding, this data is necessary in order to truly gauge our Recruitment and Hiring ROI and make adjustments in the right areas.

We are making progress in this area. This year we piloted the use of the Salesforce.com cloud solution to help address some of these metrics challenges. Salesforce also enhanced our candidate relations management (CRM), automated our day to day processing for Ambassador activities, and improved collaboration among Ambassadors and recruitment staff.

The DOE Student Ambassadors Program has exceeded our expectations. It is a cost-effective means to brand and market our jobs directly to students while sustaining a creditable and interactive presence on college campuses. Ambassadors cost the agency about \$5,000 each, which includes a \$3,000 stipend and a \$2,000 "recruitment/marketing" budget not including the management costs. We have found in our ROI analysis that it costs about \$5,000 each time we send a Federal recruiter to a one day career fair at some of these non-local Universities. This includes travel costs, registration fees, shipping of materials, etc. Having Ambassadors on these

campuses allows the agency to maximize efforts beyond just a one day visit, to a year round presence for nearly the same costs. The Ambassadors Program has also provided a critical resource for our regional human resources offices; giving them the ability to reach audiences they usually do not reach because of funding limitations.

The future of the program includes maintaining the current level of Ambassadors, exploring ways to continue to leverage Ambassadors on campuses and further refine ways to measure the effectiveness of the program.

To attract and to retain today's students, we have to be pro-active, be engaged and be innovative; otherwise, we can't inspire students to Federal service.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would be pleased to answer any questions that you or the Subcommittee members may have.