

Harry S. Truman Scholarship Foundation

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To: Interested Persons

From: Louis Blair

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Subject: Nature of the Executive Secretary Position

I. Background: The Executive Secretary works with the Board of Trustees, Foundation President Madeleine Albright and a five-member staff to carry out the mandate of PL 93-642 to operate “a perpetual education scholarship program to develop increased opportunities for young Americans to prepare and pursue careers in public service.”

The Foundation executes this mandate by awarding annually 70-75 scholarships, each worth \$30 thousand, to college students with junior-level academic standing¹ who wish to attend graduate/professional school in preparation for careers in government or elsewhere in the public service. The Foundation offers four education/leadership development programs for Scholars to supplement the monetary benefits of the Scholarship. Foundation operations are supported by a \$55 mil trust fund in the US Treasury anticipated to yield just over \$3 mil dollars in FY 2005.

The Executive Secretary, appointed by the Board of Trustees, has a non-career Senior Executive Service appointment. The incumbent has served 15+ years. His predecessor served 11 years.

II Challenges: The main challenges for the Executive Secretary, working with the Board and the Staff, are in designing and implementing strategies and approaches to:

- Maximize the impact of the Truman Scholarship in light of the declining relative economic benefit of the stipend. When the Foundation was established in 1975, the \$30 mil endowment yielded sufficient income for 53 four-year full-ride scholarships. In 2005, the \$55 mil endowment yields enough income for 70-75 scholarships @ \$30,000. Due to the rate of inflation in higher education, the stipend covers only about 15-20% of the costs of three years of graduate study for a law degree, a commonly sought degree by Truman Scholars. In setting up the Foundation, the Congress made clear that there were to be no additional Federal contributions to the endowment but gave the Foundation authority to raise funds from other sources.
- Cope with an expected 20-25% reduction in Foundation income over the next 4-5 years. The Foundation's income derives from interest on 10-year US Treasury instruments. These securities purchased over the past five years have been yielding in the range of 4.7-5.5%. Current interest rates are in the neighborhood of 4.0% and appear likely to stay in this range.
- Help Scholars maintain their public service career ambitions.
- Help all colleges and universities understand that they are likely to have one or more excellent candidates for Truman Scholarships but that to be competitive, the institution will

¹ Students who are graduating in three years and those who are residents of Puerto Rico and the Islands are eligible to apply during their senior year.

need to devote staff/faculty time to recruiting candidates and helping them prepare for the competition. Often faculty/staff at regional and non-flagship public institutions and small modestly endowed private institutions fail to get involved, either because of higher priorities for the scarce resources or doubts about the competitiveness of their candidates.

- Assure a strong set of candidates each year from smaller population states. The Foundation has been charged to select one Scholar annually from each state that has a candidate that meets standards established by the Foundation. In 2005, there were no Scholars from Wyoming, West Virginia, Delaware, Vermont, and Hawaii.

III Major Responsibilities and activities: The incumbent Executive Secretary has devoted the bulk of his time and efforts to:

- Having one-on-one relationships with three hundred Truman Scholars. At TSLW, he meets individually with the 75 new Scholars. He maintains contact with them through e-mail and written correspondence, visits to the office during Summer Institute, and travels to geographic concentrations of Truman Scholars. This responsibility includes counseling about graduate school and programs for graduate study, advising on professional or academic development opportunities to pursue prior to attending graduate school, providing encouragement and affirmation, and, in some cases, offering sympathy and support. Occasionally, it involves letting Scholars know ways in which they could be better.

All Scholars receiving or deferring Foundation funding support are required to submit on July 15 an annual report of 3-10 pages in length to which the Executive Secretary responds with marginal notes or separate e-mail. The annual reports are a full-time project for the Executive Secretary from July 15 to late August.

- Maintaining, directing and overseeing the Truman Scholar selection process. This involves: Setting up and monitoring the performance of the 19 Regional Review Panels [RRPs] that interview Truman Scholarship Finalists and select the Scholars [100 members including federal judges, university presidents, and former Truman Scholars] and the 20-member Truman Scholarship Finalists Selection Committee [FSC] to assure that they adhere to appropriate criteria for a merit-based scholarship looking for public sector change agents or others that will provide high quality public services. The Executive Secretary spends 3 ½ to 4 days in Annapolis in February with the FSC and two weeks on the road in March attending 6 of the interview panels. The Associate Executive Secretary attends 6 of the panels. Six panels rely on former Truman Scholars in the area to staff them.

Starting in mid-summer the Executive Secretary sends invitations to persons to serve on the FSC and then in September sends invitations to persons to serve on the 19 RRs. There is a 20-25% turnover in selectors from year to year. Each panel generally has one or more confirmed panelists who have to drop out and must be replaced. Substantial effort is required to get the sorts of persons that not only are good judges but also whose participation enhances the stature of the Foundation and the panel and impresses all candidates ["Wow, I was interviewed by Judge/President/etc"].

- Having an active partnership with four hundred or more Truman Faculty Representatives on college campuses to help them understand how to identify appropriate candidates and ensure quality applications that are reflective of the candidate. The Executive Secretary also provides feedback on inadequacies in applications of unsuccessful candidates.

In the course of carrying out these responsibilities, the incumbent:

- Spends 60 or more nights a year on the road. This involves: visiting 30-40 undergraduate colleges and 10-12 graduate schools to promote the program; attending selection panels; directing Truman Scholars Leadership Week; taking part in Truman Foundation Honor Institution ceremonies; and, helping establish or maintain vibrant communities of Truman Scholars.
- When in the office, he devotes the bulk of each day to e-mail and written correspondence from Scholars on a variety of topics [advice about graduate school or approval of plans for graduate study, special opportunities, etc.] and with Truman Faculty Representatives wanting to know more the Foundation's selection processes or how to improve their performance.

The Foundation currently has an extremely competent Foundation staff under the direction of Associate Executive Secretary Tara Kneller who serves as Chief of Staff. With minimal oversight/interference from the Executive Secretary, the staff in a typical year processes payment requests for two hundred Truman Scholars, runs four programs² for Scholars, responds to dozens of federal reporting requirements, maintains the Foundation's website, a database of 700 Faculty Representatives, and a data base of approximately 2500 former Truman Scholars, and keeps the Foundation's software and hardware technology up to date.

For the most part, the incumbent Executive Secretary handles his own administrative responsibilities [typing, making travel arrangements, answering the direct phone line, photocopying, etc.].

Selected workload statistics for Executive Secretary in 2004

23	Number of states plus DC and Guam visited on behalf of Foundation
51	Number of colleges and universities visited ³
58	Number of graduate study plans reviewed and approved [often with modification]
97	Number of days on travel [all or parts of days]
300 [est]	Number of Truman annual reports read and responded to with comments
3221	Number of individual e-mails sent between 1 Nov 04 and 5 May 05

² These programs are: Truman Scholars Leadership Week [TSLW] where Foundation staff, supported by 15 former Truman Scholars, put on a 7-day program to develop a community among the new Scholars. The program attempts to acquaint them with the opportunities and responsibilities of being Truman Scholars; develop skills for graduate school and career development; and give Scholars fresh thoughts about career options and graduate study plans. During the Washington Summer Institute [SI], 50+ Trumans, following their graduation from college, come to DC for 8-week internships in federal agencies and two weeks of seminars, site visits, alumni events, and the like. The Public Service Law Conference [PSLC], typically attended by 20-24 Truman Scholars between their first and second years of law school, helps Scholars to prepare and plan for legal careers in the public sector. The trial Truman Fellows Program has 20-24 Trumans remaining in Washington for 9 months or more following Summer Institute. These Scholars are employed full-time in public service positions. The group also takes a graduate level public policy course and embarks on a community service project.

³ Institutions visited in 2004 included: Albion College, Alma College, Arizona State University, Bates College, Birmingham Southern College, Boston College, Bowdoin College, College of William & Mary, Dickinson College, Emory University, Florida International University, Fordham University, Gettysburg College, Lewis & Clark College, Linfield College, Messiah College, Miami University of Ohio, Montana State University, North Carolina State University, Ohio University, Oklahoma State, Rhodes College, Samford University, Seattle University, Syracuse University, University of Alabama - Birmingham, University of Alabama - Tuscaloosa, University of Georgia, University of Guam [for Honor Institution Award], University of Maryland-Baltimore County, University of Miami, University of Mississippi, University of Montana, University of Puget Sound, University of Washington, Virginia Tech, Wake Forest University, Xavier University of Ohio, and Truman-producing stalwart institutions Columbia University, Duke University, Georgetown University, Harvard University, University of North Carolina, University of Virginia, US Military Academy and Yale University.