

Clinton service plan becomes reality

By HARRY STRAIGHT

"Uncle Sam wants you. Earn credit for college tuition while serving your country."

If those words conjure up images of boot camps, baggy green fatigues, and 10-mile hikes with a 50-pound pack on your back, think again. This isn't a recruitment message for the U.S. Armed Forces; it's an invitation from President Bill Clinton to get involved in grassroots community service.

The service program that Clinton signed into law last year is becoming reality this year. Through the newly formed AmeriCorps program, the Corporation for National and Community Service plans to offer \$150 million in federal grants in 1994 to community service programs in all 50 states.

For a year's worth of service, as many as 20,000 participants can receive a small salary, roughly \$8,000 annually, basic health care coverage, child-care support if needed, and \$4,725 in educational benefits. The program also will repay student loan interest during the service and is open to any U.S. citizen 17 or older.

Participants can work 1,700 hours full-time over nine months or part-time for 900 hours over two years. College students can stretch their service to three years and still qualify for full educational benefits.

If everything goes as planned,

Convocation leaves out Theatre Award

By CECILIA LYNN CASEY

Joan Dobson was mistakenly omitted from the list of students honored at the 1994 Honor Convocation for their work during the year.

Dobson received the Theatre Award because of her efforts in the theater, her good grades and her contributions to several performances that the Department has produced.

"I feel wonderful to get this award, and a little sad that there was an oversight at the awards. I would have loved to have had been a part of the convocation," Dobson said.

Vaughn Schutz the Director of the Wesleyan said that a plaque has been ordered and will be given to Dobson as soon as it arrives.

AmeriCorps will ensure a domestic service program that will surpass the Peace Corps at its height of popularity, according to the Clinton advisors. The Peace Corps currently has about 6,000 members in worldwide service now.

"The Peace Corps was never more than 16,000, yet it had such a dramatic influence on America's perception of itself. We hope that we will do as good a job as the Peace Corps and have the same impact," said Rick Allen, the program's senior adviser and a deputy assistant to President Clinton.

During his campaign, Clinton made a strong push for AmeriCorps, which became law last September when he signed the National and Community Service Trust Act. Although AmeriCorps isn't as big as Clinton and his supporters hoped it would be at first, there are plans to double the funding to \$300 million in 1995, \$500 million in 1996, and \$700 million in 1997, which would allow more people

to take part. However those figures are not certain since programs and funding must be justified through the congressional appropriations process every year.

At the bill signing, Clinton said he hoped that "national service will remain throughout the life of America, not as a series of promises but a series of challenges, across all the generations and all walks of life to help push to rebuild our troubled but wonderful land."

Since then, AmeriCorps has been working on the details for putting the programs in place. Summer programs should be up and running by June with full-scale operations in place by the fall, Allen said.

The kind of work available to participants will be limited only by the imagination of the service agencies that win grants. Participants could find themselves tutoring inner city kids, building parks and recreation facilities, helping immunize children in rural areas, repairing homes for the elderly, delivering food to shut-

ins — in short, just about any kind of community service.

"When we ask for grant applications we're going to be looking at the quality of the idea. Is it going to make a real difference? Getting things done in the community is the principal criteria. We want to know how it will make things better, and how do you measure that?" Allen said.

Several successful ideas came out of a pilot program last summer called the Summer of Service, which engaged 1,500 young people in 16 different community service projects in 12 different cities.

The 1994 summer pilot program will be called Summer of Safety and focus on public safety needs. AmeriCorps hopes to have 3,000 participants involved in such crime prevention activities as boarding up abandoned buildings, painting over graffiti, and working with local law enforce-

ment agencies to develop anti-crime strategies for specific areas such as playgrounds, public transportation points, and other public gathering spots.

AmeriCorps plans to start allocating year-long grants by July 1, with most programs starting in September or October. Each state will be eligible for a share of the grant money on a proportional basis, with larger states getting more. A certain number of national projects, such as the American Red Cross, for example, can also compete for grant money outside of the state programs.

While AmeriCorps executives expect states to conduct their own aggressive recruitment programs, those interested in participating can contact AmeriCorps' Washington, D.C., office and have their names added to a national pool of volunteers by writing 1100 Vermont Ave. NW, Washington, D.C. 20525 or calling 1-800-94-ACORPS for more information.

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