



Department of Defense

**CYBER SERVICE
ACADEMY**

Recruitment Scholar Handbook

2025 - 2026

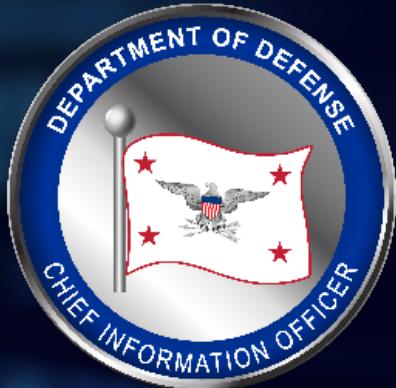


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Background



Authorized in 2000 under Title 10, Chapter 112, Section 2200 of the U.S. Code, the Department of War (DoW) Cyber Service Academy (CSA) program addresses critical cybersecurity needs. Funded by the DoW Chief Information Officer (CIO), the DoW CSA serves as both a scholarship program and a mechanism to strengthen cyber education. It recruits top cyber talent, retains skilled DoW personnel, and enhances cyber education programs and curricula. This initiative fulfills the DoW's and Congress's commitment to support higher education in preparing the DoW workforce to defend against threats to DoW information systems and networks.

The DoW Cyber Service Academy provides undergraduate and graduate students with academic funding in exchange for a commitment to full-time civilian employment with the Department of War. The length of this service commitment, as detailed in the DoW CSA Service Agreement (SA), is equivalent to the number of years of funding received. The SA is a formal, legally binding agreement between the DoW and the CSA Scholar (referred to as "scholar" herein).

This handbook serves as a crucial resource for all DoW CSA scholars. By signing the SA, scholars agree to adhere to all program policies and procedures outlined within this handbook. In return for this compliance, the DoW provides academic funding and guarantees full-time employment upon graduation.

The handbook's purpose is to provide a comprehensive and accessible guide to the Program's regulations, expectations, and requirements. It ensures scholars are fully informed of their obligations and rights throughout their participation in the DoW CSA. To maintain accuracy and relevance, the handbook will be updated annually to reflect current policies and procedures. Scholars will be notified of any changes via email or their on-campus Point of Contact (POC). Compliance with the most current version of the handbook is mandatory for all scholars.

DID YOU KNOW...

OCT 2000	<i>DoW CIO established the DoW Information Assurance Scholarship Program (IASP), authorized by the FY01 NDAA, Chapter 112 of U.S.C., Sec. 2200</i>
JUL 2017	<i>In accordance with FY23 NDAA, Sec. 1535, and FY18 NDAA Sec. 1641, DoW IASP becomes the DoW Cyber Scholarship Program (CySP)</i>
OCT 2022	<i>In accordance with the FY23 NDAA Sec. 1535 established the name DoW Cyber and Digital Service Academy</i>
OCT 2023	<i>DoW Cyber and Digital Service Academy becomes a program of record and based on FY24 Sec. 1533 the program was renamed to the DoW Cyber Service Academy (CSA)</i>
JUN 2024	<i>In accordance with the FY24 NDAA Sec. 1511, the DoW CIO establishes the DoW Cyber Academic Engagement Office</i>
JUN 20XX	<i>DoW CSA announces award of scholars</i>
JUL 20XX	<i>DoW CSA newly selected scholars attend Bootcamp</i>

Key Stakeholders



DoW CSA Recruitment Scholars

Non-DoW employees accepted into the DoW CSA scholarship program to pursue an associates, undergraduate, or graduate degree in cybersecurity.

Scholarship recipients remain a scholar as they progress through their degree program and during the full term of the service obligation period.

DoW Chief Information Officer

Sponsors
funding and provides policy, and strategic goal oversight for the DoW CSA Program.

DoW Cyber Academic Engagement Office

Provides policy oversight to the DoW CSA.

National Centers of Academic Excellence in Cybersecurity

Provides direct support to students throughout the application process, award term, and coordinates grant delivery for their institution.

DoW Components

Identifies requirements, provides billets, selects scholars for employment, provide internships, and hire graduates.

Eligibility & Benefits



The DoW CSA Program offers unique benefits to each cohort of scholars that meet the following below outlined requirements.

REQUIREMENTS



Rising junior or senior undergraduate students with 3.2 or above GPA

OR



Second year of pursuing an associate's degree with min 3.2 GPA

OR



Graduate Student with a 3.5 GPA or above



Currently not a full-time Federal employee or Active-duty military



Enrolled full-time in a cyber program at a designated NCAE-C



Major or concentration in cyber-related discipline



U.S Citizen eligible for security clearance



Have at least one full academic year remaining in degree program



Able to complete service obligation following graduation



Maintain flexibility to move within the continental U.S to perform internships and final service obligation

BENEFITS

- ✓ *Full Tuition & Fees*
- ✓ *Books and Supplies*
- ✓ *Living Stipend*
- ✓ *DoD 8140 certification allowance*
- ✓ *Paid summer internship*
- ✓ *DoD Agency/Component career opportunity post-graduation*
- ✓ *Eligible for up to 5 years of support*

REMINDER

KEEP COPIES OF ALL COMPLETED DOCUMENTS FOR YOUR RECORDS AND YOUR SANITY



Key Program Milestones



Recruitment Scholars will reach the following key milestones during the program, from award acceptance to starting their career in the Department to their DoD career

1

SCHOLARSHIP AWARD

- DoD CSA Bootcamp
- Background Check May Begin

2

ACADEMIC PURSUITS

- University Coursework
- Summer Internship(s)

3

SERVICE COMMITMENT

- Graduation
- Transition to Employment

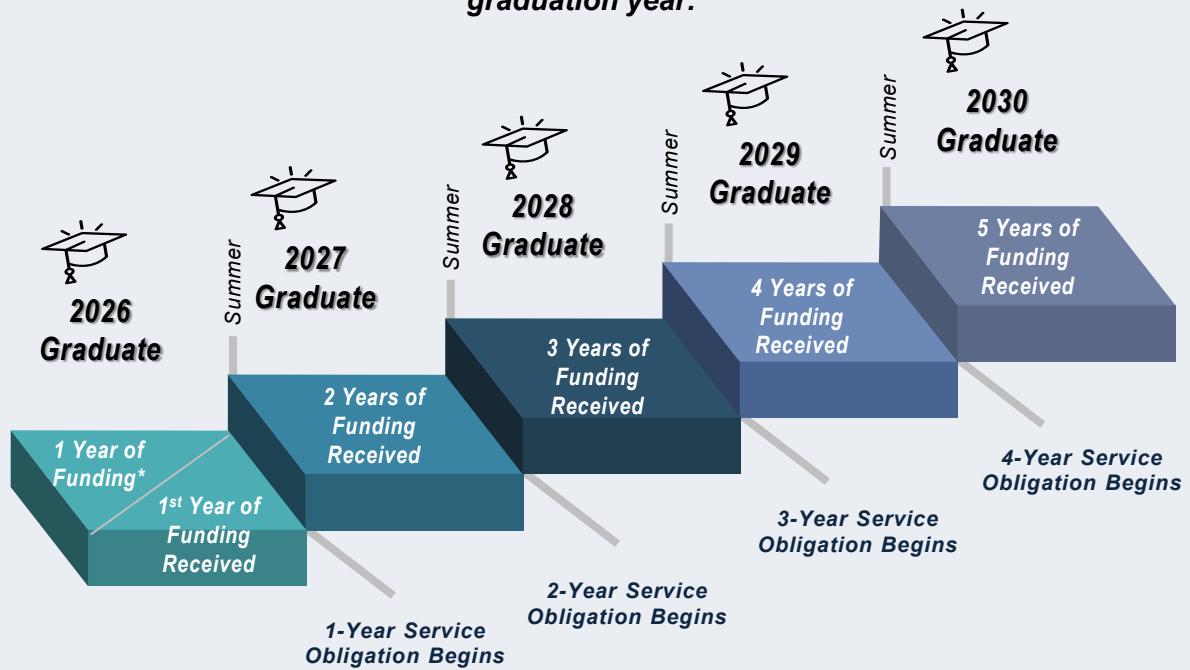
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CAREER

- Complete Service Obligation
- Professional Journey begins



The figure below illustrates service obligation based on funding received and expected graduation year:



DoD CSA recognizes two academic year systems when referencing years of funding:

- Semester System: Fall and Spring semester (approximately 15 weeks each/ 30 weeks total) or
- Quarter System: Fall, Winter, and Spring quarter (approximately 10 weeks each/30 weeks total).

Award Procedure Overview



In the DoW CSA Program, DoW Components select applicants matching their cyber workforce requirements, and the DoW CSA coordinates program milestones for scholars their DoW career.



DoW Component Role

SELECT

Scholarships are awarded when a DoW Component commits to supporting and hiring a student upon graduation. Awardees are notified of their assigned Component's details at the time of the award and, by accepting the scholarship, agree to join that workforce after completing their program.



DoW CSA Role

COORDINATE

Selected applicants receive required documents and details about mandatory Recruitment Scholar orientations. These orientations, which may be online or in-person, introduce new scholars to the DoW CSA, their sponsoring Component, and their cohort.



Scholar Role

ACCEPT

The DoW CSA application portal will notify selected applicants. Acceptance requires signing the service agreement and promissory note within the portal. Funding is contingent upon receipt of all required documentation. Failure to comply may result in award rescission.

Boot Camp: The boot camp will be hosted at a designated location in July. Recruitment scholars will be contacted by a representative from the hosting organization with details about the event. Returning Recruitment scholars do not attend the boot camp. Travel restrictions placed by DoW leadership may cancel or delay this event.

Award Deferral Not Allowed

DoW CSA awards do not allow for deferrals. Awardees must begin or continue their studies in the fall term following the application cycle, typically August or September of their offer year.

DoW CSA Ethics



DoW CSA Scholars are expected to always uphold the program ethics below.



PROFESSIONALISM

Scholars maintain the highest standards of excellence in all their endeavors and consistently demonstrate punctuality in attendance and timely fulfillment of their academic, hiring agency, and scholarship responsibilities.



LEADERSHIP

Scholars take the initiative to advance their knowledge and share their experience with others throughout their studies and DoW career.



INTEGRITY

Scholars adhere to the highest ethical standards and comply with applicable laws, rules, and regulations – within and outside of the classroom.



BE KIND

Scholars adhere to the highest ethical standards and comply with applicable laws, rules, and regulations – within and outside of the classroom..



PUBLIC SERVICE

Scholars are mindful of the public investment made in their DoW CSA awards and act in a manner that is worthy of that investment. Scholars are dedicated to and uphold the principles and national interests of the United States.



Eligibility & Benefits

DoW CSA
Recruitment Scholar

Eligibility & Benefits Overview



Funding

The Department of War Cyber Scholarship Academy is a merit-based program. Scholarships are awarded based on funding availability and provide financial assistance as determined by 10 U.S.C. § 2200 and the DoW Chief Information Officer (CIO). Funding is provided only for the degree specified in the initial application. Scholars seeking funding for a subsequent degree must reapply to the DoW CSA for a separate award, following the established policy for follow-on funding.

Tuition and Approved Educational Expenses

The DoW CSA covers the full cost of tuition and mandatory fees for full-time study (fall, winter, and spring semesters) at a National Centers of Academic Excellence in Cybersecurity (NCAE-C) institution. Summer and condensed winter terms are generally not covered, except for required summer internships for scholars. There is no tuition cap, and the tuition amount does not impact service obligations. Mandatory fees typically include student activity, technology, and student government fees. In addition to tuition and fees, Recruitment Scholars receive a stipend (set annually by the DoW CSA Program Office and subject to change), a book/supply/certification allowance, and a one-time technology allowance. The DoW CSA will cover the cost of student health insurance only if purchased through the institution's healthcare program; coverage provided through a parent/guardian or employer is not eligible for reimbursement.



All Recruitment Scholarship funds are disbursed as a grant to the academic institution, which is then responsible for distributing funds or crediting student accounts. Grants are awarded before the start of the fall term. Returning scholars are not eligible for additional laptop/computer allowances, regardless of how much time remains in their degree program. Scholars who complete less than nine months of academic study may receive a prorated stipend.

Award Length and Adjustments

The scholarship award length, ranging from one to five years, determines the duration of funding and benefits. Scholars incur a one-year service obligation for each year of funding received, with six-month increments added for periods extending beyond a typical academic year. The minimum award length and service obligation is one year. Scholars are expected to complete their chosen degree full-time, though exceptions may be granted for those nearing graduation.

Award length adjustments require a request submitted at least 90 days before the current graduation date. This request must include justification, a confirmed new graduation date from the university, and coordination with the DoW CSA POC and Component Liaison. The DoW CSA PO has sole approval authority and will review requests based on available funding, Component support, and established procedures. Approved adjustments will modify the service obligation accordingly.

Maintaining Eligibility



Full-Time Status

Scholars must maintain full-time enrollment, though exceptions may be granted for those nearing graduation.

Completion of Degree Requirements

Scholars must complete all degree requirements, including a written thesis or dissertation, edits, defense, and any other requirements specified by your institution.

➤ **Minimum GPA Requirement.**

Scholars must maintain a minimum cumulative GPA for their DoW CSA-funded degree, per the most recent official academic transcript provided by their currently funded institution each year – 3.0 associate's degree, 3.2 bachelor's degree, 3.5 master's or PhD/doctorate.

If the scholar fails to maintain the required GPA, the scholar may be placed in a probation status with one academic semester/two academic quarters to raise the GPA. If a scholar is unable to raise the GPA, the scholar may be dismissed from the DoW CSA.

➤ **Academic Performance and Degree Completion Requirements**

Scholars who do not complete their funded degree with the required cumulative GPA (3.0 for associate's, 3.2 for bachelor's, and 3.5 for master's/doctoral) may be required to repay the scholarship. Scholars may also be required to repay the scholarship if their selecting Component is unable to hire them. All courses offered for a letter grade must be taken for a letter grade. Taking such courses as pass/fail may result in probation and potential dismissal from the DoW CSA.

➤ **Incomplete Coursework**

Scholars must complete all coursework on time and according to their academic program requirements. Receiving an incomplete grade for a registered course or failing any course within a term (even if the cumulative GPA remains above the required minimum), does not constitute satisfactory academic progress. Earning less than full-time credit in a term due to incomplete grades may result in probation and possible dismissal from the DoW CSA. While failed or withdrawn courses may be repeated, the scholar is responsible for any associated costs. Exceptions will be made for pandemic situations where universities institute universal pass/fail grading policies.

Leave of Absence

Scholars are expected to participate in the Program and pursue their approved degree full-time. If a scholar is unable to participate in the DoW CSA for more than four consecutive weeks, they must notify the DoW CSA PO, their on-campus and Component POCs of the absence.

Prior approval from the DoW CSA PO is required for any leave of absence. The DoW CSA PO has the sole authority to approve or deny leave requests.

Scholars may request a leave of absence in the following circumstances:

- The scholar or an immediate family member (as defined by the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993) has a medical condition requiring a leave.
- Other emergencies (e.g., natural disaster).
- Activation for military service.

A leave of absence will not be approved to delay the start of the service obligation.

Maintaining Eligibility

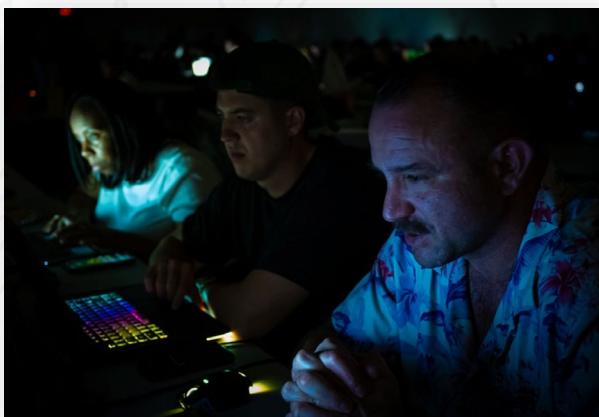


Pursuit of Degrees Outside of DoW CSA Scholars may not simultaneously pursue another degree while funded by the DoW CSA. The DoW CSA only supports the degree listed on the scholar application. A scholar initially sponsored for one degree may submit a returning scholar application to pursue an additional degree, however the scholar may not request more than 5 years of support.

Participation in Study Abroad Programs

Scholars are strongly encouraged not to participate in a study-abroad program, but should a scholar decide to engage in a study-abroad program, the program **must do the following**:

- Directly contribute to the scholar's funded degree requirements
- Not affect degree completion, graduation date, or service obligation start date
- Not interfere with internship or service obligation requirements
- Not interfere with scholar's ability to maintain full-time enrollment at their DoW CSA-funded U.S. institution
- Not affect the scholar's ability to obtain or maintain the required security clearance
- Agree that all tuition must be paid directly to the scholar's DoW CSA-funded U.S. institution



Scholars shall also notify the DoW CSA PO 30 day prior to their travel.

The DoW CSA will not fund travel or other study-abroad related expenses beyond standard tuition and fees. Additional tuition costs outside standard academic terms may be requested.

Participation in Fieldwork, Conferences, Meetings, or Training

Scholars may conduct research or participate in fieldwork, conferences, meetings, or training activities outside of their funded academic institution. When funds are available, the DoW CSA will provide financial support for one cyber-related conference or meeting within the continental United States.

Additional Opportunities & Limitations



Employment Guidelines for Recruitment Scholars

Acceptable Employment: Scholars may accept employment (e.g., commercial, private industry, non-federal) while maintaining academic standards. Some DoW CSA POCs may require scholars to provide employment details (company, hours, supervisor). On-campus positions are allowed if they don't negatively affect academics, internships, or service obligations. Examples: research assistant, resident advisor, food service, tutor.

Restrictions on Employment: Scholars cannot work for their sponsoring Component or any other federal agency during the academic year. Working over 20 hours/week during the academic year may forfeit the stipend. This limit doesn't apply to summer internships. Scholars can work over 16 hours during academic breaks.

Impact of Academic Performance and Service Obligation: Employment hours may be restricted if the work negatively impacts the scholar's ability to maintain academic requirements. Outside employment may in no way impact a scholar's service obligation or summer internship at the sponsoring agency/component. Scholars are expected to adhere to all time and attendance policies while performing their summer internship.

Wage Limits: There is no monetary limit on the sum of wages a scholar may earn.

Institutional Restrictions: Institutions may not use the scholar stipend to require work from the scholar. Institutions may not deny payment of the stipend for students who are not working on campus.



Outside Funding

Scholars are not required to submit applications or demonstrate financial need. The DoW CSA will fully cover the scholar's tuition.

Scholars may accept external funding (e.g., private scholarships, fellowships, grants) if designated for non-tuition expenses (housing, supplies, etc.). Funding specifically intended for tuition should not be accepted.

Scholars may not accept funding from other federal sources (excluding DoW CSA) that carry a service obligation. Exceptions include salary supplements from certain Department of Veterans Affairs programs (e.g., GI Bill). Importantly, this restriction does not apply to wages earned through employment with any company or organization.

Scholars are responsible for repaying any private or federal student loans they obtain. Loan default may impact security clearance and the ability to fulfill service obligations.

Acceptance of external funding must not compromise DoW CSA obligations (graduation date, internships). Receipt of external funding does not reduce or eliminate the service obligation.





Processes & Procedures

DoW CSA
Recruitment Scholar

Security Clearance



As part of the hiring process, each DoW CSA Scholar will undergo security clearance procedures, facilitated by their DoW Component before their internship or service obligation begins.



Clearance Requirements

- **Provide** complete and timely information and documentation as requested
- **Be eligible to obtain** the level of **security clearance** required by the selecting agency
- **Be eligible to maintain** the required level of security clearance through completion of the service obligation
- **Notify** the DoW CSA PO and selecting Component **prior to traveling** to a foreign country
- **Notify** the DoW CSA PO and sponsoring facility immediately of any actions or events that may affect eligibility to obtain or maintain the security clearance. For a list of activities that may result in the denial or revocation of a security clearance visit <http://www.OPM.gov>



Denial of Security Clearance Application

If the application for the security clearance is denied, the scholar will be returned to the DoW CSA PO to be matched with a new selecting Component.

Scholar's resume will be provided to DoW Components in the event of a position with a lower clearance requirement can be obtained. Scholars may perform their service obligation through military service (active duty, reserves, or the National Guard).

In rare cases, the scholar may be assigned to another federal or state/local government organization to perform their service obligation. If the clearance issue is something that prevents the scholar from being hired, the scholar will be dismissed from the DoW CSA and required to pay back any funding provided to date. Employment by DoW-contractor companies, Federal Funded Research and Development Centers, or federal labs is not authorized for SA completion.



Revocation of Security Clearance

If a security clearance is revoked at any time prior to completion of the service obligation, the scholar will be dismissed from the DoW CSA and be required to pay back the scholarship.

Security Clearance



COMMON BLOCKERS

- Provides policy and oversight to DoD CSA. The DoD CSA team does not play an active role in Component clearance processes
- Failure to submit required forms may result in loss of scholarship.
- Get familiar with the SF86 form. Consider collecting needed information before official submission. The form can be extensive.
- Processes may differ for Scholars who have previously held a security clearance

COMMON REMINDERS

- Illegal Substance Abuse
- Excessive Alcohol Use
- Dishonesty at any point of the process.
- False names/identification numbers
- Foreign Contacts / Activities
- Criminal Activity
- Illegal Use of Information Technology
- Financial Issues
- Member of nefarious groups



PLEASE BE PATIENT

Each DoD Component's clearance process differs and takes time. Diligent screening helps secure our Nation against potential internal cyber threats.



Service Obligation Overview

Service Obligation Overview

The sponsoring DoW Component hires Scholars as full-time federal employees to fulfill their service obligation. The hiring process varies by Component and position, requiring scholars to complete all steps and provide documents (e.g., CV, resume, transcripts) at their expense. Before a start date, the Component confirms academic completion with the DoW CSA Program Office.

Scholars noncompliant with program requirements or who decline employment will be dismissed from the DoW CSA and must repay the scholarship.

Service Obligation Details

➤ Start of Service Obligation:

- The sponsoring DoW Component typically requires a security clearance prior to the service obligation start date, also known as the Entry on Duty (EOD) date.
- The EOD date is defined as the first day of full-time employment with the sponsoring DoW Component after verified degree completion.
- Requests for a short delay to the service obligation start require prior authorization from both the DoW CSA Program Office and the sponsoring DoW Component and are rarely approved. Scholars generally do not defer or delay their service obligation.

➤ Full-Time Federal Civilian Employment:

- Scholars work as full-time federal civilian employees for their sponsoring DoW Component until the service obligation is fulfilled.
- Periods of leave without pay or other non-pay status do not count toward completion of the service obligation. The service completion date must be extended by the total amount of time spent in non-pay status. Scholars must inform the DoW CSA Program Office of any leave without pay or non-pay status during their service obligation.

➤ Salary and Benefits:

- Scholars should contact their sponsoring DoW Component directly for information about salary, benefits, and potential relocation costs.
- The DoW CSA does not set or determine salaries. All salary and benefit details are determined by the sponsoring DoW Component according to OPM guidance and their own policies.
- Relocation costs may not be covered by the sponsoring DoW Component, and scholars should anticipate potentially paying for relocation and travel themselves.
- Information regarding federal salary levels can be found at www.OPM.gov.

➤ Completion of Service Obligation:

- Scholars must complete their service obligation with their sponsoring DoW Component in accordance with the DoW CSA Service Agreement (SA). Completing the service obligation with another facility is not permitted.
- Scholars must fulfill the service obligation as outlined in their selection letter. Failure to properly complete the service obligation will result in dismissal from the DoW CSA and be subject to debt repayment procedures.

Post – Service Obligation Requirements



All DoW CSA Scholars are required to complete post-service obligations with their selecting DoW Component in accordance with the DoW CSA Service Agreement.



Geographic Mobility

Scholars must relocate to their assigned DoW Component facility for the completion of their service obligation, including any internship. Failure to relocate will result in repayment of scholarship funds.



Engagement Opportunities

Upon completion of the SA, Scholars have opportunities to engage with the program and promote its success for future years. These opportunities include but are not limited promoting and supporting the DoW CSA PO within the community (facility of employment and professional associations) as well as serving as a panelist at future boot camps and student events.



Reporting Requirements

Shortly after completing the service obligation with the selecting DoW Component, scholars provide the DoW CSA PO with completion verification documentation and updated contact information.



Completion Letter

Once the DoW CSA Program Office verifies a scholar's service obligation is complete, a confirmation letter will be sent to both the scholar and the selecting DoW Component.

Summer Internship Overview



Scholars are required to complete internships with the DoW Component that selected/sponsored them. These internships allow scholars to contribute to the Component's mission, build relationships with potential colleagues and supervisors, and familiarize themselves with the local area.



Length of Internship

Internships are completed each year the award crosses a summer period and are usually completed during summer months, ranging in duration from 8 to 12 weeks, unless the selecting DoW Component requests a different length. Scholars with alternative academic schedules such as year-round coursework, extended internship/co-op periods, or other special requirements may request alternative timing or internship lengths. Internship start dates are scheduled based on DoW pay periods.



Internship Funding

Scholars completing internships will receive wages from the selecting DoW Component. Salary levels are typically lower than full-time positions and are based on your experience and academic level. Travel funding to-and-from your internship location will be provided by the DoW CSA PO via the grant awarded to your institution. Scholars who are within 50 miles of their selecting DoW Component will not receive travel support.



Common Access Card (CAC)

The Common Access Card (CAC) is a DoW badge used for identification as well as for security authentication. CACs are issued by the selecting DoW Component. Selecting DoW Components generally require scholars to have a valid CAC or other approved identification to gain entrance to the facility and use their networks.

Obtaining a CAC may be a lengthy process and the time it takes to issue a CAC is dependent on each selecting DoW Component.

Scholars confirm the CAC requirement and coordinate the CAC process directly with the selecting DoW Component well in advance of arriving for an internship and employment. Scholars work directly with the sponsoring component to resolve any CAC questions or concerns.

If a scholar has been issued a CAC and withdraws or is dismissed, the CAC will be deactivated, and its privileges revoked. Since the CAC is U.S. Government property, it is required to be returned upon the withdrawal or dismissal effective date.

Internship Conduct



PROFESSIONALISM

Scholars adhere to the highest professional and ethical standards throughout the internship period, including complying with the DoW CSA code of conduct, adhering to selecting DoW Component dress codes, timeliness, acting appropriately, and satisfactorily completing internship duties and responsibilities.

Scholars are encouraged to request guidance and support as needed, as well as accept and learn from instruction and constructive criticism.

TIME & ATTENDANCE

Scholars are expected to work full-time for their selected DoW Component throughout the internship. Compliance with all Component policies regarding time, attendance, and absence reporting is mandatory. Failure to adhere to these policies may result in disciplinary action or impact program standing.

MISCONDUCT

Personal and/or professional misconduct during the internship may result in dismissal from the DoW CSA.

REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

Scholars are responsible for proactively contacting their selected DoW Component prior to the internship to determine and prepare for all facility-specific requirements related to access and badging. This includes gathering and providing the required documentation to establish identity and citizenship.



Internship Waiver Policy

The internship requirement may only be waived by the DoW CSA PO.

Reasons for a waiver are:

- Late notice of start date with selecting DoW Component which does not allow a scholar to obtain adequate housing.
- A global pandemic.
- Government-wide shut down.
- Selecting DoW Component hiring freeze.
- Failure by the scholar to obtain required security clearance.
- DoW Component delay in the clearance processing.

Granting a waiver for the internship requirement does not change the length of the scholar's service obligation. Waivers are considered for one internship period at a time. The DoW CSA PO will work with the Scholar, the on-campus DoW CSA POC, and the relevant DoW Component to communicate when an internship waiver is approved. If a scholar cannot complete an internship due to a delayed security clearance (less than two months before the start date), they may find other summer employment. However, they should not accept positions that require them to return after graduation.

Internship Conduct



EMERGENCIES

Scholars must adhere to all relevant Component policies and procedures in the event of a medical or other emergency during their internship. After taking necessary actions to ensure their safety and well-being, they should contact their supervisor and the selected DoW Component as soon as it is safe and practical to do so.

ANNUAL LEAVE

Scholars work continuously at the selecting DoW Component for the dates of the internship. Approval of personal leave is at the discretion of the selecting DoW Component.

SICK LEAVE

Scholars are expected to adhere to the sick leave/call-out policies of their assigned DoW Component. In the event of illness preventing attendance, Scholars should notify their supervisor as soon as practical and follow any additional reporting procedures required by the Component.

ILLNESS & INJURY

If a Scholar is injured or becomes ill as a direct result of performing their internship duties, they should immediately contact their selected DoW Component. It's important to note that, for the limited purposes of work injury compensation (under Title 5 U.S.C., Chapter 81) and tort claims (under Title 28 U.S.C., Chapter 171), Scholars are considered employees during their internship, even if they are not otherwise employed by the federal government. However, this designation does not extend to any other aspect of federal employment. Regardless of the severity, all such illnesses or injuries must be reported to the DoW Component as soon as the Scholar is able.

ABSENT WITHOUT LEAVE

If a Scholar leaves an internship without notifying their assigned DoW Component, the DoD CSA PO will be notified, and the Scholar may face probationary status or removal from the program. The assigned DoW Component must adhere to its established policies and procedures regarding AWOL employees.



Internship Preparation



1

Coordinate Dates

Scholars must coordinate mutually agreeable internship start and end dates directly with their assigned DoW Component. This coordination should be conducted via email, contacting their CL and/or facility POC as directed by the assigned DoW Component. Due to federal pay period structures, internships must begin on a Monday and end on a Friday. Scholars should not report to any location without prior coordination and a confirmed start date.

2

Security Clearance

To ensure a successful internship experience, Scholars should proactively discuss security clearance requirements with their Component or facility POC well in advance of the internship. These requirements are determined by the assigned DoW Component. Failure to meet the clearance requirements at least two months prior to the internship start date may result in the Scholar being unable to participate in the internship.

3

Internship Travel

Scholars are responsible for initiating the travel reimbursement process by working with their institution to complete required forms for travel to and from the internship location. Institutions must then process these requests, adhering to both their own travel policies and the U.S. General Services Administration's travel policy (<https://www.gsa.gov/travel?topnav=travel>).

Scholars have the option to drive or fly. However, Scholars who live within 50 miles of their assigned DoW Component are not eligible for the travel stipend

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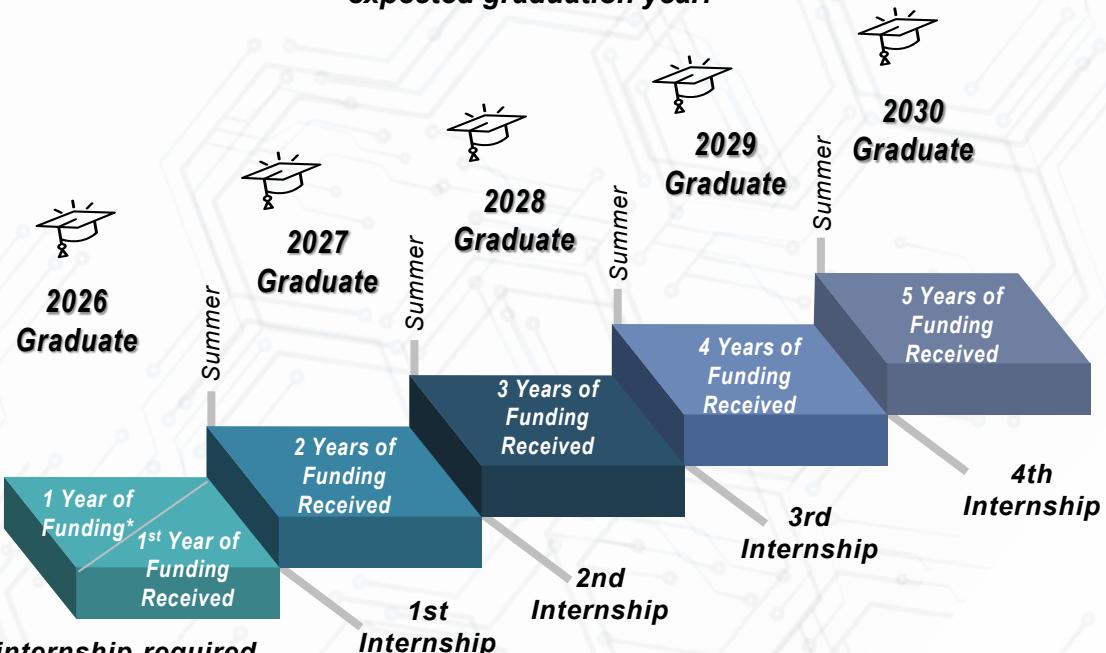
Confirm Facility Access

To facilitate a seamless onboarding experience, Scholars should discuss specific facility access requirements with their Component or facility POC well in advance of the internship. This includes requirements related to gaining access to the facility grounds, computers, email systems, and other essential resources.

Number of Internships Example



The figure below illustrates internship requirements based on funding received and expected graduation year.



*No internship required if Scholar received funding their final academic year for one year

Below Illustrates Sample Profiles of Scholars



Dorothy

- Begins 1 year service obligation in spring 2026
- New Scholar - 2025 Cohort
- Undergraduate Senior
- Expects to graduate spring 2026
- No summer internship required



Samuel

- New Scholar - 2025 Cohort
- Undergraduate Junior
- Expects to graduate Spring 2027
- Anticipates 2 years of funding
- Performs internship summer 2026
- Reapplies during 2026 cycle
- Begins 2-year service obligation spring 2027



Cameron

- Returning Scholar in 2025 Cohort
- Second year PhD student
- Expects to graduate spring 2029
- Performs internship summer 2026, 2027, and 2028
- Reapplies during 2026, 2027, and 2028 cycles
- Begins 5-year service obligation in spring 2029



Andrew

- New Scholar in 2025 Cohort
- Second year Associate, but would like to finish Bachelors
- Expects to graduate spring 2028
- Performs internship spring 2026, 2027, and 2028
- Decides in 2028 on 1 additional year to complete Masters
- Begins 4-year service obligation spring 2029



Reporting Requirements

DoW CSA Scholars have reporting requirements at all stages of their journey to becoming DoW cyber employees. These include requirements during their academic studies, service obligation and post-service obligation. The chart below outlines the requirements based on stage.

DURING SCHOLARSHIP

Requirement	Details	Due No Later Than
Updated Contact Information	Confirm or update contact information including mailing address, telephone number(s), and email address(es) through the DoW CSA Scholar Portal.	2 weeks prior to start of Academic Year courses
Final Transcript	All scholars must provide a copy of their final transcripts to the DoW CSA PO within 30 days of starting their service obligation. Transcripts can be sent to osd.mc-alex.DoD-cio.mbx.Dod-csa@mail.mil .	30 days prior to services obligation start date

DURING SERVICE OBLIGATION

Requirement	Details	Due No Later Than
Updated Contact Information	Confirm or update contact information including mailing address, telephone number(s), and email address(es) through the DoW CSA Scholar Portal.	2 weeks prior to start of Academic Year courses
Final Transcript	Scholars are required to submit final transcripts with the conferred degree identified to their selecting Component prior to final job offer.	Determined by Component
SF-50 (with birthdate and SSN redacted)	Notification of personnel action hiring scholar as a full-time federal civilian employee. Available from the SF human resources office after work start date.	6 weeks after EOD
SF-50 (with birthdate and SSN redacted)	Notification of personnel action hiring scholar as a full-time federal civilian employee. Available from the SF human resources office after work start date.	Every year during the service obligation.

POST-SERVICE OBLIGATION

Requirement	Details	Due No Later Than
Updated Contact Information	Confirm or update contact information including mailing address, telephone number(s), and email address(es) through the DoW CSA Scholar Portal.	2 weeks after service obligation completion then annually for 5 years
Redacted SF-50	If Scholar chooses to stay with their hiring Component, they should submit this form with their social security redacted	2 weeks after service obligation is complete
Resume / Employer	If Scholar chooses not to stay with their Component an updated resume and name of new employer	2 weeks after service obligation is complete

Voluntary Withdraw & Expulsion



DoW CSA Scholars retain the right to voluntarily withdraw from the DoW CSA Program at any time. However, Scholars should understand that withdrawal triggers specific repayment obligations and requires completion of a formal withdrawal process. To initiate this process, Scholars must notify the DoW CSA PO in writing of their intent to withdraw.



VOLUNTARY WITHDRAWAL FROM DoW CSA

The withdrawal letter should be sent via email to osd.mc-alex.Dod-cio.mbx.Dod=csa@mail.mil. A withdrawal acknowledgement letter will be provided to the scholar, specifying the date of withdrawal. All DoW CSA funding will cease immediately upon the date of withdrawal.

- If the scholar withdraws from the Program prior to any funding being provided, the student will not be required to repay the funds.
- If the scholar withdraws from the Program after funding has been provided to the academic institution, the scholar will be subject to debt repayment procedures and may be responsible for repaying all funds expended on their behalf.
- If the scholar withdraws from the Program after graduation but before or during the service obligation, the scholar will be subject to debt repayment procedures. Any portion of the service obligation already performed will be prorated in the debt amount.



DISMISSAL FROM DoW CSA

Failure to comply with any Program policy or procedure may result in dismissal from the DoW CSA Program. In the event of dismissal, the Scholar will receive a written notice specifying the date and reason for the action. All DoW CSA funding will terminate immediately, and the Scholar may be required to repay the entire award amount.

Debt Repayment Overview



Non-Compliance Procedures

If a scholar is found to be non-compliant with program requirements (e.g., failing to maintain the required grade point average, code of conduct violations), the DoW CSA Program Office (PO) will issue either a non-compliance notice or a dismissal notice, depending on the severity of the violation and supporting documentation. Scholars acknowledge receipt of any non-compliance notice. If the scholar fails to return to compliance or is deemed unable to return to compliance, the DoW CSA PO will initiate the debt collection process.



DoW Scholarship Debt Policy

Scholars dismissed from the DoW CSA program for non-compliance, or who withdraw before completing their service obligation (regardless of DoW employment status), are subject to debt establishment procedures. Title 10, U.S.C. section 2192a(e) grants the U.S. government the right to seek repayment for any unserved obligated service, constituting a debt owed to the United States.

Several entities play a role in establishing debt against scholars: the DoW Component Security Authority Washington Headquarters Services (WHS), the DoW Chief Information Officer (DoW CIO), and the DoW Service Components (Army, Navy, Air Force, and other DoW Components). However, the DoW CSA Program Office (PO) holds the final authority to establish a debt.

When a scholar withdraws or is dismissed, the DoW CSA PO will issue a debt letter outlining the debt amount, repayment procedures, and instructions on how to dispute the debt or request a waiver.

The debt establishment process typically results in:

- **Monetary Debt:** The scholar repays the United States for failing to fulfill program requirements. Scholars may be required to repay all funds expended under their DoW CSA award, including tuition, books, fees, stipend, technology allowance, approved educational expenses, travel, health insurance funds, miscellaneous allowance, and any other federal funds provided. Debt may be pro-rated for partial service.
- **No Debt:** The DoW Component determines the scholar is not obligated to repay the United States, as permitted by Title 10, U.S.C. Section 2192a, subsection (e).
- **Service Repayment:** The debt may be reduced or eliminated if the scholar is a current DoW employee performing obligated service commensurate with benefits received (Title 10 U.S.C. 2192a(e)).

Debt Disputes and Waivers

The debt letter will include instructions on how to dispute the debt or request a waiver. Waivers are typically granted if the scholar provides proof of a performed service obligation with a federal component or military service. The DoW CSA PO will review the documentation and may clear the scholar of the debt.

Debt Repayment

Absent a request for review or waiver, debts are to be paid in full according to instructions in the debt letter. The terms of repayment (including interest, if applicable) are negotiated between the scholar and the identified debt collection office. The maximum repayment period is 60 months. Repayment must comply with Volume 5, Chapter 28 of DoW 7000.14-R, "Department of War Financial Management Regulation (FMR)," November 2012, DFAS policies, and other relevant debt repayment policies and procedures. A bankruptcy discharge granted less than 5 years after program termination does not discharge this debt.

On-Campus Support



DoD CSA Program Office is committed to ensuring scholars have the direct support they need to progress through the program successfully.

➤ DO YOU KNOW YOUR ON-CAMPUS POC?

Institutions with active DoD CSA Scholars have at least one **On-Campus POC** who acts as the first-line of support to Scholars as they reach key milestones on their path to becoming DoD employees.



Reviews and **prioritizes** all submitted student applications based on the program eligibility requirements.



Provide 1:1 support to students - Answers basic program questions, (e.g., how to request travel, scholarship benefits, selection process).



Advertises DoD CSA on campus (e.g., campus social media, flyers, newspapers, websites).



Notifies the DoD CSA Program Office of student issues or concerns.

Want to Get Involved?



Scholars should **contact** their **On-Campus POC** for opportunities to spread **awareness** of DoD CSA across campus and through university media platforms.

Communication



Methods of Communication

The DoW CSA Program Office will use the Online Application Portal to coordinate with scholars, CLs, and on-campus POCs regarding program and policy updates as well as relevant timelines and due dates.

Scholars should check their email regularly and designate DoW CSA-related emails as non-SPAM material and or regularly check SPAM email folders. Scholars shall respond to DoW CSA emails in a professional and timely manner.

Gentle Reminder

Reply to mail with the DoW CSA program office, your academic institution, and future employer in a timely and professional manner...

Including emails, physical mail, and phone calls!

Meet Our Team



Alice Smitley

DoW CSA Program Manager
alice.e.smitley.civ@mail.mil



Allison Swim

DoW CSA Contract Support
Allison.c.swim.ctr@mail.mil



Keylee Jones

DoW CSA Contract Support
[keylee.d.jones.ctr@mail.mil](mailto:Keylee.d.jones.ctr@mail.mil)

Resourceful Links



Below are useful resources all Scholars should bookmark for easy reference.



DoW CYBER EXCHANGE

Latest DoW CSA documents and Information
(i.e., *memorandums, solicitation*)

<https://public.cyber.mil/wid/csa/>



DoW COMPONENT PORTAL

Component Participation Information

Coming Soon



DoW CSA APPLICATION PORTAL

Recruitment and Retention Application

Coming Soon



CONTACT US

DoW CSA Program Email

osd.mc-alex.Dod-cio.mbx.Dod-csa@mail.mil

Security Clearance Background Check Preparation (SF-86)



Scholars should familiarize themselves with the required information for their security clearance background check.

DCSA is committed to increasing the efficiency of the security clearance investigation process.

STANDARD FORM-86

HOW TO FILL OUT THE SF-86

The Standard Form 86 "Questionnaire for National Security Positions" (SF-86) is a background investigation form you need to fill out for a security clearance. The information provided on this form is used to determine whether you are reliable, trustworthy, of good conduct and character, and loyal to the U.S.

#	SECTION
1-7	IDENTIFYING & CONTACT INFORMATION
8-10	PASSPORT AND CITIZENSHIP
11	RESIDENTIAL HISTORY
12	EDUCATION
13	EMPLOYMENT
14	SELECTIVE SERVICE RECORD
15	MILITARY HISTORY
16	PEOPLE WHO KNOW YOU WELL
17	MARITAL/RELATIONSHIP STATUS
18	RELATIVES
19	FOREIGN CONTACTS
20A	FOREIGN ACTIVITIES
20C	FOREIGN TRAVEL
21	PSYCHOLOGICAL & EMOTIONAL HEALTH
22	POLICE RECORDS
23	DRUG ACTIVITY
24	USE OF ALCOHOL
25	INVESTIGATIONS/CLEARANCES
26	FINANCES
27	USE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
28	NON-CRIMINAL COURT ACTIVITY

Questions? Contact your security manager, facility security officer, recruiter, or HR office. For more information go to: <https://www.dcsa.mil/mc/pv/>

TIPS FOR FILLING OUT THE FORM

- Remove Gaps.** Ensure there are no gaps in history or missing identifying data in your questionnaire.
- Update or Delete Old Information.** If you've previously completed a background investigation questionnaire (like the SF-85), make sure the information in the system is updated by deleting any old or irrelevant entries.
- Be Honest:** Do not omit information, such as illegal drug activity or arrests. It's always better to be honest and provide truthful answers than misleading information.

KEY TIMEFRAMES

Some questions can reach back up to seven or 10 years, while others are "have you EVER" questions.

- Residential History:** List the addresses of your past and present residences going back **10 years**.
- Employment:** List past employment information going back **10 years**.
- Education:** List educational institutions and dates of your attendance going back **10 years**. Do not include certificate programs or military training. List any degrees/diplomas earned more than 10 years ago.
- People Who Know You Well:** List contact information for three personal references going back **seven years**.

Not sure if something should be listed?

When in doubt, fill it out.

DEFENSE COUNTERINTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY AGENCY



Glossary



Academic Address	An academic address is the current address of record for the scholar while enrolled at the academic institution. The academic address is usually a temporary address located near the academic institution. In some cases, the academic address may be the same as the permanent address or the summer address.
Academic Term	An academic term is a division of the academic year. Depending on how the academic institution structures its classes, an academic term may consist of a quarter or a semester.
Academic Year	An academic year in the DoW CSA PO consists of the fall through spring academic terms and is generally nine months in length. An academic year does not include the summer term or condensed winter term.
Award	An award in the DoW CSA PO is an offer of scholarship for the completion and conferral of a specific degree in accordance with the SA in exchange for a period of obligated service. Also referred to as the DoW CSA award.
Awardee	An awardee is an individual that has been offered and accepted a DoW CSA award but has not begun to receive funding yet.
Award Funding	Award funding refers to the amount of funds expended under the scholar's DoW CSA award including all stipend, tuition, approved related educational expenses, travel expenses, health insurance funds, miscellaneous supplies allowance, and all other funds expended by the federal government under the scholar's award. Award funding begins 1 August of the first award year.
Award Year	An award year refers to a DoW CSA PO funding year which generally last 18 months beginning in August and ending 18 months later in December.
Cumulative GPA	A cumulative GPA is determined based on the grades and courses listed on the most-recent official transcript from the DoW CSA-funded institution, for the DoW CSA-funded degree and is calculated on a 4.0 scale.
Debt Repayment	The procedure for recovering funds determined due the federal government under a DoW CSA award based on scholar withdrawal or dismissal from the DoW CSA PO prior to completion of the service obligation.
Degree Completion	Degree completion refers to the date on which an individual completes all requirements to complete a degree, including thesis/dissertation writing, edits, defense, etc. This date generally occurs prior to degree conferral and is not set forth on official transcripts. The degree completion date may be the same as the degree conferral date.
Degree Conferral	Degree conferral refers to the date on which a degree is bestowed upon an individual. This date is set forth on the official transcript reflecting the degree earned. The degree conferral date may be the same as the degree completion date.
Dismissal	Dismissal is the process to remove a scholar from the DoW CSA based on failure to comply with DoW CSA policy, procedure, and/or SA.
DoW Component	Organizational entities in the DoW. There are four DoW component designations in the DoW CSA: Department of the Army, Department of the Navy, Department of the Air Force, and other DoW Agencies.
DoW CSA Website	The DoW CSA website provides updated information regarding other program events.

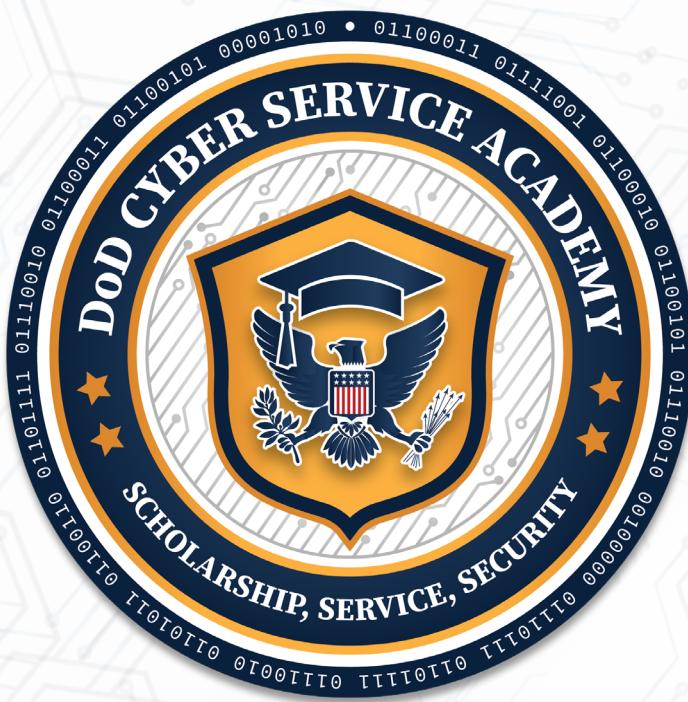
Glossary



DoW CSA Scholar Portal	The DoW CSA Scholar Portal contains scholar submittal documents, posts, policies, and procedures, and is where scholars update their contact information during all phases.
Scholarship Program	The Department of War Cyber Service Academy.
Full-Time Employment	Employment that includes regularly scheduled work hours and days required by the administrative workweek for a particular group or class.
Incomplete Coursework	Incomplete coursework is receiving a grade of incomplete for a registered course and does not constitute adequate progress toward degree completion.
Other DoW Components	Individual DoW Agencies and Components that do not belong to the Army, Navy, or Air Force.
Permanent Address	A permanent address is the legal permanent residence of the scholar. In some cases, the permanent address may be the same as the academic or summer address.
Recruitment Scholar	A recruitment scholar is a scholar who is not employed in a permanent civilian position by the DoW Component at the time of and throughout the award. Scholars who are employed by the DoW Component in temporary or internship positions at the time of award are recruitment scholars.
Satisfactory Academic Progress	Maintenance of at least a 3.0 GPA on a 4.0 scale within the criteria defined in the SA and maintaining adequate progress toward degree completion.
Scholar	An individual who has received and accepted a DoW CSA award. An individual remains a scholar throughout all three program phases.
Scholarship	A financial award for full-time study leading to cyber-related degree.
Security Clearance	A security clearance is an authorization issued by the federal government permitting an individual access to sensitive and classified information.
Service Obligation	The period of service for a scholar determined by the DoW as being appropriate to obtain adequate service in exchange for financial assistance.
Summer Address	The summer address is where the scholar is located prior to traveling to their summer activities, example internship. In most cases this will be either the academic address or permanent address.
United States Citizen	A United States citizen is an individual who was born or naturalized within the United States and is subject to the jurisdiction of the United States.
Work Start Date/Enter on Duty Date (EOD)	The work start date or enter on duty date is defined as the first day of full-time employment with selecting DoW Component after verified degree completion.



DoW Cyber Service Academy



*Inspiring the next
generation of top cyber
talent across the Nation.*