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## FEDERAL DIARY

Stephen Barr

### Graduating to Public Service

**I**n hopes of encouraging more college students to consider careers in government, leaders at 27 universities are trading ideas and techniques on what it will take to bring a new generation into public service.

The forecast is troublesome. Hundreds of thousands of baby boomers will be retiring from the government in the next few years, but most college students know little about federal jobs and how to apply for them.

The college leaders gathered last week at Princeton University for a discussion on the future of the government and how to create a national movement to champion scholarship and fellowship programs that will attract top students to public service.

"Our research is pretty clear. Public service is not on the radar screen of most students," said **Max Stier**, president of the nonprofit Partnership for Public Service.

**Anne-Marie Slaughter**, dean of the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton, added, "The kids who want to be change agents and make the biggest impact do not see the federal government as the place to do that."

The Partnership for Public Service and the Woodrow Wilson school sponsored the forum to hear from students, deans and financial donors. Participants explored ways to create new and specialized fellowships that would show students that the government has its share of cutting-edge programs and help them avoid excessive educational debt as they prepare for federal service.

A number of colleges have programs in place that could serve as models, Stier said. They include Princeton's Scholars in the Nation's

Service initiative, which began in 2006; the **Samuel J. Heyman** fellowships at the Harvard Law School, started in 2000; and the **Robert B. Fiske Jr.** fellowships at the University of Michigan Law School, started in 2001.

The Princeton initiative, for example, includes a summer internship with the federal government, two years working in a federal agency, and a master's degree in public affairs from the Woodrow Wilson school. Heyman, who founded the Partnership for Public Service, and Fiske, a former U.S. attorney in New York, provide honorariums and student loan repayments for students going into the federal government.

Other programs that encourage federal service have been launched by the University of Maryland, Seton Hall Law School and Tufts University. Louisiana State University, Stanford University and others are considering such programs.

Participants at the Princeton forum included **Shirley M. Tilghman**, president of Princeton; **Walter D. Broadnax**, president of Clark Atlanta University; **David T. Ellwood**, dean of Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government; **Selma Botman**, executive vice president of the City University of New York; **Astrid E. Merget**, provost of LSU; **T. Alexander Aleinikoff**, dean of the Georgetown University law school; **Robert Hollister**, dean of Tufts' college of citizenship and public service; and **Jeffrey Wachtel**, chief of staff to the president at Stanford.

While the forum participants agreed they need to better inform students about opportunities in government and help them pay for their educations, Stier said the university leaders also think the government has to speed up hiring

and become more competitive with the private sector.

"They were quite clear that they could not do it on their own, that the government had to help itself," Stier said.

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#### Retirement's Next Wave


The Office of Personnel Management projects that about 60 percent of federal employees will become eligible to retire in the next decade. But it's not clear that all agencies are planning for the day when they might be short of experienced hands, according to a survey released yesterday.

Only 39 percent of the 171 federal managers in the survey said their agency had a policy for "knowledge management," the formal and informal ways that organizations pass along information, procedures and practices so that employees know how to get their jobs done. The rest were unsure or did not know if their agencies had such a policy.

The survey was sponsored by Tandberg, a firm that makes software for video, voice and other data.

Rep. **Danny K. Davis** (D-Ill.), chairman of the House federal workforce subcommittee, said if agencies stumble in transferring knowledge to newly hired employees, "then there could be a downturn in productivity" across government. Agencies need to ensure that their new employees are properly trained, he said.

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 **ONLINE DISCUSSION** **Tom Bernatavitz**, Aetna vice president for federal plans, will take questions and comments about the 2008 Federal Employees Health Benefits Program at noon Wednesday on Federal Diary Live at [washingtonpost.com](http://washingtonpost.com).

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