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CORE AmeriCorps Student Ambassadors (CASA) **Program Handbook**

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Welcome to the CASA Program!

Congratulations! You are now a part of the second class of our statewide network of young adults participating in service-based scholarship programs in their communities and on their campuses through the CORE AmeriCorps Student Ambassador (CASA) Program.

As a CORE AmeriCorps member you will:

- **Work** with your community on issues of education, human rights, environment, public health and more
- **Commit** to a service experience where you will complete approximately 5 hrs/week of service during the academic year and/or an intensive summer program of 300 hours
- **Participate** between 1-4 years as a CASA leader by engaging in service and reflection, and participating in leadership and enrichment activities both on campus and in your community
- **Increase** the amount of financial resources available to pay for your current college expenses or future educational endeavors.
- **Belong** to a growing network of over 75 campuses and 2500 members nation-wide



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Introduction & History

What is CORE?

Since its creation in 2003, College Opportunity Resources for Education (CORE) has become the city of Philadelphia's largest privately funded service scholarship program. Through sustained partnerships with academic institutions, congregations, and community agencies CORE seeks to expand leadership opportunities for its scholars by helping meet basic needs and by enhancing services provided to the community.

CORE addresses its mission through two primary programs, the CORE Scholars Program and the CORE CASA Program. The CORE Scholars Program has awarded over \$30 million to nearly 17,000 Philadelphian students to cover tuition or other expenses.

The CORE CASA Community Fellows Program is our service-based scholarship program designed to provide students with an "access to education and an opportunity to serve."

What is AmeriCorps?

AmeriCorps members are Americans of all ages who have made a commitment to serve their communities and country.

Approximately 75,000 people serve in AmeriCorps each year. Members range in age from seventeen to older than ninety. They reflect the diversity of America in age, ethnicity, education, sexual preference, physical ability, gender and religion.

AmeriCorps has four main goals:

- **Getting Things Done** - AmeriCorps members help communities solve problems in the areas of education, public safety, the environment, and other human needs (like health and housing) by serving directly and by recruiting other people to serve as volunteers.
- **Strengthening Communities** - AmeriCorps members help unite individuals from all different backgrounds—and organizations of all kinds - in a common effort to improve communities.
- **Encouraging Responsibility** - AmeriCorps members explore and exercise their responsibilities to their communities, their families, and themselves during their service experience and throughout their lives.
- **Expanding Opportunity** - AmeriCorps members receive awards to further their education or to pay back student loans. They also gain valuable job experience, specialized training, and other skills.

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What is Service Learning?

Service learning is a strategy that many educational institutions and community-based organizations have embraced.

It challenges students to address issues in their community through service, while at the same time learning on a personal, social and intellectual level.



Timeline

1930's President Franklin D. Roosevelt creates the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). During the Depression, four million young people help restore the nation's parks, revitalize the economy, & support their families.

1961 President John Kennedy creates the Peace Corps. Since then, more than 150,000 Americans have served as Peace Corps volunteers.

1984 Wayne Meisel & Robert Hackett found COOL, Campus Outreach Opportunity League, creating a national network of college students committed to service, civic engagement, & leadership.

1990 President George Bush, Sr. signs the National & Community Service Act of 1990. The legislation authorizes grants to schools to support service-learning & grants for national service programs to youth corps, nonprofits, & colleges & universities.

1964 As part of the War on Poverty, President Lyndon B. Johnson creates VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America), giving Americans opportunities to serve full-time to help thousands of low-income communities.

2003 CORE was created by US Congressman Chaka Fattah

2011 CORE launches its first CASA Class of AmeriCorps Community Fellows

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CORE AmeriCorps Responsibilities

What are your responsibilities?

To earn an education award a CORE AmeriCorps member must satisfactorily complete program requirements and a full term of service.

Satisfactory service includes:

- Completing the required number of AmeriCorps hours as verified by your service site supervisor and campus program administrator
- Comply with applicable rules and complete all required enrollment and exit paperwork, including signing a member contract that states the rights and responsibilities while in the CORE AmeriCorps Program
- Members must abide by this contract and follow the rules of the program. You may be suspended or terminated if you violate the stated rules of behavior
- Maintain a positive attitude, quality service, and respect toward others in the program
- Attend all CORE AmeriCorps Program related leadership, training, and enrichment activities required by your institution
- Use the CORE Web-based Reporting System to track required documentation throughout member term



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CORE Service Opportunities Responsibilities

What are some examples of service activities I can be involve in?

In exchange for committing to serving 300 hours over the course of the calendar year, Community Fellows will receive an AmeriCorps Education Award of \$1,175 upon completion of their service.

Community Fellow service activities can include, but are not limited to:

- Providing academic support to K-12 at-risk students
- Mentoring K-12 at-risk students
- Serving in an academic enrichment program
- Volunteering in a college access program
- Providing workshops for at-risk students in: career awareness, study skills, or college admissions process
- Exposing at-risk students to the college environment via campus tours, sitting in on classes, or meeting with faculty
- Serving in a public high school guidance department
- Providing one-on-one counseling on the financial aid process and/or college application process
- Providing any of these supports to veterans seeking to attend college
- Supporting a service-learning course that focuses on any of these areas
- Coordinating and supporting volunteers who serve in any of these areas

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

AmeriCorps Education Award

What is an Education Award and what can it be used for?

After successfully completing a term of service and submitting the required exit paperwork to their campus director within 20 days of their exit date, CORE AmeriCorps members are enrolled in the National Service Trust and are then eligible to receive an education award.

The education award can be used to pay education costs at qualified institutions of higher education or to repay qualified student loans.

You may use the Education Award in the following ways, or a combination of them:

- To repay qualified existing or future student loans
- To pay all or part of the current cost of attending a qualified institution of higher education (including certain vocational programs)
- To pay current expenses while participating in an approved school-to-work program

What Types of Loans Can the Education Award Repay?

Most post-secondary loans that are backed by the federal government are qualified for repayment with an AmeriCorps education award.

The lender should be able to tell you if the loan is qualified. Qualified loans include:

- Stafford Loans
- William D. Ford Direct Loans
- Supplemental Loans for Students
- Nursing Student Loans
- Loans issued to AmeriCorps members by the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education
- Perkins Loan
- Federal Consolidated Loans
- Primary Care Loans
- Health Education Assistance Loans

What Types of Expenses Are Considered Part of the Current “Cost of Attending” an Institution?

“Cost of attending” may include tuition, room and board, books, supplies, transportation, and other various expenses.

The financial aid office at your school has information on expenses for specific academic programs, and that office determines the cost of attendance for your particular school.

When Can Education Awards Be Used?

The Education Award can be used any time after you receive your voucher for up to seven years after the date you ended your service. The member must fill out the AmeriCorps Exit Form and turn it in to your campus program administrator.

Once all required paperwork has been completed and entered into the Corporation for National & Community Service's database, they will send a voucher directly to the member's permanent address noted on the exit form, or member may access the voucher online. Members have seven years from their date of Exit to use their Education Award.

What if a member loses the voucher or never received one after being exited?

It's best to first check with the Program Director to ensure all paperwork was completed and to verify the Social Security number as well as the permanent address of the member.

Once the paperwork has been processed the Corporation for National & Community Service handles the voucher and sends it directly to the member. The quickest way to obtain a new voucher is to visit www.americorps.org.

Follow the link to Members and Alumni and then to the Education Award. Once there members will be able to sign up for a login and PIN to view their account balance and to download a voucher.

They can be reached by phone at 1-888-507-5962 or by email at edawardvoucher@cns.gov. Be sure to leave the Social Security number of the member in all messages.

Is the Education Award Taxable?

Yes. The education award is taxed in the year it is used. The Corporation for National Service does not deduct taxes from the award, but in late January it sends 1099 Forms to all AmeriCorps members who have made payments from their education awards and who have accrued interest during the previous year.

The 1099 Form does not need to be included in your tax return, but it reflects the amount that the National Service Trust reports to the IRS as taxable miscellaneous income. If you have questions about how to file taxes for your award, contact your local IRS office.

Remember, you can split up the use of your award to pay a combination of student loans and/or educational expenses. And, you can split up the allocation of your award over multiple calendar years, as well, to divide up the tax costs.

Must the Ed Award be used all at once?

No. It is completely up to the member as to how the Ed Award is used. It may be used all at once or in increments. A new voucher will be sent showing the current balance each time one is submitted. If it is used in increments we recommend the member visit www.americorps.org and follow links to Alumni information.

There, the member will be allowed to sign up for a login to view their account and how much has been processed. We also recommend that members keep copies of everything.

How Many Education Awards Can I Receive?

You may receive up to two education awards in your lifetime, and only for the first two terms of service, regardless of whether they are for full-time, part-time or reduced part-time terms.

Even if you do not complete one of the first two terms of service, you cannot receive an education award for a third term.

You may, however, serve two AmeriCorps terms (receiving the education award) and one term as a VISTA, where you can receive the end of term cash grant instead of the end of term education award.

What if I Need to Transfer to Another College?

In some cases, students need to transfer from one school to another. You may have a change in career goals, you may need to be closer to family, or you may have gotten married.

If you can demonstrate that you need to transfer for compelling personal reasons, then you may transfer to another education award only program at your new location. The program you transfer into must be the same kind of program that you are coming from.

If the program you are seeking to transfer into is not an education award only program, then you cannot transfer into it. Transfers are not automatic. You must first be accepted into the program at your new location. After they have agreed to accept you into their program, you must request that your program administrator in your previous location transfer you.

Your program administrator will then need to contact the CORE Program to initiate and complete the transfer. Copies of your enrollment documentation, hours logs, direct service activities logs, and training activities logs will need to be sent to your new program. If your new program cannot verify the validity of this documentation, they may reserve the right to refuse your entrance into their program.

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How can I stay involved in service after I graduate?

There are many ways you can stay connected to service after graduation. One option is to get connected to our CORE Alumni Association.

There are currently CORE Alumni spread out all over the Commonwealth. The CORE Program seeks to create the CORE Alumni Network to accomplish the following:

- Create a network of graduated CORE CASA Fellows, linked to their communities through other CORE graduates, current CORE CASA Fellows, and all the CORE campuses.
- Encourage CORE graduates to seek employment in service-related fields.
- Provide opportunities for those not in a service-related jobs to continue their meaningful service experiences.
- Track CORE graduates and produce publications such as directories and newsletters.

Also, here are several options and resources for you to consider after graduation if you are interested in continuing to serve:

- Serving a full-time term as an AmeriCorps member; visit the AmeriCorps website <http://www.americorps.org>
- Leading teams of AmeriCorps members and programs as an AmeriCorps Leader; call 202-

606-5000, ext.164

• Applying to the Peace Corps; visit <http://www.peacecorps.gov> or call 1-800-424-8580

• Volunteering in your community or through your church; visit the Voluntary Action at <http://www.vacnepa.org> or <http://www.handsonnetwork.org/actioncenters/find>

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Thank you for participating in CORE AmeriCorps and enjoy your service!

CORE CASA Leaders 2011-12

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Latoya Corbin	Overbrook High School	Millersville University	toyacorbin88@gmail.com	267-357-6012
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Syheah Bragg-Taylor	Simon Gratz High School	Lincoln University	shyeabraggtaylor@yahoo.com	215-954-0220
Kaleem Compton	Thomas Fitzsimons High School	Lincoln University	dafamatic8@yahoo.com	215-436-4341
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Nina Blalock	Girard Academic Music Program	University of Pennsylvania	blalock.nina@gmail.com	215-687-8015
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Elijah Simmons	World Communications Charter School	Penn State University	elijahsimmons19@yahoo.com	215-313-5164

Appendix A

Prohibited Activities

There are certain activities including lobbying, political, religious or advocacy activities that AmeriCorps Members and staff may not perform in the course of their duties while charging time to the AmeriCorps program, or at the request of program staff.

Furthermore, members and staff may not engage in any conduct in a manner that would associate the National Service Program or the Corporation with the prohibited activities. Programs must become familiar with the specific prohibitions in the Corporation's formal regulations (45 C.F.R. B2520.30) and the grant provisions.

The list of prohibited activities includes:

- Participating in efforts to influence legislation, including lobbying for your program.
- Organizing a letter-writing campaign to Congress.
- Engaging in partisan political activities, or other activities designed to influence the outcome of an election to any public office.
- Participating in, or endorsing, events or activities that are likely to include advocacy for or against political parties, political platforms, political candidates, proposed legislation, or elected officials.
- Printing politically charged articles in a Corporation-funded newsletter or listserve.
- Taking part in political demonstrations or rallies.
- Engaging in any efforts to influence legislation, including state or local ballot initiatives.
- Voter registration drives.
- Organizing or participating in protests, petitions, boycotts, or strikes.
- Assisting or deterring union organizing.
- Impairing existing contracts or collective bargaining agreements
- Religious activities, including engaging in religious instruction; conducting worship services; providing instruction as part of a Program that includes mandatory religious instruction or worship; constructing or operating facilities devoted to religious instruction or worship; maintaining facilities primarily or inherently devoted to religious instruction or worship; or engaging in any form of religious proselytization.
- Activities that pose a significant safety risk to participants.
- Assignments that displace employees.
- Placement of members into internships with for-profit business as part of the education and training component of the program.

- Providing assistance to a business organized for profit.
- Raising funds for an AmeriCorps stipend.
- Raising funds for an organization's operating expenses or endowment.
- Writing grant applications for AmeriCorps funding or for any other funding provided by the Corporation for National and Community Service.
- Writing grant applications for funding provided by any other federal agencies.
- Administrative work, unless it benefits the member's approved direct service activities.

There are also several types of activities that programs may not assign to you as a CORE AmeriCorps member, such as:

- Activities that pose a significant risk to AmeriCorps members or others;
- Internships with for-profit business as a part of the education and training component of the program; and assignments that displace employees;
- Administrative work, unless it benefits your approved direct service activities; or
- Any of the prohibited activities mentioned above.
- Like other private citizens, you may participate in the above-listed activities on your own time, at your own expense, and at your own initiative.

Appendix B

More on AmeriCorps

AmeriCorps Student Leaders in Service is an AmeriCorps Education Award Only program which engages college students as part-time AmeriCorps members. AmeriCorps is a network of local, state, and national service programs that connects more than 75,000 Americans each year in intensive service to meet our country's critical needs in education, public safety, health, and the environment.

This program builds upon five successful years of an AmeriCorps Education Award program. During the five years, over 1,500 college students participated in the program, totaling in over 450,000 hours of service in their communities.

AmeriCorps Education Award Only programs are designed to add value to on-going service initiatives through the Education Award and additional support and training. CORE CASA Community Fellows, administered by Pennsylvania Campus Compact, empowers college students to connect campuses and communities across Pennsylvania through active citizenship and service. As AmeriCorps members, 10 college students will each provide direct service to schools, faith-based and community organizations. Through their service, students build the capacity of campus-community partnerships for long-term sustainability through volunteer recruitment and coordination, service program management and development, and by improving community knowledge of the Community Federal Work-Study program and other partnership-building resources.

Students chosen to become part of the PACC AmeriCorps Community Fellows will be the students most committed to local communities and playing a leadership role in strengthening campus community partnerships through service and capacity building activities. AmeriCorps Student Community Fellows will serve a 300 hour term of service that will be completed over a course of time spanning from February 1 through August 19, 2011 (6 ½ months).

AmeriCorps members who successfully complete the term of service as well as other minor program requirements are eligible to receive an AmeriCorps education award that corresponds with their term of service (see below). Education awards can be used to repay qualified student loans, to pay all or part of the cost of attending a qualified institution of higher education, or to pay expenses incurred while participating in approved school-to-work programs. While no stipend is provided for member service, community service federal work-study students are eligible and encouraged to participate.

Benefits for Students

In addition to receiving the education award to finance your education, CORE CASA Fellows will also be connected to the national service movement. They will join a group of 300 college students in Pennsylvania committed to strengthening local communities and will be connected through an electronic distribution list and various training opportunities.

Concepts such as service, volunteerism, and activism are united with educational goals to develop university graduates who are prepared not only for a career but also for a life as informed and involved citizens at both the local and global levels. Partnerships for civic engagement are formed by educational institutions from pre-school through college to strengthen children, families, campuses, and communities.

The Impact of AmeriCorps Work

Student service projects have addressed a wide variety of issues including: access and success in higher education, agriculture/nutrition, animal welfare, civil rights/human rights, conflict resolution, crime/criminal justice, disability issues, disaster preparedness, economic development, environment/sustainability issues, global citizenship, health care, HIV/AIDS, housing/homelessness, hunger, immigrant/migrant worker rights, international issues, K-12 education, legal aid, mental health, mentoring, multiculturalism/diversity, parenting, poverty, public arts/theater, reading/writing, senior/elder services, sexual assault, substance abuse, tax form preparation, technology, transportation, tutoring, voting, and women's issues.

After School Science Clubs

The VISTA working with the UW Madison Center for Biology Education has helped develop the infrastructure for over 35 after-school science clubs. The science clubs work closely with existing after-school programs to develop curriculum that provides low-income youth access to science in a fun setting. With the inquiry-based, hands-on approach the Science Clubs offer, kids who may not have had an opportunity to enjoy science in a classroom setting now have the space to explore and discover science in a new way. Children also have the opportunity to interact with a role model who is enthusiastic and knowledgeable about science.

Campus Kitchens

By way of example, AmeriCorps student leaders have played an invaluable role of starting up a "Campus Kitchen" at campuses across the country. The Campus Kitchen addresses local poverty issues by recovering leftover food from the campus dining halls, farms, and the food pantry and using the food to make and deliver meals to individuals who are food insecure. The project could also include more empowerment-based programs, such as nutrition classes and gardening workshops. How many meals might be served under your leadership on a monthly basis? In the coming spring, through working with community agencies, you might want to think about creating a gardening project at a local school.