



# **Emergency Management Higher Education Consortium**

Dept. 2351, P.O. Box 6050, Fargo, ND 58108-6050

December 8, 2011

The Honorable William Craig Fugate  
Administrator  
Federal Emergency Management Agency  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
500 C Street SW  
Washington, D.C. 20472

Dear Administrator Fugate,

I am writing to you regarding the recently advertised position for Director of the FEMA Higher Education Program (MG-2012-90233-KJD-488911D/M; Training Specialist, GS-1712-14).

First and foremost, I thank you for being responsive to the higher education community's requests to list the position. This position is important to the advancement of emergency management higher education directives and the field of emergency management's professionalization effort. Having said that, I would like to share some concerns with you regarding the position advertisement, such as: the length of the application period, the level of distribution, the qualifications expected, and the criteria being used to assess qualifications for the position.

The application period for the position is two weeks in length - Tuesday, November 29, 2011 to Monday, December 12, 2011. This period is problematic on two fronts. First, it is too short an opening period for such a critical position. Second, it is being opened at a time when the vast majority of potential qualified applicants are in the throes of end-of-semester activities. These two factors will affect the quality of the applicant pool. A longer application period of at least six weeks (stretching into early January 2012) would produce a much stronger applicant pool.

The position advertisement, while advertised via typical avenues for FEMA, was not widely circulated to the audience most likely to be able to cull quality applicants. Assurances were made at the recent IAEM Conference that both EMHEC and IAEM's Training and Education Committee would be notified when the position was listed so that it could be circulated in the higher education community with the goal of creating the strongest possible applicant pool. The information about the position being listed came to the attention of EMHEC and IAEM's Training and Education Committee through outside sources a number of days after the listing was published. The lack of direct and timely notification coupled with the short application window makes the culling of quality candidates from the higher education community difficult. This is frustrating to the higher education community based on the importance of this position to the emergency management community's continuing strength and success.

In the Consortium's original letter to you regarding this position (October 25, 2010), a list of credentials and characteristics that the emergency management higher education community deemed important for the holder of the position to possess was included. Your response to that letter included assurances to the emergency management higher education community that its input was valued. Based on the current position listing it is not clear that those credentials and characteristics were included. For instance, the top item on the higher education community's list was that the holder of the position possess a Ph.D. degree. The position as it is listed presently evidences no degree requirement at all. The lack of a baseline graduate degree requirement and a Ph.D. preference is troubling in that an understanding of graduate degrees and the ability to assess graduate level work and materials (to include the expansive emergency management body of literature), to conduct research, and to assess research is critical to the advancement of higher education goals. Additionally, the fact that the bulk of faculty members teaching in emergency management higher education possess a doctoral level degree and are the key touch-points for program and resource development, further warrants the placement of a person in the position with like credentials.

The criteria used for assessing whether applicants are included in the pool that moves forward for additional consideration is clearly based on many of the activities and obligations undertaken by Dr. B. Wayne Blanchard in the position. For instance, applicants have been asked to assess themselves based on their experience coordinating emergency management higher education conferences; while this assessment question is clearly a responsibility associated with the job, it does not measure the underlying characteristics that would make the holder of the position successful in this task. Instead, characteristics such as strong advocacy skills, commitment to the profession of emergency management, ability to work collaboratively, personality characteristics likely to imbue enthusiasm and infuse energy into individual program's efforts, and a big picture viewpoint – characteristics that are not easily discerned from back and white experience documentation - are of greater value in accomplishing this and other key higher education directives. This black and white measurement of potential candidates for the position when coupled with the static point system for FEMA positions may screen out qualified applicants that have not had exposure to all aspects of the assessment criteria, but who possess the key characteristics identified by the higher education community as being critical for success in the position.

Based on the above concerns regarding the position listing, it is respectfully requested that the position announcement be withdrawn and rewritten to better reflect the higher education community's input and FEMA's commitment to obtaining the most qualified candidate to lead the agency's higher education efforts.

Thank you for evidencing an understanding of the value of emergency management higher education in the advancement of emergency management goals and directives, it is both noted and appreciated. The higher education community looks forward to hearing from you regarding this position and working further with your administration toward advancing goals that are important to the overall emergency management community.

Sincerely,

Carol Cwiak, J.D., Ph.D.  
Executive Director, EMHEC

Cc: Timothy Manning; Richard Serino