

# Technical Careers in Government: You're Needed

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As our nation's leaders concentrate their energies to protect our way of life in the post-September 11 environment, it's important to recognize the critical role of government in meeting many new and complex challenges.

Public servants at local, state and federal levels will be pivotal in implementing the goals of the new U.S. Department of Homeland Security. The complexity of the issues, the research demands, the challenges of implementing new technologies will require the skills of a new generation of leaders — especially those who offer technical knowledge forged with solid leadership training. This talent pool is needed to identify and counter not only existing threats, but also emerging challenges to our infrastructure, public health and government.

The ability to use critical thinking to solve problems, sensitivity to the complexities of our environment and infrastructure, a background in the sciences, and a willingness to use this knowledge make graduates from institutions like NJIT valuable resources. Public service may not bring the salary one expects from the private sector, but for those in public service positions — from the police officer in New York City to your community health officer and the scientist at NASA — the opportunity to serve the public is as great a driving force.

I encourage the men and women who graduate from NJIT to consider a career in government, to make a commitment to public service. Law enforcement agencies will require educational backgrounds relevant to addressing biological and chemical hazards, as well as expertise in the whole new world of biometrics. The Public Health Service and other similar agencies will need individuals to address present as well as future threats to national health. Transportation agencies

need planners to design secure transit systems to serve an increasing population. Engineering backgrounds are critical for agencies involved with agriculture, flood control and water resources. Emergency management organizations need creative thinkers to mitigate future risks and apply technology to lessen the impact of disasters.

As students focus on their career paths, it is important that those attending technical and scientific universities become aware of the opportunities in public service. It is important that they learn of the significant need for their special talents and skills, particularly as they apply to the technological challenges of our modern world dramatically highlighted by the events of September 11.

A challenge for college administrators is to build this awareness. As the federal government streamlines hiring practices for the Department of Homeland Security, career opportunities within this agency and others need to be identified for students considering public service.

It is critical that individuals with solid technical backgrounds, students from our nation's universities, see government service as an attractive career option. Without them, it will be difficult for government to meet all that our nation's future demands. ■

