



(Introducing Future Leaders to Opportunities in Water)

About WEF InFLOW

The Water Environment Federation (WEF) is excited to introduce **WEF InFLOW**, a new initiative that strives to identify promising students from underserved minority groups who are interested in professional careers in the water industry.

WEF InFLOW is a scholarship program, which invites students to attend WEFTEC to:

- solidify their interest in working in the water sector; and
- help foster a network within WEF and water to increase probabilities for employment and for long term success.



WEF InFLOW's 2018 participants celebrating their program completion at the Closing Luncheon

The program kicked off at WEFTEC 2018 and provided travel assistance, hotel accommodations, registration, and additional networking opportunities to the InFLOW participants. WEFTEC is the largest annual water quality conference in the world, and provides water quality professionals with the best water quality education and training available today.

Program Participants

In our pilot year, WEF InFLOW initially focused on African American students. African Americans are one of the most underrepresented groups with respect to the percentage of the population versus percentage engaged in STEM. In future years, WEF InFLOW will expand to include other underrepresented minority groups and schools, as well as leverage the program to engage in other activities in support of WEF's Strategic Goals.

For the 2018 WEF InFLOW program, the following criteria was used to identify program participants:

- Full-time student currently enrolled in a college or university
- Sophomore or Junior level student preferred
- Majoring in a STEM field
- Strive for a gender balance
- Able to fully participate in program and engage with sponsors, WEF members, WEFTEC attendees

Thanks to the program sponsors, WEF InFLOW was able to host sixteen (16) students from Howard University (Washington, DC), Tuskegee University (Tuskegee, Alabama), and University of South Florida (Tampa, Florida). The group of eight men and eight women had a range of technical backgrounds and awareness of water sector opportunities. One student is pursuing a doctorate in the water sector. The students from Tuskegee University had summer internships related to water. Many other students, however, had no background knowledge of water sector possibilities.

Introducing the Students to Water

The program took place at WEFTEC 2018 in New Orleans, LA from Friday, September 28 to Tuesday, October 2. The InFLOW participants' schedules included many of the WEF Students and Young Professional Committee events, including:

- Water Palooza
- Community Service Project
- Student Design Competition
- Career Fair
- Student Chapter and Committee Meetings



Students from University of South Florida teach the "Water Cycle Dance" during Water Palooza at St. Mary's Academy in New Orleans, La.

The students also attended the Opening General Session and were encouraged to explore the exhibition and attend technical sessions.

Aside from these traditional WEFTEC activities, the students attended two special events. The first was a networking panel that introduced the students to African American water sector leaders representing utilities, academia, consulting, and manufacturing. Panelists talked about their journeys and career paths in water, as well as answered questions from InFLOW participants. A networking lunch was the final event that wrapped up the WEFTEC experience.

The program already has yielded one result: Howard University started a WEF student chapter in February 2019. This chapter will help to expand the program's reach to more students at the university. The chapter is hoping to participate in future WEF Student Design Competitions.

What's Next for 2019?

WEF is excited to grow this program in the coming years. Some of the proposed additions for the 2019 WEF InFLOW program include:

- Inviting other underserved minority groups in addition to African Americans;
- Incorporating a second program track, through WEF's existing Emerging Water Quality Scholars Program, that focuses on water fundamentals and operations;
- Introducing program participants to potential opportunities in the water sector prior to WEFTEC through a series of webinars and discussions with WEF's Water Leadership Institute program; and
- Expanding the program on a local level through WEF's Member Associations.

After the success of the inaugural 2018 program, we are excited to build and expand WEF InFLOW, with a goal of inviting up to 50 participants in 2019!

Want to get involved?

For more information on the WEF InFLOW program, please visit <https://www.wef.org/inflow>, or contact Morgan Brown via e-mail at mbrown@wef.org or by phone at 703-684-2400 x7467.