

Virginia Sea Grant Graduate Research Fellowship

Deadline: November 16, 2018

Virginia Sea Grant (VASG) is pleased to announce the availability of graduate research fellowships for the 2019-2021 academic years. The fellowship is open to full-time graduate students at any Virginia academic institution - who are engaged in coastal and marine research relevant to Virginia and the VASG strategic plan. In addition to supporting the student's academic expenses, the fellowship will provide additional professional development opportunities throughout its duration, focusing on science communication, science-to-management process, team science, outreach, and other Sea Grant mission priorities. VASG is accepting applications until 5:00 p.m. EST on Friday, November 16, 2018. This announcement and additional information can be found at: <https://vaseagrant.org/>

FELLOWSHIP DESCRIPTION

The purpose of the VASG Graduate Research Fellowship is to support exceptional graduate students who are engaged in education and research that furthers the goals of VASG. The fellowship provides hands-on experience in translating research results to coastal and marine stakeholders through a professional mentor. Selected fellows also have the opportunity to participate in a comprehensive set of professional development training opportunities offered by VASG.

Graduate Research Fellows address issues relevant to Virginia communities, and of importance to coastal and marine science – broadly defined (e.g., natural or social sciences, engineering and design, policy and legal analysis, etc.).

In addition to their primary faculty advisor, fellows will be expected to work with a professional end-user or outreach mentor. Through these interactions, fellows will ensure their research results are useful to and used by stakeholders, and gain access to experienced professionals who can provide career advice. The process will also help fellows develop practical skills in science communication, collaboration, transferring science to management, and exposure to other critical professional skills. More information can be found in VASG's *Guidance on Mentor-Fellow Relationships*.

VIRGINIA SEA GRANT

The mission of VASG is to provide transformative, integrated education, research, communication, extension, legal and policy programs – programs that create the coastal, estuarine and marine workforce, and novel solutions to meet challenges in coastal communities. VASG aims to nurture sustainable, resilient communities through informed personal, business, policy, and management decisions.

To achieve our vision and mission, VASG is committed to certain operating values, objectives, and cross-cutting principles. See the VASG Strategic Plan for details; however, most relevant to the Graduate Research Fellowship is VASG's commitment to:

In Collaboration With



Focus on People and Their Capacity-Building

- Invest in people and provide them with the knowledge and expertise to thrive now and in the future, particularly the graduate and post-graduate fellows and alumni, who will become future coastal, estuarine and marine science, policy and management leaders.
- VASG is committed to promoting diversity and inclusion in our research, education, communication, outreach and extension activities. Innovation derives from diversity, in all its forms.

VASG's Strategic Plan aligns with and complements the National Sea Grant College Program Strategic Plan, while addressing the Commonwealth's specific coastal and marine challenges. VASG Strategic Plan focuses on four areas: *workforce development and environmental literacy, resilient coastal communities and economies, sustainable fisheries and aquaculture, and healthy coastal ecosystem and communities*. The research, outreach, education and communication conducted by fellows must address focal areas and goals of the VASG Strategic Plan. More information, including the 2018 - 2021 Strategic Plan, can be found at: <https://vaseagrant.org/together-for-virginia/>

ELIGIBILITY

Applicants must be enrolled in a full-time graduate or professional degree program at a Virginia academic institution prior to the award of the fellowship, no later than Fall 2019. Students may be working towards a degree in any discipline as long as they are engaged in research that is coastal- or marine-related and relevant to VASG's mission and strategic plan. Previous recipients of a VASG Graduate Research Fellowship are not eligible to apply.

VASG is committed to building inclusive research, extension, communication and education programs that serve people with diverse backgrounds, circumstances, needs, perspectives, and ways of thinking. Diversity includes, but is not limited to, age, race, ethnicity, nationality, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability and/or health status, religion, veteran status, geographic origin and socio-economic status.

AWARD INFORMATION

The fellowship provides an award of up to \$40,000 per year.

VASG-funded projects require a 50% funding match (i.e., application budgets must show \$1 of match for every \$2 of Sea Grant funding requested). Only non-Federal funds may be committed as matching contribution. Pursuant to federal regulation (15 C.F.R. § 917.11), no overhead is permitted on Sea Grant fellowships. It is acceptable to VASG for the difference between an institution's federally negotiated overhead rate and the VASG's 0% fellowship overhead rate to be applied toward match. See *Budget and Budget Justification* section below for more details.

Contingent upon available federal funding, fellowships are available for up to two years for M.S. and Ph.D. students. The start date for the fellowship is September 1, 2019. VASG expects to fund between five and seven fellowships for the 2019–2021 academic years.

VASG will make all awards to the student's primary faculty advisor, as required by most university-sponsored programs. However, VASG expects that the student will take primary leadership in developing the fellowship application, including engaging with their institution's sponsored programs offices, and submitting the application to VASG.



FELLOWSHIP REQUIREMENTS

Selected fellows will be required to:

Submit Reports: Provide progress reports to VASG on an annual basis, including a final report, and copy of their thesis or dissertation.

Work with VASG's Communication Center: Assist VASG efforts to publicize their research and fellowship activities.

Collaborate with a Professional Mentor: Select and work with a professional end-user or outreach mentor, including the development and launch of an individual professional development plan (see VASG's *Guidance on Fellow-Mentor Relationships*).

Attend VASG Events: Participate in regular meetings with VASG, including:

- An orientation meeting at the beginning of the fellowship
- VASG's Graduate Symposium in Richmond, including making a presentation on your research or outreach activities
- An exit interview and evaluation at the conclusion of the fellowship
- VASG-sponsored professional development activities, anticipated to occur two to four times per year (optional)

Acknowledge Support: Acknowledge VASG support in all relevant presentations and publications.

HOW TO APPLY

Intent to Apply

All applicants are strongly encouraged to contact VASG's Fellowship and Research Program Coordinator, Sam Lake (contact information below), to indicate their interest in the fellowship, and to discuss the application process.

Application Guidelines

Although awards will be made to the faculty advisor(s), students are expected to take a leadership role in developing their application – including writing the proposal, developing a budget, and engaging with the institution's sponsored programs office. Students are responsible for routing the application through their institution's sponsored programs office, and obtaining all required institutional endorsements before submitting to VASG.

Adherence to the format requirements is mandatory, and ensures fairness across all applications. Applications not meeting the format requirements may be rejected without review. Several application elements have specific page limits. Do not exceed the page limits; excess pages will not be reviewed. Only the requested materials should be submitted; additional documents (e.g., appendices, letters of support, etc.) will not be reviewed. Forms and templates can be found on the VASG website (<https://vaseagrant.org/>).

For application elements A, B, C, F, and H prepare using Calibri or Times New Roman, font size can be no smaller than 11 point, and margins must be at least one inch on standard 8.5 by 11 inch paper throughout these sections. VASG recommends including the name of the student in a header or footer on all pages.

Application Elements

Each application must include two major sections with the following elements in this sequence:

PART 1

- A. **Signed Title Page** (*two-page maximum*): The title page must list the project title, identify and provide contact information for the prospective fellow, faculty advisor(s), and professional mentor. The proposed start and end date, and the total amount of VASG and matching funds being requested for each project year must also be listed. The title page should include a Research Abstract of up to 500 words, summarizing the research project you will be working on during the fellowship, including section headers for the *objectives*, *methodology*, and *rationale*. In addition, include a list of funders (agency, organizations, university programs, etc.) and funding amounts that are supporting the proposed research. Separate research funding is not a requirement or selection criteria for VASG fellowship support, although students will need to demonstrate the feasibility of implementing the proposed work. Please indicate if the funding program(s) peer-reviewed the associated proposal / research work plan. Required institutional signatures should be included on the title page; these are often provided by institutional sponsored program offices or equivalent to verify that the institution has reviewed the application. *A template can be found on the VASG website.*
- B. **Career and Professional Development Goal Statement** (*two-page maximum*): The statement should describe your educational/professional goals and ambitions, professional growth interests and objectives. Include how these goals relate to broader societal needs in the coastal and marine environment. The statement should emphasize how past experiences and competencies contribute toward your short- (1-5yr) and long-term (>5yr) goals and in particular, how this fellowship would contribute toward those goals. Speak to your leadership potential, communication ability, stakeholder engagement interests or experience, and include any pertinent information that provides insights into your past choices and future interests. Illustrate what motivates you today and moving forward with your research and its application. A section of the statement should include a timeline of activities you hope to achieve over the duration of the fellowship, i.e., the initial outline of an individualized professional development plan that will be fleshed out with the professional mentor. VASG encourages you to include what you hope to gain from your professional outreach or end-user mentor relationship, and how that contributes toward your long-term academic and professional goals.
- C. **Professional Mentor and Outreach Plan** (*one-page maximum*): The plan should be developed with your mentor to identify professional mentoring and outreach objectives/activities to be conducted during the fellowship. The plan should address many of the questions below and indicate who your target audience(s) is for your proposed activities. What do you hope to gain professionally and academically from the specific outreach activities proposed in the outreach plan? What are the connections between your research and the needs/interests of an end-user, and how will you make these connections happen? What deliverables will you produce once the research is completed, what deliverables may be planned after the fellowship, and why are these the best option for your target audience(s)? How will you and the mentor interact to achieve these goals (e.g., frequency, timeline, means of communication, topics, etc.)?
- D. **Professional Mentor Letter of Commitment**: The letter should indicate a commitment to mentor the student, and include a description of the mentor's role in the fellow's academic and professional experience. Only a single letter should be sent (i.e., mentor teams must write and submit a single joint letter). The proposed mentor may submit the letter either to the student to include with their materials, or submit separately through eSeaGrant (see *Letters of Recommendation* section below). The letter must be submitted before the deadline. There is no page limit, but VASG recommends that they not exceed two pages, and not include attachments.
- E. **Recommendation Letters** (*submitted separately*): Two letters of recommendation should be submitted in support of the student. To maintain confidentiality, VASG requires that letters are NOT submitted with the student's application. Recommendation letters must be requested and uploaded through



eSeaGrant. There is no page limit for letters, but VASG recommends that letters not exceed two pages and not include attachments. Please address letters to Dr. Troy Hartley, Director Virginia Sea Grant.

The student's primary faculty advisor or appropriate faculty member (who is the PI on the research award the applicant will be working on during the fellowship) must provide one letter of recommendation. Co-advisors may submit a joint letter, or they may submit separate letters. However, each student is limited to a total of two recommendation letters.

Referees are encouraged to consider the student's:

- Academic and professional performance, including record and relevant experience
- Academic and professional potential for future success, including research and professional activities in integrated, trans-disciplinary settings
- Responsibility, motivation, integrity, and creativity
- Teamwork and leadership skills, ability to identify and understand the *big picture*, and connections among perspectives
- Interest and competencies in the science-to-management process, science communication to non-experts, capabilities and issues of relevance to their mentor relationship, and outreach activities

For the second letter of recommendation, VASG encourages applicants to consider someone who might know you from a different perspective (e.g., former employer, mentor from a previous relevant internship, someone you worked with on an outreach or policy project). It is most important to select someone who will write a strong letter for you, but an "outside" perspective helps to demonstrate your diversity and will likely highlight different strengths and experiences.

- F. **Resumes/CVs** (*two-page maximum per Resume/CV*): A brief CV or resume should be included for the student, primary advisor(s), and professional mentor. Do not include the CVs of committee members, other associated project participants, or others.
- G. **Undergraduate and Graduate School Transcripts**: Unofficial copies are acceptable but must clearly indicate the name of institution, degree program, courses taken, and GPAs. Transcripts should be included in reverse chronological order (i.e., newest transcripts first).

PART 2

- H. **Project Narrative** (*three-page maximum, including figures, tables, and other graphics but excluding literature cited and data management plan*): Project title and name of student must be included in the header. The narrative is intended to be a brief summary of the proposed thesis or area of study. It should include sufficient detail to evaluate the appropriateness and relevance of the research and outreach approach, and how the project aligns with the VASG Strategic Plan.

The narrative should include the following subsections:

- **Introduction**: Provide background information, rationale for the research project, how the proposed project addresses the VASG mission, and a specific strategic plan focus area (e.g., reference the strategic plan priority that the research will address).
- **Research Plan**: This section should briefly describe the research methods, approaches, and techniques that will be used to meet the stated objectives. Students may describe the experimental design, data sources, how data will be accessed, and any facilities or equipment requirements. Students should include a schedule that indicates milestones and tasks along with the anticipated dates for achieving those tasks.



- **Outreach Rational and Tasks:** Briefly restate the objectives outlined in the *Professional Mentor and Outreach Plan*, and explain the rationale behind the planned activities. Students may wish to include a schedule that indicates important corresponding outreach and research milestones, and the anticipated dates for achieving those tasks. VASG recognizes that research results may not be available until the end of the fellowship period.
 - **Outcomes and Broader Societal Impacts:** Describe the anticipated research results of the project, how these results relate to current knowledge of the topic, and how specific end-users or audiences will use the results. What difference will the research make to society?
 - **Research Team and Coordination:** Briefly describe the research team, their roles and responsibilities, including the role of the fellow and primary advisor(s).
 - **Literature Cited** (*does not count toward page limit*).
 - **Data Management Plan** (*does not count toward page limit*): As required by NOAA Data Sharing Policy for Grants and Cooperative Agreements Procedural Directive (Version 2.0, October 2011), VASG must ensure all environmental data collected with Sea Grant support are made publicly available in a timely manner. The data management plan, no more than two pages in length, should specify the plan for making environmental data available and interpretable, and free of charge or at minimal cost within two years of collection. If the data are to be archived in a larger-scale database or warehousing effort, please include the anticipated timeframe of data submission, and contact information for the database management organization. If the data are not submitted to a database for archival purposes, please provide a description of plans for making the data available upon request. Note that during project reporting, Sea Grant programs may request information regarding any data requests you have received. Students are encouraged to consider identifying and pursuing possible databases for long-term archiving of their environmental data prior to submission. If the project will not generate environmental data, it is sufficient to include a sentence saying so.
- I. **Budget and Budget Justification:** Up to \$40,000 per year for up to two years for M.S. and Ph.D. students can be requested for reasonable and necessary research fellowship funds, including stipend, tuition, fringe benefits, travel, and supplies. While the majority of the budget is likely to be stipend, tuition, or other enrollment fees, it is expected that the budget will include funds for discretionary travel for conferences, professional development, research-related events, equipment, and/or supplies. Ideally the budget would include, at a minimum, travel support for the fellow to attend one to two VASG meetings per year around Virginia (e.g., VASG's Graduate Symposium in Richmond, fellowship orientation, VASG professional development workshops), and attendance at one professional conference.

Facilities & Administrative (F&A) costs, also known as indirect or overhead, are NOT allowable on Sea Grant fellowships per federal regulation (15 C.F.R. § 917.11). VASG-funded projects require a 50% funding match (i.e., budgets must show \$1 of match for every \$2 of Sea Grant funding requested). Only non-Federal funds may be committed as matching contribution. In-kind contributions, unrecovered F&A and tuition, and non-federal salaries are all examples of match. Budgets should be developed in the 90-4 budget worksheet (available on the VASG website). The budget justification must be a detailed description of each cost item in the 90-4 budget; additional guidance is available on the VASG website. VASG strongly encourages students to work with their institution's research administration or sponsored programs office to develop their budgets.



Application Submission

Applications must be submitted online via eSeaGrant (<http://vaseagrant.ecsion.com>) by **5:00 pm EST on Friday, November 16, 2018**. If you plan to apply, we strongly recommend registering for eSeaGrant at least two weeks in advance of the deadline. Notifications can be sent to VASG as a short email expressing your interest in the fellowship. Please reference "VASG Graduate Research Fellowship" in the subject line.

Instructions on how to register and start a proposal on eSeaGrant are included below. Additional instructions can be found on the VASG website (<https://vaseagrant.org>) and on eSeaGrant.

Applicants can register for eSeaGrant by visiting the website, selecting the "Register" tab, and completing the required information. If you do not receive a "welcome" email with login credentials shortly after registering, please contact Sam Lake.

To start a fellowship proposal, or edit an existing application, click on "Current Tasks" on the banner head, and select "Add Fellowship Application" under "2019 VASG Graduate Research Fellowship." Once you have added the fellowship application to your Current Tasks, you must progress down through the sequence of application sections ("Start Here" through "Submission Preview") listed on the left side of the window to submit the application. Guidance related to these sections follows, in sequence. Please note - some sections may require additional pop-up pages, please allow your browser to display pop-up windows and enable JavaScript.

All application elements must be converted to PDF documents before uploading to eSeaGrant. Adherence to the format requirements and page limits is mandatory, and ensures fairness across all applications. Applications not meeting these requirements may be rejected without review.

To preserve confidentiality, letters of recommendations must be uploaded directly from the referees to VASG through eSeaGrant. Applicants must identify and submit requests to their referees through eSeaGrant, by entering their names and email addresses on the corresponding section.

All elements, including recommendation letters, must be submitted by the deadline. VASG will not accept late applications under any circumstances (e.g., internet delays), so please allow ample time to submit your applications in advance of the deadline. Confirmation of the application and recommendation letters will be automatically generated and sent by eSeaGrant. If you do not receive confirmation shortly after submitting your application, please contact Sam Lake.

REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

Stage 1

The review process proceeds in stages. In Stage 1, VASG will first review all proposals for scientific, technical and outreach relevance to Sea Grant and Virginia, completeness of applications, and adherence to format requirements. This review will be conducted by VASG staff, VASG's External Advisory Committee members, and key stakeholders. Any proposals considered not relevant to VASG will not be eligible for further review. VASG follows strict conflict-of-interest policies in all of its review procedures.

Stage 2

VASG will assemble a review panel composed of coastal and marine science scholars, educators, fellowship managers, and talent search and development professionals to review Part 1 of the fellowship proposal. The panel will assess the student's academic/professional performance and potential, professional mentorship plan, outreach activities, and research relevance. Approximately ten candidates will move forward to participate in interview during Stage 3. The Stage 2 review panel will consider the following criteria:

Academic and Professional Performance (35%): Strength of academic and professional performance to date, with a focus on graduate school performance. Reviewers will consider their responsibility, motivation, integrity, creativity, teamwork and leadership skills, experiences at the science-to-management interface, and with end-



user engagement. Performance is assessed primarily by review of the student's *CV*, *Transcripts*, and *Letters of Recommendation*; students are evaluated on their suite of academic/professional accomplishments including GPA, honors, awards, diversity of coursework, publications, presentations, and diversity of relevant professional and extracurricular experiences.

Academic and Career Potential (35%): Student's interest in a relevant career path, as well as their demonstrated success in their academic and career goals. Students are to be evaluated on their interests and understanding of science-to-management and end-user engagement. The demonstration of academic, professional, research, and outreach potential (e.g., professional engagement, initiative, participation in previous research and outreach projects); evidence of vision and past professional growth, work ethic, and strong interpersonal and communication skills; and strength and diversity of relevant academic, professional, and extracurricular experiences. Reviewers will consider the student's potential as a collaborative leader, particularly in integrated, trans-disciplinary settings, their ability to see the big picture and connections between perspectives. Reviewers will apply a holistic perspective – considering the student's academic/professional experiences, growth, attributes, competencies, and achievements as a demonstration of future impacts both academically and professionally. Potential is assessed primarily by review of the *Career and Professional Development Goal Statement*, *Letters of Recommendation*, *CV*, and the potential impact on broader societal needs from the student's work, future interests and potential.

Professional Mentor Relationship (30%): Strength and potential of the relationship established with a professional end-user or outreach mentor. Is there a clearly communicated rationale for selecting the proposed professional mentor and outreach activities? Will the arrangement lead to professional growth for the student? Have the student and mentor worked together developing a thoughtful, systematic, and strategic plan for professional growth, and impactful outreach activities? Will it produce valuable transferable knowledge from science to an end-user? Is the approach feasible and likely to achieve the professional growth and outreach objectives identified? Reviewers will assess the mentor relationship based upon the *Career and Professional Development Goal Statement*.

Stage 3

VASG will assemble a committee to conduct in-person interviews with the final candidates identified by the Stage 2 review panel. Selected finalists will be invited to VASG's offices in Gloucester Point to meet with the committee and discuss their proposed research, outreach, and mentorship plans. Finalists will be asked to provide a 15-minute overview of their research, outreach and mentorship plans, their academic and professional background, and why they want a VASG Graduate Research Fellowship.

The committee will consider all proposal elements and the interview, and will advise VASG on the selection of fellows based on the following criteria:

Candidate Interview (30%): Candidates will be assessed on their ability to successfully communicate the importance of their proposed activities, describe how those activities align with VASG's vision and mission, and their ability to demonstrate how their selected mentor will meaningfully contribute to both their short- and long-term goals. Candidates should illustrate how they reflect upon professional experiences, and hope to grow from a VASG Graduate Research Fellowship.

Research Plan (40%): Quality, scientific merit, relevance, and feasibility of the proposed research, and the significance of the issues to coastal and marine science (broadly defined, e.g., natural or social sciences, engineering and design, policy and legal analysis, planning, business, education, etc.)

Professional Potential and Broader Societal Impact (30%): Quality and extent of collaboration between student and their professional mentor, and quality of mentorship and outreach activities. VASG will consider how much professional growth potential exists for the student under the mentor relationship structure. Quality, merit, and feasibility of the proposed outreach activities, and their importance to the target end-user audience(s).



VASG will assess the short- and long-term potential to make a difference and address a substantial societal challenge locally, regionally, nationally, or globally.

VASG makes the final selection of Graduate Research Fellowships after considering the review panel and committees' advice, programmatic objectives, and priorities. All VASG awards are contingent upon the availability and timeliness of federal appropriations.

TENTATIVE TIMELINE FOR FELLOWSHIP COMPETITION

Fellowship announcement released	September 2018
Proposals due to VASG by 5:00 p.m. EST	November 16, 2018
Stage 1 – Relevancy review	November/December 2018
Stage 2 – Review panel	January 2019
Stage 3 – Candidate interviews	March 2019
Notification of results	Spring 2019
Awards begin	September 1, 2019

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

All applicants are strongly encouraged to contact Sam Lake, VASG Fellowship and Research Program Coordinator to indicate their interest in the fellowship, and to discuss the application process. VASG will visit each partner institution in the Fall of 2018 to discuss all of VASG's fellowship announcements, and answer questions. Please contact Sam Lake for more information on these informational sessions.

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