

## Virginia Sea Grant Graduate Research Fellowship

*Deadline: December 16, 2020*

Virginia Sea Grant (VASG) is pleased to announce the availability of Graduate Research Fellowships for the 2021-2023 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 professional development opportunities, focusing on communicating complex information, science-to-management, science-to-policy process, trans-disciplinary collaborative problem-solving, outreach, and other Sea Grant mission priorities. VASG is accepting applications until 5:00 p.m. EST on Friday, December 16, 2020. 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 resources – broadly defined (e.g., natural or social sciences, engineering and design, policy and legal analysis, architecture, business, education, arts and humanities, etc.). In addition to their primary faculty advisor, fellows will be expected to work with a professional end-user 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.

### FELLOWSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES

Selected fellows will:

- **Collaborate with a Professional Mentor:** Select and work with a professional end-user mentor, including identifying opportunities to execute your professional development plan (see VASG's *Guidance on Fellow-Mentor Relationships*).
- **Work with VASG's Professional Development Coordinator:** To develop and launch an individual professional development plan, based on your short- and long-term professional goals.
- **Collaborate with VASG's Communication Center:** Assist VASG efforts to publicize their research and fellowship activities. Fellows are required to submit blog posts and share story ideas.
- **Attend VASG Events:** Participate in regular meetings with VASG, including: an orientation meeting at the beginning of the fellowship; making a presentation on your research or outreach activities at a VASG event; and VASG-sponsored professional development activities.
- **Engage in VASG Relevant Research:** Fellows must be conducting rigorous inquiry and evidence-based knowledge generation that is coastal- or marine-related.

In Collaboration With



## VIRGINIA SEA GRANT

VASG is a federal-state partnership, funded by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) with matching support from our seven-university partners. Hosted at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science at William & Mary, VASG's other partner institutions include: University of Virginia, Virginia Tech, and George Mason, James Madison, Old Dominion, and Virginia Commonwealth Universities.

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. We do this through funding, and by conducting research, education, outreach, and communication services.

To achieve our vision and mission, VASG is committed to certain operating values, objectives, and cross-cutting principles. However, most relevant to the Graduate Research Fellowship is VASG's commitment to:

- Advance the collaboration, coordination, and integration of VASG's capacity in its functional areas (e.g., education and workforce development, research, outreach and extension, communication) in order to achieve broader societal impacts.
- Promote interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary education, research and outreach activities that address pressing coastal, estuarine and marine challenges in the Commonwealth, the region and the nation.
- Investing in people and providing 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, business, policy and management leaders.
- 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 (NSGCP) 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/>.

## FOSTERING A SAFE AND WELCOMING COMMUNITY

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.

VASG does not tolerate any form of misconduct, discrimination or harassment, including sexual harassment, or sexual misconduct (e.g. sexual assault within its organization, at awardee organizations, field sites, meetings, or anywhere VASG-funded research, outreach and education are conducted). Virginia institutions of higher education and any other organization that receives VASG funds are responsible for having clearly stated policies outlining standard codes of conduct, academic program requirements, and prohibiting discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment or sexual misconduct that comply with federal non-discrimination laws, regulations, and executive orders, and documented procedures for accepting reports of and investigating complaints of misconduct thoroughly, fairly and promptly. VASG implements policies, guidelines, procedures, and communications consistent with these principles to ensure that organizations funded by VASG clearly understand the program's expectations and requirements associated with its funding.



## ELIGIBILITY

Applicants must be enrolled in a full-time graduate, professional degree, or Ph.D. program at a Virginia academic institution prior to the award of the fellowship, no later than Fall 2021. Students may be working towards a degree in any discipline as long as they are engaged in research or rigorous inquiry and evidence-based knowledge generation that is coastal- or marine-related (broadly defined, e.g., natural or social sciences, engineering and design, policy and legal analysis, planning, architecture, business, education, arts and the humanities, etc.) and relevant to VASG's mission and strategic plan. Previous recipients of a VASG Graduate Research Fellowship are not eligible to apply.

## AWARD INFORMATION

Contingent upon available federal funding, fellowships are available for up to two years for masters, J.D., and Ph.D. students. The fellowship provides an award of up to \$40,000 per year to fully support the student's academic expenses. The start date for the fellowship is September 1, 2021. VASG expects to fund up to eight fellowships for the 2021–2023 academic years.

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. VASG will make all awards to the student's primary faculty advisor, who must be listed as the principle investigator (PI) on the fellowship application, as required by most university-sponsored programs. Refer to the Budget and Budget Justification section below for additional information.

## HOW TO APPLY

### *Indicating Interest to Apply*

Applicants are strongly encouraged to register and attend one of the VASG fellowship webinars which will be conducted during the fall semester; dates, times and URLs will be announced in the VASG email newsletter and on the fellowship webpage. Additional information, resources, forms, and templates can be found at: <https://vaseagrant.org/>.

### *Application Guidelines*

Students are expected to take a leadership role in developing their application – including writing the proposal, developing the budget, and engaging with the institution's sponsored programs/research office. Students are responsible for routing the application through their institution's research administration or 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, resumes/CVs longer than two pages, etc.) will not be reviewed.

For application elements A, B, E, and F 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 the following elements in this sequence:

- A. **Signed Title Page** (*two-page maximum*): The title page must list the project title and 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. Required institutional endorsements must be included on the title page (at a minimum a representative from the university's Office of Sponsored Programs/Research and the student's primary faculty advisor's digital or handwritten signature). 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.*
- 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.
- B. **Career and Professional Development Goal Statement** (*two-page maximum*): The statement should include specific examples and details that illustrate to the reviewers who you are, the unique perspective that you bring to your research and proposed outreach, and what you hope to gain from the fellowship. It should describe your educational/professional goals and ambitions, and 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. Highlight examples of personal resilience and tenacity when faced with a past challenge or barrier, and 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 and professional competencies 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 your professional mentor, with additional support from Michelle Rodriguez, VASG's Professional Development Coordinator after the fellowship has been awarded.
- C. **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 are encouraged to submit a joint letter.
- Referees are encouraged to include tangible and specific examples, and consider the student's:
- Academic and professional performance record and relevant experience;
  - Personal motivation, perspective, and insight the applicant brings to their research and graduate program;



- Academic and professional potential for future success, including experience or interest in research and professional activities, and integrated, trans-disciplinary projects;
- Interest and competencies in the science-to-management or science-to-policy processes, technical communication to non-experts, issues of relevance to their professional mentor, and outreach activities;
- Responsibility, maturity, integrity, and personal accountability;
- Teamwork and leadership skills;
- Creativity; and
- Ability to identify and understand the *big picture*, and connections among perspectives;

VASG strongly encourages applicants to share and discuss this bulleted list with their referees well in advance of the deadline for letters of recommendations.

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

- 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. The letter should include a statement of commitment to ethical behavior, respect, honesty, and open communication with the fellow (i.e., abiding by standard code of conduct policies including, but not limited to, any: personnel policy, policy regarding sexual harassment, policy regarding workplace violence and policy regarding ethical behavior). Only a single letter should be sent (i.e., mentor teams must write and submit a single joint letter). To maintain confidentiality, VASG requires that letters are NOT submitted with the student’s application. Recommendation letters must be requested and uploaded through eSeaGrant (see *Recommendation Letters* section above). 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. Please address letters to Dr. Troy Hartley, Director, Virginia Sea Grant.
- E. **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. Any additional pages beyond the two-page maximum will be redacted or removed. Do not include the CVs of committee members, other associated project participants, or others.
- F. **Project Narrative** (*four-page maximum, including figures, tables, and other graphics but excluding literature cited and data management plan*): The full project title and name of the student must be included in the header. The narrative is intended to be a brief summary of your thesis or area of study, and how you will leverage those activities to achieve your proposed outreach plan. The professional mentorship and outreach plan sections should be developed in collaboration with your professional mentor. The narrative should include sufficient detail to evaluate the appropriateness and relevance of your research, and how the project aligns with the VASG Strategic Plan.



The narrative should include the following sections:

- **Introduction:** Provide background information.
- **Research Rationale and Relevance:** This section should clearly indicate the significance of the issue being studied to the Commonwealth of Virginia. Briefly describe the research approaches and techniques that will be used and how the proposed project aligns with the VASG mission, including a specific strategic plan focus area (e.g., reference the strategic plan priority that the fellowship project will address). Applicants may describe the experimental design, data sources, how data will be accessed, and any facilities or equipment requirements. VASG recognizes that research results may not be available until the end of the fellowship period.
- **Outreach Plan:** This plan should be developed in collaboration with your professional mentor. It should identify the connections between your research and the needs/interests of an end-user and/or stakeholder group. It should also describe how you will leverage your research activities to produce a deliverable(s) by the end of your fellowship to meet those needs. The plan should indicate your target audience(s) and include clearly stated objectives and the rationale behind your proposed activities. There should be sufficient detail to evaluate the method of the approach and deliverable(s), and why these are the best option(s) for your target audience(s). Additionally, this section should include how you will address any anticipated obstacles, and make the necessary connections to ensure the application of your research.
- **Outcomes and Broader Societal Impacts:** VASG encourages applicants to clearly identify how their proposed activities will have broader societal impacts on the coastal community including stakeholders from underrepresented or underserved communities. This section should highlight how your research and/or outreach activities will make a difference to society. It should describe the anticipated outcomes of the project, how these results/deliverables relate to current knowledge of the field, and how specific end-users or audiences will use the results. You may also indicate what longer-term deliverables may be planned after the fellowship.
- **Professional Mentorship Plan:** This section should detail how you will collaborate with your professional mentor to achieve some of the short-term professional goals identified in your *Career and Professional Development Goal Statement*. It should include specific activities; what you hope to gain (skills, experiences, shadowing and networking opportunities, etc.) from working with your professional mentor; how you anticipate growing professionally and academically from those experiences; and how they contribute towards your long-term goals. This section should detail how you and the mentor will interact to achieve these goals (e.g., frequency, timeline, means of communication, topics, etc.). More information can be found in VASG's *Guidance on Mentor-Fellow Relationships*.
- **Timeline:** Students should include a schedule that indicates academic, research, and outreach milestones and tasks along with the anticipated dates for achieving those tasks.
- **Team and Coordination:** Briefly describe the participating team members, their roles and responsibilities, including the role of the fellow, primary advisor(s), professional mentor, and any associated researchers.
- **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.

- G. **Budget and Budget Justification:** The purpose of the VASG Graduate Research Fellowship is to fully support the student's academic expenses. Up to \$40,000 per year for up to two years for full-time graduate, professional degree, or Ph.D. program students at a Virginia academic institution can be requested for eligible fellowship-related expenses (defined below).

**Eligible Costs:** student stipend; fringe benefits; tuition; enrollment, university and graduate program fees; health insurance; indirect costs; VASG events and conference fees, expenses and travel; and professional development training and travel.

**Ineligible Costs:** research and lab supplies; research and field work travel; sample processing; research-related service fees; laboratory and field equipment (expendable supplies and permanent equipment); and other expenses needed to conduct research activities.

Ideally, the budget will include, at a minimum, travel support for the fellow to attend one to two VASG meetings per year around Virginia (e.g., fellowship orientation meeting, presenting at a VASG event, and VASG-sponsored professional development workshops), and attendance at one professional conference. If COVID-19 continues to limit travel and in-person meetings, then travel funds can be re-budgeted into eligible cost categories only, with VASG approval.

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, non-federal research expense, start-up funds, faculty salaries, travel support (research, conference, professional development, etc.), partial stipend and tuition are all examples of match.

Historically, common methods used to meet the match and full support requirements have included: 1) providing partial support for the stipend and/or tuition as part of the required match (although that partial support cannot come with other responsibilities, e.g., teaching assistantships, in order to receive the full professional development benefits of the Fellowship), or 2) the academic institutions volunteering to waive overhead on the federal dollars. To date, VASG partner institutions have chosen the latter option and have used the foregone overhead to make up most or all of their match requirement.

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 begin working early with their institution's research administration or sponsored programs office to develop their budgets.

- H. **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). All personal identification numbers (Social Security, student ID, etc.), personal email addresses, mailing addresses, etc. should be redacted prior to submission.



### *Application Submission*

Applications must be submitted online via eSeaGrant (<http://vaseagrant.ecsion.com>) by **5:00 pm EST on Friday, December 16, 2020**. If you plan to apply, we strongly recommend notifying VASG and 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 Dr. Sam Lake, VASG's Fellowship and Research Program Coordinator (contact information below).

To start a fellowship proposal, or edit an existing application, click on "Current Tasks" on the banner head, and select "Add Fellowship Application" under "2021 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.

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.

Application elements should be converted to PDF documents before uploading to eSeaGrant. 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 Dr. 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. VASG follows strict conflict-of-interest policies in all of its review procedures. Any fellowship application not considered complete will not be eligible for further review. Feedback submitted by VASG's External Advisory Committee and key stakeholders regarding the scientific, technical and outreach relevance will be shared and considered by the Stage 2 review panel (Professional Mentor Relationship evaluation criteria) and Stage 3 interview committee (Relevance of Research or Inquiry evaluation criteria).

### *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 the fellowship proposal. The panel will assess the student's academic/professional performance and potential, professional mentorship plan, and outreach activities. Top candidates will move forward to participate in interviews 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, resiliency, integrity, creativity, teamwork and leadership skills; experiences at, or interests in, the science-to-management interface, and with end-user engagement. Performance is assessed primarily by review of the student's *resume/CV, transcripts, and letters of recommendations*; students are evaluated on their suite of academic/professional accomplishments including GPA, honors, awards, breadth of coursework, publications, presentations, and breadth of relevant professional and extracurricular experiences.

**Academic and Career Potential** (35%): Student's interest in a relevant career path, as well as demonstrated success in academic and career goals. Students are to be evaluated on their professional motivation, initiative and leadership, 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 breadth 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 different 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 recommendations, resume/CV, outreach plan*, and the potential impact on broader societal needs from the student's work, future interests and motivation.

**Professional Mentor Relationship** (30%): Strength and potential of the relationship established with a professional 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 collaboratively to develop a thoughtful, systematic, and strategic plan for professional growth, and impactful outreach activities? Will it produce valuable transferable knowledge to an end-user? Does the plan engage with underserved coastal communities and stakeholders from a diverse range of backgrounds and disciplines? 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, project narrative, and professional mentor letter of commitment*.

### 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 research, and proposed mentorship and outreach plans. Finalists will be asked to provide a 15-minute overview of their proposed fellowship activities, their academic and professional background, and why they want a VASG Graduate Research Fellowship.

The committee will consider all proposal elements and the interview, including submitted comments regarding the scientific, technical and outreach relevance, and will advise VASG on the selection of fellows based on the following criteria:

**Candidate Interview** (40%): 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.



**Relevance of Research or Inquiry (25%):** Relevance of the research to the Commonwealth and VASG's Strategic Plan, 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, architecture, business, education, arts & humanities, etc.).

**Professional Potential and Broader Societal Impact (35%):** 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. VASG will evaluate the 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.

The Virginia Sea Grant Director will use peer and relevancy reviews and panel recommendations, and interview committee recommendations for funding; however, the Director has final discretion to select projects based on the panel recommendations, interview committee advice, diversity and balance of the award portfolio, availability of funding, and programmatic objectives, needs and priorities.

#### TENTATIVE TIMELINE FOR FELLOWSHIP COMPETITION

Announcement released	October 2020
Proposals due to VASG by 5:00 p.m. EST	December 16, 2020
Stage 1 – Relevancy review	January 2021
Stage 2 – Review panel	February 2021
Stage 3 – Candidate interviews	April 2021
Notification of results	Spring 2021
Awards begin	September 1, 2021

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND CONTACT

This announcement, application element templates, and additional resources can be found at: <https://vaseagrant.org/fellowship-research-funding/fellowships/>.

Samuel J. Lake, Ph.D.  
Fellowship & Research Program Coordinator  
Virginia Sea Grant  
Ph. 804-684-7436  
Email: [sjlake@vaseagrant.org](mailto:sjlake@vaseagrant.org)



## Programmatic Policies, Terms & Conditions

*The following information applies to funded fellowship recipients.*

This section includes information on the required policies and procedures that selected awardees must adhere to as a requirement of the fellowship award. These and other conditions of the grant award are stipulated in guidance documents, agreements, and the award announcements, which will be sent to the PI and affiliated institutions. Please read through these policies carefully.

### *Federal Funding and Award Notifications*

Funding for the Graduate Research Fellowship program is contingent on available federal funds from NOAA and the NSGCP. Throughout the award, VASG will work closely with the PI(s), fellow, and the institution's sponsored programs/research office to support the administration of the award. As VASG's host institution, the Virginia Institute of Marine Science's Office of Sponsored Programs will be the point-of-contact for questions regarding financial documentation and sub-award management.

To ensure compliance with federal funding from NOAA, awardees should thoroughly review the full Terms and Conditions. In particular, all awardees should be aware of and comply with the following:

- When traveling, the fellow is subject to the provisions of the Fly America Act and must comply with the Act when scheduling transportation for travel paid with VASG funds.
- Federal and match expenditure reports and/or invoices should be provided upon submission of every reimbursement request, or quarterly (every three months; if no such requests have been submitted) at a minimum, and accurately reflect expenditures.

### *Acknowledge Support*

Per the DOC's Standard Terms and Conditions, NOAA and VASG require funding recipients to credit financial assistance where appropriate. Acknowledging Sea Grant support is important to let the academic community and other key audiences know that the projects VASG funds are producing results.

VASG requests that you make these attributions by referring to DOC, NOAA, and VASG in publications and by reproducing VASG's logo, using the following guidance and resources available on our website (<https://vaseagrant.org/about-us/brand/>).

Papers in scientific, technical, or professional journals must include language mirroring the following within the acknowledgement section when supported by VASG (i.e., publications, reports, and products produced as a result of the activities outlined in the proposal; journal articles and reports authored or co-authored by the fellow while they are receiving VASG funds that support their stipend; etc. require the following acknowledgement). *Please replace the bracketed items with the appropriate award information.*

*This [publication, report, website, video, etc.] was prepared by [recipient/author's name] using Federal funds under award [NOAA Award/Grant # \_\_\_\_\_], Virginia Sea Grant College Program Project [VASG Project # \_\_\_\_\_], from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) National Sea Grant College Program, U.S. Department of Commerce. The statements, findings, conclusions, and recommendations are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of Virginia Sea Grant, NOAA, or the U.S. Department of Commerce.*



### *Award Expectations*

The fellowship provides an award of up to \$40,000 per year to support the student's academic expenses. Fellows are required to be enrolled on campus and remain in good standing at their academic institution. All fellowship funds must be used for the objectives outlined in the original application, unless prior approval is requested (see Change to Scope and Objective section below).

### *Policy Statement for Any Form of Discrimination or Sexual Misconduct, Including Sexual Harassment, or Sexual Assault*

VASG does not tolerate any form of discrimination or harassment, including sexual harassment, or sexual misconduct (e.g. sexual assault within its organization, at awardee organizations, field sites, meetings, or anywhere VASG-funded research, outreach and education are conducted). Virginia institutions of higher education and any other organization that receives VASG funds are responsible for having clearly stated policies prohibiting such discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment or sexual misconduct that comply with federal non-discrimination laws, regulations, and executive orders, and documented procedures for accepting reports of and investigating complaints of misconduct thoroughly, fairly and promptly. VASG's Policy Statement regarding any form of discrimination or harassment, including sexual harassment, and sexual assault can be found at: <https://vaseagrant.org/>.

### *Terms & Condition for: Notification Requirements Regarding Dismissal or Suspension*

VASG funds may not be expended for salaries, wages, tuition or other benefits provided to personnel who are not in good standing as employees or enrolled students of subrecipient. Subrecipient shall notify the VASG Director within 10 days if any PI, funded student (e.g., graduate research fellows, interns, summer resilience fellows, post-graduate fellows, etc.), professional mentor or other personnel is dismissed or suspended from the institution for any period of time for any reason. Written approval from the VASG Director is required before any suspended personnel may resume work on a Sea Grant funded project.

### *Changes to Scope and Objective*

Per 2 CFR § 200.308 Revision of Budget and Program Plans, NOAA and Sea Grant require prior approval for any changes to the scope of the objective of the project or program. The scope and objective of the program is focused on supporting the student's fellowship-related expenses so they can conduct research to benefit the Commonwealth of Virginia. The fellowship program is aimed at supporting the student's academic-, professional development-, and outreach-related costs.

### *Pre-award Costs*

Pre-award costs are those incurred prior to the start date of the award directly pursuant to the negotiation and in anticipation of the award where such costs are necessary for efficient and timely performance of the scope of work. Per § 200.458 Pre-award Costs, NOAA and Sea Grant allow up to 90-day pre-award spending. Such pre-award costs are allowable only if they are eligible fellowship-related expenses and with written approval from VASG.

### *Changes to Proposed Spending*

Awardees must report budgetary changes, so that VASG can comply with the Department of Commerce (DOC) and NOAA's Research Performance Progress Report requirements (refer to the Annual Reports section below). Any changes that amount to more than ten (10) percent of the total budget requires prior approval from VASG. If an awardee wishes to transfer funds from one budget line item to another (e.g., using tuition funds for travel), the fellow is required to work with their advisor(s) and institution's sponsored programs/research office to submit the following documentation:



- A formal request (on letterhead; addressed to the VASG Director and Associate Director) detailing the rationale for the budget revision, and
- A revised 90-4 budget (for each year and cumulative) and budget justification.

In general, budget changes will be approved only if:

- The funds will be used in direct support of the fellow's activities;
- The funds will be used for eligible expenses, as proposed in the fellow's proposal and as defined within the original RFP; and
- The funds will be used while the fellow is still a student and remains in good standing at his/her institution.

Fellowship funds can be carried over from one year to the next without prior approval (e.g., if fellows have a two-year fellowship, they can reserve some of year one budgeted funds and spend them in year two, within the same line item). However, fellows cannot move funds forward (e.g., funds in the year two budget cannot be spent in year one).

Please note that ineligible costs defined in the Budget and Budget Justification section are not allowable in any budget change, and funds from other line item categories cannot be used to support research-related costs after the fellowship has been awarded. Additionally, budget revisions may result in changes to the indirect costs and have match ramifications. Please inform your institution's sponsored programs/research office and VASG as early as possible.

### *Other Types of Budget Modifications*

VASG will entertain all allowable budget modifications, within the constraints of our NOAA award and NOAA/VASG policies, as long as they are consistent with the intent of the fellowship program.

### *Changes in Duration*

All changes to the project duration require prior formal approval by VASG, and in some instances NOAA and the NSGCP as well. Fellows can request a no-cost extension to use funds up to one year after the original end date of their award, with reasonable justification. Unexpended funds are not, by themselves, justification for an extension. No-cost extensions must be requested BEFORE the end of the award (at least two months in advance). Awardees are required to work with their institution's sponsored programs/research office to submit the following documentation:

- A formal request (on letterhead; addressed to the VASG Director and Associate Director) and detailing the reason rational for the no-cost extension, confirmation of whether a budget modification is necessary, and the new proposed end date.
- If a change of more than ten (10) percent of the total budget is required the rationale for the budget revision, revised 90-4 budget(s) and budget justification must be included.

In most cases, VASG will only grant a single no-cost extension for up to one year in duration.

### *Annual Reports*

Fellows are required to submit progress reports to VASG on an annual basis, including a final report. Progress and final reports must highlight significant activities, detail important measures and metrics, and document any budgetary changes that occurred within the previous Sea Grant fiscal year (February 1 to January 31). All reports must be submitted through VASG's eSeaGrant reporting system.



### *Graduation*

Graduate Research Fellowship funds are intended to support the student's fellowship-related expenses while they are seeking a graduate degree at a Virginia institution working on their research objectives outlined in the application. VASG encourages all of our fellows to share important milestones, including defense and graduation dates, with VASG staff. At the conclusion of the fellow's graduate program they are required to notify VASG of their graduation date and submit a digital copy of their final project, thesis or dissertation to VASG.

Fellows who graduate before the end date of their fellowship award are not permitted to use the remaining funds to support post-graduation expenditures.

### *Exit Interview*

Graduate Research Fellows are required to participate in an exit interview (in-person or virtually) organized by the Professional Development Coordinator at the conclusion of the fellowship.