Virginia Sea Grant Announcement
NOAA Sea Grant Knauss Marine Policy Fellowship

Voluntary Submission Date: 5:00 p.m. on December 4, 2019

Virginia Sea Grant (VASG) is now accepting applications for the 2021 John A. Knauss Marine Policy Fellowship, sponsored by NOAA’s National Sea Grant College Program (NSGCP). The Knauss Fellowship provides a unique educational and professional experience to graduate students who have an interest in ocean, coastal and Great Lakes resources and in the national policy decisions affecting those resources. Applicants are required to apply through the Sea Grant program in their state, or the state closest to them. All eligible applicants, enrolled at a Virginia institution who are planning to apply, are strongly encouraged to contact Sam Lake (contact information below) to discuss the application process and VASG’s Tips for Knauss Applications. VASG requests that all draft application materials be shared by the voluntary submission date on December 4, 2019. This allows our staff time to assist applicants and schedule interviews before the NSGCP deadline.

FELLOWSHIP DESCRIPTION & ELIGIBILITY

The Knauss Fellowship, named after one of Sea Grant’s founders, former NOAA Administrator, John A. Knauss, matches highly qualified graduate students with hosts in the legislative and executive branches of government located in the Washington, D.C. area. This one-year paid fellowship is anticipated to begin on February 1, 2021. Selected fellows are involved in both daily operations and special projects assigned based on their areas of interest and expertise, and their host office’s mission-relevant activities and needs.

To submit competitive applications, it is critical that candidates and VASG get the process underway immediately, and thus VASG is issuing this announcement and timeline. The information included below should not be considered a comprehensive guide. Applicants are strongly encouraged to review the 2021 Knauss Fellowship Federal Funding Opportunity (FFO), available at: https://vaseagrant.org/.

Eligibility

An eligible applicant is any student, regardless of citizenship, who, on February 21, 2020, is enrolled towards a degree in a graduate program, that has an interest in ocean, coastal and Great Lakes resources and in the national policy decisions affecting those resources. The graduate degree must be awarded through an accredited institution of higher education in the United States or U.S. Territories.

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.

This is a one-time fellowship opportunity. Applicants that have participated in the fellowship in past years will not be eligible to submit an application. Applicants must be able to pass a federal background security check. Prior contact/arrangements made with possible host offices before the start of the placement week will be cause for immediate disqualification from the process. The fellowship will take place in the National Capital region, so applicants must be able to reside in the Washington, D.C. area. Non-U.S. citizens' are responsible for obtaining the appropriate visa to allow them to work in the Washington, D.C. area during the fellowship.
Funding Availability

Sea Grant anticipates funding not less than 35 selected applicants, of which those assigned to the Legislative branch will be approximately 14. Each award is anticipated to be funded at a total of $74,000 in federal funding, which includes up to $15,000 for host office related travel. In certain circumstances additional office-related travel funding may take the award above $74,000. The anticipated start date is February 1, 2020 for the 12-month fellowship. These awards cannot be renewed or deferred. The final month (February 2021) of the award can be utilized by the fellow for relocation expenses, and is not intended for fellows to carry out host office activities or any other fellowship-salaried activities. Knauss Fellowships are contingent upon the availability and timeliness of federal appropriations.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Fellowship applications will be evaluated with consideration for the following criteria (percent weighting of the criteria):

Statement of Career Goals of the Student (35 percent)

For the Knauss Fellowship program, the career goal statement is reviewed on the extent to which the goal statement:

- is specific, direct, and concise while discussing what the applicant would bring to and gain from the Knauss fellowship;
- clearly articulates the applicant’s career or life goal;
- provides evidence of creative thinking, analytical skill, and/or indicates the applicant’s capacity and willingness to make connections between science and broader economic, social, and political issues;
- demonstrates the applicant’s ability to convey scientific knowledge in broader, non-scientific contexts; and
- includes clear objectives which align with the broader mission of the Sea Grant program and NOAA.

Additional relevant experience (40 percent)

Including: diversity of education; extra-curricular activities; honors and awards; and interpersonal, written and oral communication skills. For the Sea Grant Knauss Fellowship Program, relevant experience would be in marine or aquatic-related fields. The curriculum vitae and career goal statement are reviewed on the extent to which the:

- applicant has employment, volunteer, or extracurricular activities in relevant academic, applied, research, administration, outreach, or policy positions;
- experience in the applicant's area of expertise is appropriate to the career stage;
- applicant has received relevant honors, awards and other recognition;
- applicant has shown interest in working with diverse stakeholders;
- applicant’s experience demonstrates a commitment to apply scientific expertise to serve society; and
- applicant’s experiences show prior leadership roles relevant to career stage (e.g., student government, faculty committees, advisory committees, professional societies, community initiatives, etc.).

Academic Record (10 percent)

For the Knauss Fellowship program, the graduate and undergraduate transcripts, as well as the curriculum vitae, are reviewed on the extent to which the:

- education and experience in the applicant's area of expertise are appropriate to the career stage;
- applicant displays strength in academic performance and competitive course grades; and
- records of publications and/or presentations (academic and non-academic) are appropriate to the career stage, field, and institutional setting.
Recommendations and/or Endorsements of Student (15 percent)

For the Knauss Fellowship program the endorsements and content of the letter from the applicant’s major professor, and the second letter of recommendation are reviewed on the extent to which the letters:

- demonstrate knowledge of the applicant and their abilities;
- speak to the leadership potential, confidence, maturity, and self-direction of the applicant;
- provide evidence of the applicant's willingness and flexibility to tackle issues beyond their area of expertise and an openness and capacity to expand experience; and
- provide evidence of the applicant’s ability to convey scientific knowledge in broader, non-scientific contexts.

HOW TO APPLY

Intent to Apply

All applicants are strongly encouraged to contact VASG’s Fellowship and Research Program Coordinator, Sam Lake, to indicate their interest in the fellowship, discuss the application process and VASG’s Tips for Knauss Applications, and to schedule their interview.

Required Elements

An application package must contain the following elements:

I. Curriculum Vitae (not to exceed two pages) – The student should not include personal contact information or web links to external resources (e.g., LinkedIn, articles, blogs, etc.).

II. Personal Education and Career Goal Statement (1000 words or less) – Emphasizing the applicant’s abilities and the applicant’s expectations of the fellowship experience in terms of their career development.

III. Two Signed Letters of Recommendation – Including one from the student’s major professor; if no major professor exists, a faculty member with knowledge of the applicant's academic performance may be substituted. All applicants will be evaluated solely on their application package according to the criteria listed in the FFO. Therefore, letters of endorsement from members of Congress, friends, or relatives will not be accepted. Any letters beyond the two letters of recommendation and the eligible Sea Grant Director’s letter will be disregarded by the selection panel.

IV. Listing of classes and/or plans for spring 2020, summer 2020, and fall 2020 (not to exceed one page)

V. Clear copy of all undergraduate and graduate student transcripts

Refer to the 2021 Knauss Fellowship FFO for full details on each application element. See VASG’s Tips for Knauss Applications for additional guidance on the elements of your application.

Application Submission

Applications must be submitted online via eSeaGrant (http://vaseagrant.ecsion.com). VASG requests that all students share draft applications by 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time on Wednesday, December 4, 2019 to allow our staff time to assist applicants and schedule interviews. 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 “Knauss 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 application, or edit an existing application, click on “Current Tasks” on the banner head, and select “Add Fellowship Application” under “2021 Knauss Marine Policy 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.

All application elements must be converted to PDF documents. Adherence to the format requirements and page limits is mandatory, and ensures fairness across all applications. All elements, including recommendation letters, must be submitted by the deadline. VASG cannot accept late applications as outlined in the FFO, please allow ample time to submit your application. 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, contact Sam Lake.

**REVIEW & SELECTION PROCESS**

The review process proceeds in stages. VASG will first review all applications to ensure they adhere to the FFO requirements. Each eligible applicant will be invited to interview with a VASG committee. Up to six applicants from Virginia will be selected based on their application package and interview according to the selection criteria, and advanced to the NSGCP for the national competition.

**TENTATIVE TIMELINE FOR FELLOWSHIP COMPETITION**

- VASG announcement released: September 2019
- Voluntary Submission Date, due by 5:00 p.m. EST: December 4, 2019
- Applicants interview with VASG: December 2019
- VASG assembles and submits applications to the NSGCP: February/March 2020
- National competition: May/June 2020
- Anticipated notification of finalists: June 2020
- Placement Week: October/November 2020
- Fellowship begins: February 1, 2021

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND CONTACT**

This announcement, the 2021 Knauss Fellowship FFO, and additional resources can be found at: https://vaseagrant.org/fellowship-research-funding/fellowships/post-graduate-professional-fellowships/.

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1 From the 2021 Knauss Fellowship FFO: Foreign nationals please note: while this fellowship is open to all eligible students regardless of nationality, a significant number of participating Federal host offices are unable to accept foreign nationals as fellows. This may reduce the number of placement opportunities available to foreign nationals.
Tips for Knauss Applications

PREPARING FOR YOUR APPLICATION

Consider Timing
While any enrolled Virginia graduate student is eligible, the Knauss Fellowship is intended for fellows who will have graduated, or are very close to graduation, by the time the fellowship begins. If you are far from completing your degree, you may want to consider applying in the future.

Understand the Process
The application process takes a year to complete, with reviews at both the state and national level.

- **December 4, 2019** – Virginia Sea Grant (VASG) requests that all applicants share draft materials by the voluntary submission date.
- **December 2019** – All candidates who share a draft application by the voluntary submission date will be interviewed by members of the VASG leadership team.
- **February 2020** – All applications are due to VASG by the Federal Funding Opportunity specified state deadline. Based on the interview and application package, VASG will select up to six applicants from Virginia to move forward to the 2021 Knauss Fellowship national competition.
- **February/March 2020** – VASG will assemble application packages and submit to the national competition. VASG leadership also writes an accompanying letter of recommendation.
- **May/June 2020** – The National Sea Grant College Program (NSGCP) runs the national competition; they typically receive 100-120 applications from around the US. A review panel comprised of people familiar with the Knauss Fellowship (e.g., Knauss fellows, host office supervisors, Sea Grant program directors, and advisory board members) will review and discuss all applications against the evaluation criteria and select the 40-50 finalists, who will be notified in June.
- **Fall 2020** – Finalists are required to participate in Placement Week in the Washington, D.C., area. The week-long series of interviews with potential host offices ends with hosts selecting finalists for their office.
- **February 2021** – Knauss Fellows begin their year-long fellowship in the Washington, D.C., area.

Talk to Former Knauss Fellows
Candidates are strongly encouraged to speak to current and former Knauss Fellows to better understand the fellowship, and make sure it is a good fit for their professional development, career goals, and interests. Speaking to fellows also helps you develop your goal statement and CV, and reflect on the important considerations and opportunities available to fellows working in executive or legislative host offices.

Review the Evaluation Criteria
The reviewers will be asked to read a large number of applications. They may read 30 applications, and potentially skim 100+ applications. For each, they will be asked to evaluate against the criteria. **Make it easy for them to find the information they need!**
GOAL STATEMENT

Why Knauss?
You should clearly articulate the answers to the following questions: What do you bring to the Knauss fellowship? What do you hope to learn/gain from your fellowship year? What are your professional development and career goals, and how will Knauss help you achieve those goals?

You are discouraged from stating that you hope to be accepted as a Knauss Finalist in order to get a job in the future. Rather, focus on how you will grow professionally from a year in the Knauss Fellowship program.

Tell Stories
Reviewers are looking for specific examples and details that explain who you are, why you are unique, and what you hope to learn from the fellowship. Don't be too general or vague. Tell detailed stories that validate skills, highlight examples of personal resilience and grit when faced with past challenges, and illuminate your capacity and interest in making connections between science and broader economic, social, and political issues. Stories that highlight what inspires and motivates you today, including what drives you to learn about and work in the science-policy domain, are preferable to stories that explain your original motivation to work on coastal and marine issues.

Don’t Be Repetitive
A thousand words is not a lot to tell your story. Avoid wasting precious space by repeating what is in your CV.

Keep Your Knauss Interests General
The fellowship is an educational opportunity; therefore, while it is appropriate to indicate general areas of interest, it is not appropriate to be too specific in the types of work or offices you hope to be placed in. Reviewers want to see that you are open minded and interested in the learning opportunities presented by the Knauss Fellowship, not that you are seeking a specific job. For example, it might be appropriate to say that you are interested in the international aspects of marine policy, but it might be too specific to say you are interested in working for the State Department on international marine mammal conservation issues.

Placement Preference
Applicants should not specify a preference for a legislative or executive placement in their statement, and are discouraged from specifically referencing host offices. We encourage you to reflect on the type of professional growth and experiences you want to gain from a year in the Knauss Fellowship, and clearly articulate those within your statement.

Follow Format Guidance
Keep your statement under a thousand words. You should not include personal contact information or web links to external resources (e.g., LinkedIn, articles, blogs, etc.).

Make It Easy for Reviewers
We encourage you to use 12pt font, and to include your name and “Goal Statement” in the document. Also consider how formatting (e.g., headers, white space, bold/italics) can help guide reviewers and make your statement easier to read. Be engaging; remember that reviewers are reading many statements. They will all start to sound alike, so think of ways to stand out. Also, remember to proofread carefully; your statement is the primary way that reviewers judge your written communication skills.
CV/RESUME

Demonstrate Diversity
The fellowship program is looking for students with diverse interests and experiences. Note that “additional relevant experience” is 40% of your overall evaluation score, and includes: diversity of education, extra-curricular activities, honors and awards, and interpersonal, written, and oral communications skills. Address as many of these criteria as possible in your CV.

Use Lots of Headers
Unlike a typical CV, you are showing breadth of expertise and interests, as opposed to depth in a particular area. You will likely include more headers, with comparatively less information under each, than a typical CV. If you have a lot of experience, highlight only the most relevant or recent. Definitely consider using words from the evaluation criteria (i.e., extra-curricular activities, honors and awards, etc.) as headers. List publications and presentations, because these demonstrate written and oral communication skills.

Think Outside the Box
You may end up putting things in this CV that you would not typically highlight for a job application. Think about volunteer and outreach activities, work experience (not necessarily/solely in coastal and marine fields), professional service, hobbies, and similar activities that may help demonstrate diversity, and other “additional relevant experience.” You may even refer to your undergraduate years to broaden your choices of activities, experiences, and interests.

Make It Easy for Reviewers
We encourage you to use 12pt font and reasonable margins. Also consider how formatting (e.g., headers, white space, bold/italics) can help guide reviewers.

Follow Format Guidance
Keep your CV under two pages. You should not include personal contact information or web links to external resources (e.g., LinkedIn, articles, blogs, etc.).

RECOMMENDATION LETTERS

Get a Diverse Second Letter
Your first letter must come from your major professor or the faculty member who knows you best. For your second letter, consider someone who might know you from a different perspective (e.g., former employer, mentor from a previous relevant internship, someone you have 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 demonstrate your breadth and diversity, and will likely highlight different strengths and experiences.

Coach Your Letter Writers
Tell your letter writers what the Knauss Fellowship is about, what the evaluation criteria are, and what you want them to highlight in their letters. Remember: this is not for a research job. Make sure they are highlighting the right skills and strengths—things like leadership, independence, problem-solving, work ethic, ability to learn new things, communication skills, team work, interest in policy, etc.

Send Reminders
Please remind your letter writers to submit their letters to VASG on time. If a recommendation letter is submitted after the deadline, we will not be able to accept it and you will be at a disadvantage.
OTHER TIPS

Transcripts
You must submit undergraduate and graduate transcripts, but they do not have to be sent from the universities in sealed envelopes or via secure email. If you have copies of your official transcript, you may submit those. Please ensure they are high-quality scanned copies; reviewers may print these scanned copies, so ensure they are readable even when printed.

Future Plans
The NSGCP ask for a list of plans for the next year to ensure that you will be close to graduating or already graduated by the time the fellowship begins. Your plans should clearly indicate this (i.e., graduation date, defense date, etc.). If you are graduating well before the start of the fellowship, you should indicate temporary employment opportunities (e.g., internships, part-time work in your major professor’s lab) that demonstrate that you will not be seeking permanent employment before the start of the fellowship, but are remaining engaged in your field.