

Tips for Knauss Applications

PREPARING FOR YOUR APPLICATION

Consider Timing

While any enrolled Virginia graduate student is eligible, the Knauss Marine Policy Fellowship is intended for fellows who will have graduated, or are very close to graduation, by the time the fellowship begins.

Talk to Former Knauss Fellows

Candidates are encouraged to speak to current and former Knauss Fellows to better understand the fellowship. If you would like assistance connecting with a former Knauss Fellow, please email Lisa Eddy at lmeddy@vaseagrant.org.

Review the Evaluation Criteria Carefully

Reviewers are asked to read a large number of applications. For each, they will be asked to evaluate against the criteria detailed in the NOFO. *Make it easy for them to find the information they need!* The review criteria can be found in the [Student Guide](#).

PERSONAL EDUCATION AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT RESPONSE

Why Knauss?

Responses to the Personal Education and Career Development section should emphasize your abilities and expectations of the fellowship experience in terms of your career development. Please consider 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/life goals, and how will Knauss help you achieve those goals? Think about what makes YOU, and YOUR life experiences unique, and how you can explain this in a clear and concise way.

Tell Stories

Reviewers are often looking for specific examples and details that highlight your diverse personal and professional experiences, explain who you are, why you are unique, and what you hope to learn from the fellowship. Tell detailed stories that validate skills and highlight examples of personal resilience. Highlight experiences that show your experience and interest in making connections between science and broader economic, social, and political issues, and demonstrate your ability to convey scientific knowledge in broader, non-scientific contexts. Your personal education and career development response should include clear objectives that align with the broader mission of the Sea Grant program and NOAA.

Don't Be Repetitive

The word counts are not large. Avoid wasting precious space by repeating what is in your CV. Your response to the personal education and career development prompts should complement or expand on things mentioned in your CV.

Keep Your Knauss Interests General

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

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.

Follow Format Guidance

Keep your statement under the word limit. Do not include personal contact information or web links to external resources (e.g., LinkedIn, articles, blogs, etc.).

CV/RESUME

Use Headers

Unlike a typical CV, you are showing breadth of work and life expertise and interests, as opposed to depth in a particular area. *Definitely consider using words from the evaluation criteria (i.e., extracurricular activities, employment and volunteer experience, honors and awards, etc.) as headers.*

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, leadership roles (e.g., student government, faculty committees, advisory committees, community initiatives), work experience (not necessarily/solely in coastal and marine fields), stakeholder engagement with diverse audiences, professional service, hobbies, and similar activities that may help demonstrate diversity, a commitment to serve society, and other “additional relevant experience.” You may even refer to your undergraduate years to broaden your choices of activities, experiences, and interests. Look for keywords in the fellowship description and review criteria. Use these words in your CV and tailor it to highlight those specific attributes the reviewers will be looking for.

Follow Format Guidance

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

Make It Easy for Reviewers

Use 12pt font and consider how formatting (e.g., headers, white space, bold/italics) can help guide reviewers and make your statement and CV easier to read.

RECOMMENDATION LETTERS

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. It is very important that they write a strong letter that demonstrates their knowledge of your experience and abilities, and how they translate to the Knauss Fellowship. Additionally, the letters should speak to anything else the review panel should know about the strengths that you will bring to the fellowship.

Remember: *this is not for an academic or research job. Make sure they are highlighting the right skills and strengths— self-motivation, response to setbacks, skills and involvement in teamwork, collaborative leadership skills, willingness to learn a new skill or topic, academic performance and potential.*

Get a Diverse Second Letter

At least one letter must come from a faculty member with knowledge of your academic and research performance (when applicable). 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.

Send Reminders

Remind your letter writers to submit their letters to VASG on time. If a recommendation letter is submitted after the deadline, we cannot accept it and you will be at a significant disadvantage.

OTHER TIPS

Relevant Coursework and Future Year Plans

In this section you will share any relevant coursework and your future year activities. Discuss completed or in progress classes that you think are relevant to success in the Knauss Fellowship Program. Your plans should indicate this with your graduation date, defense date, etc. If you are graduating well before the start of the fellowship, indicate temporary employment opportunities (e.g., internships, part-time work in your major professor’s lab) that demonstrate you will not be seeking permanent employment before the start of the fellowship, but are remaining engaged in your field.

Leverage this application element to highlight professional activities, forthcoming publications, conference presentations, any reports or products resulting from your degree program, professional development trainings, and other relevant experiences you will gain prior to the start of the fellowship.

OVERALL APPLICATION COHESION

Avoid duplication and make sure your individual elements complement one another. Your application should not read as if each element was written in a vacuum. If time allows, we suggest having someone read your application in its entirety with an eye toward cohesion.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Additional resources can be found at: <http://vaseagrant.org/knauss-fellowship>