

Tips for Knauss Applications

PREPARING FOR YOUR APPLICATION

Consider Timing

While any enrolled Virginia or District of Columbia graduate student is eligible, Knauss is intended for fellows that 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.

November 2017 – Your application is due to Virginia Sea Grant (VASG). All candidates that submit a completed application by the state deadline will be interviewed by the VASG Director, and other members of the VASG leadership team. Based on the interview and application package, VASG will select up to six applicants from Virginia, and up to six applicants from the District of Columbia to move forward to the 2019 Knauss national competition.

December/January 2018 – VASG will work with its selected candidates, and discuss feedback from their interviews and application reviews. Candidates have the opportunity to revise their statements, and CVs based upon feedback.

February/March 2018 – VASG will assemble application packages, and submit to the national competition. The VASG Director also writes an accompanying endorsement letter.

May/June 2018 – The National Sea Grant Office runs the national competition; they typically received 100-120 applications from around the US. A review panel comprised of people familiar with Knauss (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 early June.

October/November 2018 – Finalists are required to participate in Placement Week in DC. The week-long series of interviews with potential host offices ends with hosts selecting finalists for their office.

February 2018 – Knauss fellows begin their year-long fellowship in DC.

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 and career goals, and interests. Speaking to fellows also helps in developing your goal statement, and determining whether to indicate a preference for an executive or legislative office.

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!*

In Collaboration With



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 to state that you are hoping 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 Knauss.

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 Knauss. Don't be too general or vague. Tell detailed stories that validate skills and illuminate your interests. Stories that highlight what inspires and motivates you *today*, including drivers 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 Knauss, 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

If you have a preference for a legislative or executive placement, consider noting it in your statement, and provide some justification. This is particularly important for legislative placements, because these are more competitive. However, only indicate a preference (e.g., do not word your preference so strongly that reviewers think you are only open to one type of placement), and do not indicate specific host offices.

Follow Format Guidance

Keep your statement under 1,000 words.

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

Knauss 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’re showing breadth of expertise and interests, as opposed to depth in a particular area. Aim for many headers with a little information under each. If you have a lot of experience, highlight only the most recent or relevant. *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 in your field), professional service, and similar activities that may help demonstrate diversity, and other “additional relevant experience.” You may even refer to your undergraduate years if your graduate/professional experience is limited.

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.

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’ve 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 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 isn’t for a research job, so make sure they’re 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 they are late, we may not be able to accept them and you will be at a disadvantage.



OTHER TIPS

Transcripts

You must submit official 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 scan them and ensure high-quality scanned copies; reviewers may print these scanned copies, so ensure they are readable even when printed.

Future Plans

We 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, so 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 instead are remaining engaged in your field.