

Sea Grant Knauss Marine Policy Fellowship Tips for Recommendation Letter Writers

Thank you for agreeing to write a recommendation letter for one of our Knauss Applicants. Your recommendation will be graded along with the student's other application materials, and a well-written letter could be the difference in an applicant being awarded a fellowship position. To assist you in this endeavor we wanted to give you some general tips, as well as the expectations that the National Sea Grant Office (NSGO) has used to score these letters in the past. If you have any questions, please reach out to Lisa Eddy, VASG's Competitive Research at lmeddy@vaseagrant.org.

The Announcement for the fellowship contains the following request for letters:

"The letter should discuss the following attributes of the student: 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, and anything else the review panel should know about the strengths that the student will bring to the fellowship."

Last year the grading criteria was as follows:

1. Point Scale
 - a. 0-1 Points – the letter did not adequately address the expectations listed below
 - b. 2-3 Points – the letter adequately addresses the expectations listed below
 - c. 4-5 Points – the letter exceeds the expectations listed below
2. Expectations
 - a. Must demonstrate a knowledge of the student and their abilities
 - b. Must speak to the leadership potential, confidence, maturity and self-direction of the student
 - c. Must provide evidence of the student's willingness and flexibility to tackle issues beyond their area of expertise and an openness and capacity to expand experiences
 - d. Must provide evidence of the student's ability to convey scientific knowledge in broader, non-scientific contexts.

General Tips:

1. Use examples of past experiences with the student to showcase the student's skills
2. Letters should not exceed two pages.
3. Do not include personal information.
4. Do not include weblinks to external resources.
5. Make your letter specific to this fellowship opportunity by incorporating the expectations above.