



## 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. 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 2020 - February 2021** – All interested Virginia graduate students are strongly encouraged to contact Dr. Sam Lake (contact information below) to schedule a virtual meeting to review the submission requirements and learn more about the support our program offers all applicants.

**February 19, 2021** – All applications are due to Virginia Sea Grant (VASG) by the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) specified state deadline at 5:00 PM Eastern Time.

**February/March 2021** – All students who submit a complete application will be interviewed by at least three members of VASG's leadership team. Based on the interview and application package, VASG will select up to six applicants from Virginia to move forward to the national competition.

**March/April 2021** – VASG will assemble application packages and submit to the national competition. VASG leadership also writes an accompanying letter of recommendation.

**May/June 2021** – 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 50-60 finalists (~17 will be assigned to the Legislative branch), who will be notified in June.

**Fall 2021** – 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. Legislative Finalists may participate in a separate Placement Week as late as January 2022.

**February 1, 2022** – 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 Carefully*

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 detailed in the NOFO. *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/life 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 highlight your diverse personal and professional experiences, 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 (communication, critical thinking, and analytical skills), highlight examples of personal resilience and grit when faced with past challenges, illuminate your capacity 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 goal statement should include clear objectives that align with the broader mission of the Sea Grant program and NOAA. 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 the word limit. 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, applied research experience, employment (academic, administration, outreach or policy positions), professional service, volunteer experience, and 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 work and life 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, professional service and volunteer experience, honors and awards, etc.) as headers. List publications, reports, presentations, and outreach products, 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, 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.

### *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

### *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. They should include specific examples, including what you took away from informative past experiences, and highlight your ability to convey scientific knowledge in broader, non-scientific contexts.

*Remember: this is not for an academic or research job. Make sure they are highlighting the right skills and strengths—things like leadership potential, confidence, maturity, self-direction and independence, problem-solving, work ethic, ability and willingness to learn new things and tackle issues beyond your area of expertise, communication skills, team work, interest in policy, etc.*



### *Get a Diverse Second Letter*

Your first letter must come from your major professor or 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*

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 (unofficial are acceptable). If you have copies of your official transcript, you may submit those. Official transcripts do not have to be sent from the universities in sealed envelopes or via secure email. Please ensure all transcripts are high-quality scanned copies. Reviewers may print these scanned copies, so ensure they are readable even when printed in greyscale.

### *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.

*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.*

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

This guidance document, the 2022 Knauss Marine Policy Fellowship NOFO, eSeaGrant Instructions, and additional resources can be found at: <https://vaseagrant.org/fellowship-research-funding/fellowships/post-graduate-professional-fellowships/>.

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