Virginia Sea Grant Graduate Research Fellowship

eSeaGrant Instructions

OVERVIEW

Applications are due by December 16, 2020 at 5:00 pm Eastern Time. If you plan to apply, we strongly recommend notifying Virginia Sea Grant (VASG) and registering for eSeaGrant at least two weeks in advance of the deadline. Please review the fellowship announcement (https://vaseagrant.org/) and refer to these instructions as a guide to submit your application using eSeaGrant.

REGISTERING FOR ESEAGRANT

Applicants can register for eSeaGrant by visiting the website (http://vaseagrant.ecsion.com), 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 Dr. Sam Lake (contact information below). Once you login, you can change your password. To do so, click your name in the upper-right corner of the screen, and select "My Profile."

CREATING A FELLOWSHIP APPLICATION

To start an application, or edit an existing application, click on "Current Tasks" on the banner head, and select "Add Fellowship Application" under "2021 VASG Graduate Research Fellowship."

Once you have added the fellowship application to your Current Tasks, progress down through the sequence of application sections ("Start Here" through "Submission Preview") listed on the left side of the window to submit your 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.

eSeaGrant provides sections to upload your signed title page, resumes/CVs, career and professional development goal statement, undergraduate and graduate school transcripts, project narrative, and budget and budget justification. These documents must be converted to PDFs. To preserve confidentiality, letters of recommendations/commitment must be uploaded directly from the referees and mentor to VASG through eSeaGrant. Applicants must identify and submit requests to their referees through eSeaGrant, by entering their referees' names and email addresses in the corresponding section. ***Applicants must click the "Submit" button in the "Submission Preview" section to complete their application.***

All elements, including recommendation letters, must be submitted by the deadline. VASG will not accept late applications under any circumstances. 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, please contact Sam Lake.

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

For full details on the application guidelines, required elements, and review and selection process, please download the VASG fellowship announcement. The information included below should <u>not</u> be considered a comprehensive guide. Applicants are strongly encouraged to review VASG's additional guidance documents and related templates available at: https://vaseagrant.org/

In Collaboration With

Signed Title Page (two-page maximum)

The title page must list the project title and identify and provide contact information for the prospective fellow, faculty advisor(s), and professional mentor. The proposed start and end date, and the total amount of VASG and matching funds being requested for each project year must also be listed. Required institutional endorsements must be included on the title page (at a minimum a representative from the university's Office of Sponsored Programs/Research and the student's primary faculty advisor's digital or handwritten signature). These are often provided by institutional sponsored program offices or equivalent to verify that the institution has reviewed the application. *A template can be found on the VASG website.*

In addition, include a list of funders (agency, organizations, university programs, etc.) and funding amounts that are supporting the proposed research. Separate research funding is not a requirement or selection criteria for VASG fellowship support, although students will need to demonstrate the feasibility of implementing the proposed work. Please indicate if the funding program(s) peer-reviewed the associated proposal/research work plan.

Career and Professional Development Goal Statement (two-page maximum)

The statement should include specific examples and details that illustrate to the reviewers who you are, the unique perspective that you bring to your research and proposed outreach, and what you hope to gain from the fellowship. It should describe your educational/professional goals and ambitions, and professional growth interests and objectives. Include how these goals relate to broader societal needs in the coastal and marine environment. The statement should emphasize how past experiences and competencies contribute toward your short- (1-5yr) and long-term (>5yr) goals and in particular, how this fellowship would contribute toward those goals.

Speak to your leadership potential, communication ability, stakeholder engagement interests or experience, and include any pertinent information that provides insights into your past choices and future interests. Highlight examples of personal resilience and tenacity when faced with a past challenge or barrier, and illustrate what motivates you today and moving forward with your research and its application. A section of the statement should include a timeline of activities and professional competencies you hope to achieve over the duration of the fellowship, i.e., the initial outline of an individualized professional development plan that will be fleshed out with your professional mentor, with additional support from Michelle Rodriguez, VASG's Professional Development Coordinator after the fellowship has been awarded.

Letters of Recommendation

Two letters of recommendation should be submitted in support of the student. To maintain confidentiality, VASG requires that letters are NOT submitted with the student's application. Recommendation letters must be requested and uploaded through eSeaGrant. There is no page limit for letters, but VASG recommends that letters not exceed two pages and not include attachments.

The student's primary faculty advisor or appropriate faculty member (who is the PI on the research award the applicant will be working on during the fellowship) must provide one letter of recommendation. Co-advisors are encouraged to submit a joint letter.

For the second letter of recommendation, VASG encourages applicants to consider someone who might know them from a different perspective than their academic advisor (e.g., former employer, mentor from a previous relevant internship, someone they worked with on an outreach or policy project). It is most important to select someone who will write a strong letter for them, but an "outside" perspective helps to demonstrate their breadth and will likely highlight different strengths and experiences.

IMPORTANT - To maintain confidentiality, letters of recommendation should be submitted directly from the referee to VASG through eSeaGrant and must be submitted by the application deadline to be considered. Please address letters to Dr. Troy Hartley, Director Virginia Sea Grant. Candidates are encouraged to work with referees to meet the deadline.

Professional Mentor Letter of Commitment

The letter should indicate a commitment to mentor the student, and include a description of the mentor's role in the fellow's academic and professional experience. The letter should include a statement of commitment to ethical behavior, respect, honesty, and open communication with the fellow (i.e., abiding by standard code of conduct policies including, but not limited to, any: personnel policy, policy regarding sexual harassment, policy regarding workplace violence and policy regarding ethical behavior).

Only a single letter should be sent (i.e., mentor teams must write and submit a single joint letter).

IMPORTANT - To maintain confidentiality, VASG requires that letters are NOT submitted with the student's application. Recommendation letters must be requested and uploaded through eSeaGrant (see *Recommendation Letters* section above).The letter must be submitted before the deadline. There is no page limit, but VASG recommends that they not exceed two pages, and not include attachments. Please address letters to Dr. Troy Hartley, Director, Virginia Sea Grant.

Resumes/CVs (two-page maximum per Resume/CV)

A brief CV or resume should be included for the student, primary advisor(s), and professional mentor. Any additional pages beyond the two-page maximum will be redacted or removed. Do not include the CVs of committee members, other associated project participants, or others.

Project Narrative (four-page maximum, including figures, tables, and other graphics but excluding literature cited and data management plan)

The full project title and name of student must be included in the header. The narrative is intended to be a brief summary of your thesis or area of study, and how you will leverage those activities to achieve your proposed outreach plan. The professional mentorship and outreach plan sections should be developed in collaboration with your professional mentor. The narrative should include sufficient detail to evaluate the appropriateness and relevance of your research, and how the project aligns with the VASG Strategic Plan.

The narrative should include the following subsections: Introduction, Research Rationale and Relevance, Outreach Plan, Outcomes and Broader Societal Impacts, Professional Mentorship Plan, Timeline, Team and Coordination, Literature Cited, and Data Management Plan. Refer to the fellowship announcement for detailed guidance on each of these subsections.

Budget and Budget Justification

The purpose of the VASG Graduate Research Fellowship is to fully support the student's academic expenses. Up to $40,000 per year for up to two years for full-time graduate, professional degree, or Ph.D. program students at a Virginia academic institution can be requested for eligible fellowship-related expenses (defined below).

Eligible Costs: student stipend; fringe benefits; tuition; enrollment, university and graduate program fees; health insurance; indirect costs; VASG events and conference fees, expenses and travel; and professional development training and travel.

Ineligible Costs: research and lab supplies; research and field work travel; sample processing; research-related service fees; laboratory and field equipment (expendable supplies and permanent equipment); and other expenses needed to conduct research activities.

Ideally, the budget will include, at a minimum, travel support for the fellow to attend one to two VASG meetings per year around Virginia (e.g., fellowship orientation meeting, presenting at a VASG event, and VASG-sponsored professional development workshops), and attendance at one professional conference. If COVID-19 continues to limit travel and in-person meetings, then travel funds can be re-budgeted into eligible cost categories only, with VASG approval.

VASG-funded projects require a 50% funding match (i.e., budgets must show $1 of match for every $2 of Sea Grant funding requested). Only non-Federal funds may be committed as matching contribution. In-kind contributions, unrecovered F&A and tuition, non-federal research expense, start-up funds, faculty salaries, travel support (research, conference, professional development, etc.), partial stipend and tuition are all examples of match.

Historically, common methods used to meet the match and full support requirements have included: 1) providing partial support for the stipend and/or tuition as part of the required match (although that partial support cannot come with other responsibilities, e.g., teaching assistantships, in order to receive the full professional development benefits of the Fellowship), or 2) the academic institutions volunteering to waive overhead on the federal dollars. To date, VASG partner institutions have chosen the latter option and have used the foregone overhead to make up most or all of their match requirement.

Budgets should be developed in the 90-4 budget worksheet (available on the VASG website). The budget justification must be a detailed description of each cost item in the 90-4 budget; additional guidance is available on the VASG website. VASG strongly encourages students to begin working early with their institution's research administration or sponsored programs office to develop their budgets.

Undergraduate and Graduate School Transcripts

Unofficial copies are acceptable, but must clearly indicate the name of institution, degree program, courses taken, and GPAs. Transcripts should be included in reverse chronological order (i.e., newest transcripts first). All personal identification numbers (Social Security, student ID, etc.), personal email addresses, mailing addresses, etc. should be redacted prior to submission.

IMPORTANT

All Virginia university students applying for the VASG Graduate Research Fellowship <u>must</u> have their fellowship applications approved by their home institution's sponsored programs/research office prior to submitting to VASG. Each institution may handle this differently, although all will have an internal deadline for submitting applications to their sponsored programs/research office for their review and approval prior to VASG's deadline.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

These instructions, VASG's fellowship announcement, application templates, and additional resources can be found at: https://vaseagrant.org/fellowship-research-funding/fellowships/research-fellowships/virginia-sea-grant-graduate-research-fellowships/.

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