



Tips for 2021 Knauss Marine Policy Fellowship Applications

Pennsylvania Sea Grant is now accepting applications for the 2021 John A. Knauss Marine Policy Fellowship, sponsored by NOAA's National Sea Grant College Program (NSGCP). The Knauss Fellowship provides a unique educational and professional experience to graduate students who have an interest in ocean, coastal and Great Lakes resources and in the national policy decisions affecting those resources. Fellows are matched with hosts in the legislative and executive branches of government located in the Washington, D.C. area.

The fellowship period is one year and anticipated to begin on February 1, 2021.

Applicants are required to apply through the Sea Grant program in their state, or the state closest to them. All eligible applicants, enrolled at a Pennsylvania institution, who are planning to apply, are strongly encouraged to contact Sean Rafferty, PA Sea Grant Research Director at sdr138@psu.edu, or via phone 814.217.9011 Ext. 102, to indicate their interest in the fellowship and discuss the application process.

While any enrolled Pennsylvania graduate student is eligible, the Knauss Fellowship is intended for students who will have graduated, or are very close to graduation, by the time the fellowship begins. Applicants with more than a year remaining before completing their degree should consider applying in the future.

Be Mindful of Process Timeline and Deadlines

The application process takes a year to complete and incorporates reviews at both the state and national level.

Applicants must keep the following timeline and important deadlines in mind throughout the process.

- ***Current*** – Interested applicants should contact Pennsylvania Sea Grant to discuss the fellowship and schedule an interview.
- ***January 2020*** – Prospective applicants will be interviewed by PA Sea Grant.
- ***February 2020*** – All applications are due to PA Sea Grant by the Notice of Federal Funding Opportunity-specified state deadline. Based on the interview and application package, PA Sea Grant will select up to six applicants to move forward to the 2021 Knauss Fellowship national competition.
- ***February/March 2020*** – PA Sea Grant will assemble application packages, including a written letter of recommendation, and submit to the national competition.
- ***May/June 2020*** – The National Sea Grant College Program (NSGCP) runs the national competition; they typically receive 100-120 applications. A review panel comprised of individuals 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 40-50 finalists, who will be notified in June.
- ***Fall 2020*** – Finalists are required to participate in Placement Week in the Washington, D.C., area. The week-long series of interviews with potential host offices concludes with hosts selecting finalists for their office.
- ***February 2021*** – Knauss Fellows begin their year-long fellowship in the Washington, D.C., area.

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Talk to Former Knauss Fellows

Applicants are strongly encouraged to speak with 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 potential candidates develop a goal statement, Curriculum Vitae (CV), and reflect on the important considerations and opportunities available to fellows working in executive or legislative host offices.

Review the Evaluation Criteria and Follow Format Guidance

Reviewers will be asked to read a large number of applications, so it is important to help make their jobs easier by following the guidelines. Applicants should include name and “Goal Statement,” use 12pt font, and consider how formatting (headers, white space, bold/italics) can make a statement easier to read. Remember, reviewers will be evaluating each application against the criteria. ***Make it easy for them to find the information they need!*** Tip: *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.*

PREPARING THE APPLICATION

I. GOAL STATEMENT

Why Knauss?

While professional growth and career advancement are likely outcomes of the Knauss Fellowship, applicants should stray from answering “Why Knauss” questions with answers such as “...in order to get a job.” Applicants should be able to clearly articulate answers to these questions: *What do you bring to the Knauss fellowship? What do you hope to learn/gain from your fellowship year? What professional development and career goals might the Knauss Fellowship help you achieve?*

Share Your Story

Reviewers will be looking for specific examples and details that describe the unique backgrounds, personal and professional attributes, and what each applicant hopes to achieve through the fellowship. Applicants are encouraged to share detailed stories that validate skills, highlight examples of personal resilience and grit when faced with past challenges, and to illuminate individual capacity and interest in making connections between science and broader economic, social, and political issues. Motivational, timely, and relevant stories that highlight an applicant’s current passion to work in the science-policy domain are preferable to stories that explain original motivation to work on coastal and marine issues.

Don’t Be Repetitive

Each applicant is given one-thousand words to tell their story. Ensure wise-use of the space by not repeating content already included in the CV. Personal contact information, website addresses, and social media tags are not to be included.

Keep 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 overly specific when describing the ideal type of work or office setting. Reviewers will be looking for candidates that are open minded and interested in the learning opportunities presented by the Knauss Fellowship, not those who are seeking a specific job placement. *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 are encouraged to clearly articulate the types of professional growth and experiences being sought, but should not specify a preference for a legislative or executive placement, or request a particular host office.

II. CV/RESUME

Demonstrate Diversity

The fellowship program is looking for students with diverse interests and experiences. Note that “additional relevant experience” is *40% of the 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 the CV.

Use Lots of Headers

Unlike a typical CV, applicants should focus on demonstrating a breadth of expertise and interests, as opposed to in-depth content focused on a particular area. Applicants will likely use more headers, with comparatively less information under each, than a typical CV. Applicants with extensive experience should highlight only the most relevant or recent. *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

Volunteer and outreach activities, work experiences (not associated with coastal and marine fields), professional services, hobbies, activities that may demonstrate diversity, and other relevant experience should all be included in a CV. Relevant undergraduate activities, experiences, and experiences may also be included.

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.).

III. RECOMMENDATION LETTERS

Get a Diverse Second Letter

Two letters of recommendation are required. The first must come from the applicant’s major professor or a close faculty member. The second recommendation letter may be written by someone with a different perspective, such as a former employer, mentor from a previous relevant internship, or project partner. It is most important to select someone who will write a *strong* letter and bring an “outside” perspective to demonstrate diverse skills and to highlight different strengths and experiences.

Coach Letter Writers

Applicants should prepare letter writers by providing background about the Knauss Fellowship, details about the evaluation criteria, and key highlights that will be helpful to the application. *Remember: this is not an application for a research job. Make sure they are 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 PA Sea Grant on time. If a recommendation letter is submitted after the deadline, it will not be accepted.

ADDITIONAL TIPS

Transcripts

Undergraduate and graduate transcripts are required. However, official transcripts (sent from universities in sealed envelopes or via secure mail) are not required. Copies of official transcripts will suffice. *Please ensure they are high-quality scanned copies; reviewers may print these scanned copies, so ensure they are readable even when printed.*

Future Plans

The National Sea Grant College Program asks each applicant to include a list of plans for the next year. Plans should clearly indicate graduation date, defense date, and other information that may help to confirm availability. Applicants who will be graduating well before the start of the fellowship should indicate all temporary employment opportunities (e.g., internships, part-time work), which demonstrate that an applicant is not seeking permanent employment prior to the fellowship start date, while remaining engaged in field of interest.