

# Knauss Fellowship: Applications and Selection

Sea Grant Week, 2016





The Sea Grant 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.

Graduation Ceremony for the 2015 Knauss Fellows with Dr. Kathryn Sullivan, NOAA Administrator

# Yearly Cycle

February	Applicants submit packages to their state Sea Grant programs
March	State Sea Grants review applications, submit up to 6 applications to NSGO All packages reviewed by three reviewers, and scored based on the stated criteria
April	National Reviewers receive applications All packages reviewed by three reviewers, and scored based on the stated criteria
May	Review panel
June	Notifications sent to state Sea Grants, all applicants notified
November/ December	Placement Week
February	Start of the fellowship

# Student Application Components

Letters of Recommendation (1 from major advisor)

Personal statement (2000 words max)

Resume (two pages max)

Official Undergraduate and Graduate Transcripts

List of classes and plans for Spring/Summer/Fall 2018

# Selection Factors

The legal basis for selecting  
fellows

(1) **Recommendations and/or endorsements of student (15%)**: Endorsement/content of the letter from the applicant's major professor, and the second letter of recommendation.

(2) **Academic record and statement of career goals and objectives of student (45%)**: Quality of the applicant's personal education and career goal statement (30%); Strength of academic performance (15%).

(3) **Additional relevant experience (40%)** related to: diversity of education, extracurricular activities, honors and awards, and interpersonal, written, and oral communications skills. For the Knauss Sea Grant Fellowship Program, relevant experience would be in marine or aquatic-related fields.

How does your  
program review and  
interview applicants?

Review of applicants  
by state SG

- 3 reviewers
- Scored based on FFO criteria



Review of applicants  
by Selection Panel

- 15-19 reviewers
- Scored based on FFO criteria
- Consideration of Director LOR



Selection of whole  
cohort based on  
scores

- Geographic diversity
- Degree diversity



Manager  
recommends  
Leg and Exec  
placements to  
NSGO Director

# Review and Selection

Verifiable scores to support decisions at every stage

**Preference for Leg or Exec does not affect selection**



# Requesting Executive vs. Legislative Placement

Applicants should explicitly state Exec, Leg, or either

Their stated choice trumps Director's opinion

“While Applicant X requested an Executive position, I feel she would do well in an Legislative position”

## **Requesting Legislative Placement**

Applicants benefit from:

- Discussing their experience at state, local legislative levels
- Showing how they've worked with groups on opposite sides of an issue
- Discussing how they would be comfortable representing ideas they don't agree with

# Ranking of Fellows

Every fellow is scored by panelists

Average scores and ranks

Fellows sorted into a list

Fellows chosen based the list

Why didn't our state's  
applicant make it? We  
thought they were  
great!

# Selecting Fellows

Allowed to select out of order,  
but required to state why we're  
going against the panelists'  
recommendations

Casey  
Kendrick  
Shirley  
Patricia  
Kamilah  
Ewa

Thomas  
Myrtle  
Akiko  
Ben

# Qualified but not chosen

Selection is difficult

We very rarely get applicants who aren't qualified

- Which means most applicants would be successful fellows

We cannot select everyone

Nothing “wrong” with their applications, others were simply more qualified

# Building a Strong Application

# Resume

Cannot exceed 2 pages

Highlight the diversity of activities, classes, extracurricular awards, and volunteer activities. These are categories that reviewer seek out.

## Education

- Schools, Majors, Thesis titles, GPAs, Graduation dates

## Peer-Reviewed Publications

- In press, in review, published
- In prep are taken with a grain of salt

## Presentations

- Oral and Poster

## Non-Peer-Reviewed Publications

- Op-Eds, white papers, blog posts

## Outreach

- Volunteer, mentoring responsibilities, student gov't positions

## Awards and Honors

- Separate section!
- Explain awards if unclear (why selected, what was the award?)

Sarah Vallez  
University of Mountains  
Montana Sea Grant



# Personal Statement

1000 words maximum - STRICT LIMIT

12 pt font, please!

State a Leg/Exec preference

What the student brings to the fellowship, and what they expect to gain from being a fellow

Statement of career/life goal

Sarah Vallez  
University of Mountains  
Montana Sea Grant

“The sea, once it casts its spell, holds one in its net of wonder forever.”

Or

“My objective is to be selected for a position as a 2053 Knauss Fellow in the Executive Branch because...”

This document demonstrates the student’s written communication skills

- Grammar and typos!

Explanation of volunteer/outreach activities

Address any red flags for reviewers

- Failed class, missing year, low GPA, etc.

Explanation of policy experience or interest

~~Mention Host offices~~

- We cannot guarantee host offices from year-to-year
- It looks bad if a finalist mentions specific host offices in their statement - no guarantee they’ll end up there



# What makes a strong application

Follow FFO requirements exactly - 2 LOR, 2-page resume, 1000 word personal statement

Addressing any shortcomings

- Low GPA, failed class, missing year(s) of work

# What makes a strong application

Director letter is important!

- Don't rehash what's in the application, the reviewers already read that
- Meet with students, talk with them, understand why they're applying and convey that to the national panel
- Help compensate for for inadequate LORs
  - Many professors don't understand the Knauss app, and discuss research instead of the student's capabilities

# What makes a strong application

Solidly addressing the “Additional Relevant Experience” section of the scoring criteria

- **Additional relevant experience (40%)** related to: diversity of education, extracurricular activities, honors and awards, and interpersonal, written, and oral communications skills. For the Knauss Sea Grant Fellowship Program, relevant experience would be in marine or aquatic-related fields.

Easy-to-find information - Awards, Accomplishments

# What makes a strong application

Was the Goal Statement specific, direct, and concise while discussing what the applicant would bring to and gain from the Knauss Fellowship? Was a career or life goal stated?

Did the applicant have volunteer and extracurricular activities?

Did the recommendation letters demonstrate knowledge of the applicant and his/her abilities? Did they know the applicant more than as a participant in a class? Was the 2nd letter from a diverse activity (not from 2 professors working in one lab)?

Did the applicant have a diverse background including a diversity of classes (balanced and appropriate coursework)?

What was the strength of the academic achievement?

How much marine and aquatic science and /or policy experience did the applicant have?

Was the publication record relevant to the applicant's career stage?

Are acronyms defined?

Are there misspelled words and/or grammatical errors?

# Recruitment

Getting beyond the dynasty programs



# Recruiting Applicants

Have current and former fellows present at schools about their experience

Send Knauss announcement to university Career Centers

Encourage students to ask for your opinion

Share successful past applications

**37** years of opportunities for promising students to explore the national policy process

**70+** National Capitol Region offices hosted fellows in the past three years

**1,113** fellows participated in the program since 1979

**747** fellows placed in federal departments and agencies

**366** fellows placed in the U.S. Congress

## Dean John A. Knauss Marine Policy Fellowship

Launching illustrious careers, Sea Grant Knauss Fellowships offer direct experience working on the latest issues in ocean and coastal management, fisheries and research.

**WHERE HAVE THEY COME FROM?**  
Fellows have come from 32 of the 33 Sea Grant Programs

**WHERE WERE THEY PLACED?**

- U.S. House of Representatives
- U.S. Senate
- NOAA
- National Science Foundation
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
- U.S. Coast Guard
- The White House
- U.S. Department of State
- U.S. Department of Transportation
- Environmental Protection Agency
- The Office of the Oceanographer of the Navy

Sea Grant  
**50** YEARS  
seagrant.noaa.gov

# Broadening Our Outreach

Extending the breadth of Knauss Applicants

NOAA's Cooperative Science Centers

Minority-Serving Institutions

Historically Black Colleges and University

Hispanic-Serving Institutions

# Participate in the Process

May 2-4, 2017

Join the selection panel for 2018  
Fellows

Read and review ~20 applications