



FLORIDA SEA GRANT COLLEGE PROGRAM

FY2024-25 Graduate Student Coastal and Ocean Research Fellowship Competition

The Florida Sea Grant (FSG) 2024-25 Graduate Student Coastal and Ocean Research Fellowship Program is designed to help Sea Grant fulfill its broad educational and training responsibilities while supporting existing research efforts in fields related to coastal and ocean resources. Sea Grant is committed to building inclusive research, extension, communication, and education programs that serve all people regardless of backgrounds, circumstances, needs, and perspectives.

The objective of the program is to increase the national supply of individuals educated and trained in the assessment and sustainable utilization of coastal and ocean resources. This Fellowship will provide graduate students the opportunity to extend their research with the goal of addressing the needs of stakeholders and contributing to the peer-reviewed scientific literature. Given the broad scope of Focus Areas (see below), research can span a wide range of disciplines (e.g., natural or social sciences, engineering, planning and design, science communication, policy and legal analysis, architecture, business, education, arts and humanities, etc.).

A. IMPORTANT DATES

- Competition announcement release date: March 8, 2024
- Applications due: May 3, 2024, 3:00 PM ET
- Notice of competition results: July 26, 2024
- Fellowships begin: September 2, 2024
- Fellowships end: August 29, 2025

B. CONTACTS

- Fiscal/budget/match questions: Gina Hillsberry; rhillsberry@ufl.edu (352) 392-5870
- Content, proposal preparation and eSeaGrant submission questions: Taylor Dluzniewsky; tdluzniewski@ufl.edu; (313-574-6438)

C. ELIGIBILITY

Applications will be accepted from graduate students enrolled toward an advanced degree (Masters, Ph.D., or J.D.) in a field related to the coastal and ocean sciences. The graduate degree must be awarded through an accredited institution of higher education in Florida. The individual must be enrolled as a student to qualify for and use the fellowship funding.

D. SIZE OF AWARDS

FSG anticipates funding eight fellowships, each capped at \$25,000 during the period 9/2/2024 to 8/29/2025. Graduate student fellowships are exempt from institutional IDC but must include at least 50% match of non-federal funds (e.g., tuition, faculty supervisor's time, etc.). Please contact Gina Hillsberry rhillsberry@ufl.edu for questions or any issues/constraints you might have regarding match.

E. PRIORITY TOPICS

These Graduate Research Fellowship proposals must address at least one goal associated with any of the four focus areas identified in the FSG's FY2024-27 Strategic Plan accessible at the following link: <https://www.flseagrant.org/publication/florida-sea-grant-college-program-2024-2027-strategic-plan/>

F. APPLICATION ELEMENTS

Note: This funding opportunity is meant to enhance the student's existing research interests by integrating additional analysis or, for example, by adding a complementary outreach component that would add value or applicability of the research through cultivation and engagement of an end-user, group, or stakeholder audience.

Each section below asks for information to be entered directly into an online text box or uploaded as a PDF in the eSeaGrant system. The Appendix contains information on using the eSeaGrant system.

Faculty supervisor / principal investigator (PI) information

Curriculum vitae: Upload a CV for the faculty supervisor, who will serve the role of Principal Investigator. Funding for the student will be distributed to the student's faculty supervisor.

Student / co-principal investigator information

1. **Student name and contact information:** Provide the first and last name of the student, university/college email, and preferred telephone number.
2. **Curriculum vitae:** Attach a PDF file of student's CV. The CV must not exceed 2-pages, single-spaced, with 12-point font.
3. **Career goal statement:** Enter the student's personal and professional goal statement (200 word maximum). This statement emphasizes the applicant's circumstances, abilities, and interest in coastal and ocean science.
4. **Undergraduate and graduate student transcripts:** Upload a single PDF of all undergraduate and graduate transcripts. Unofficial copies will be accepted.

Project information

5. **Title:** Try to be descriptive, yet concise.
6. **Abstract and Key Words:** Summarize the proposed research and/or activities to be conducted as part of the fellowship. Include the need, method(s) partners, and anticipated outcomes. 200 words maximum. Please also add two to three key words that characterize the proposed project or activities.
7. **Primary Focus Area:** Identify the focus area from FSG's 2024-27 Strategic Plan to which the project is most aligned (i.e., Healthy Coastal Ecosystems, Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture, Resilient Communities and Economies, or Environmental Literacy and Workforce Development).
8. **Narrative:** Describe the proposed work following the sections a-f below. Upload as a single PDF not to exceed 5 pages of 12-point, single spaced text.
 - a. **Relevance.** Why is this topic important? How is it innovative and unique? Describe the problem or opportunity using quantitative information. What is the relevance to Florida Sea Grant priorities?

- b. **Goal and objectives.** Concisely state the overall goal of the proposed fellowship activities. List the objective(s).
 - c. **Research design.** Explain the methods to be used including the technical or analytical components. Describe how the newly proposed research activities build upon, integrate with, and add value to the existing research. What other ongoing research of the student/supervisor is being used to leverage the proposed work? This is important for a supplemental project as reviewers need to understand the strength of the leveraged work.
 - d. **Project Partners.** Identify any partner organizations or entities that are involved or may be involved.
 - e. **Expected scientific outcomes and associated broader impacts.** What are the expected results at the conclusion of the work under this one-year project? If end-users are involved, what is their role in applying or sharing project activity outcomes? As another outcome of the proposed work, students will be required to write a blog post describing their research and its application.
 - f. **Literature citations.** Include citations for each scientific reference in the document. As this is supplemental work, please identify only the top references (e.g., no more than 5-10).
9. **Budget:** In the eSeaGrant budget form, enter the total cost of each budget item on the form. Each budget item must include a justification for the expenditure that can be entered in the associated text box. Eligible budget items for this federally-funded opportunity include - but are not limited to - stipend, tuition, fees, health insurance, travel, page charges for publications, and materials and supplies. The value of the 50% match needs to be enumerated and described (i.e., how the match complements and supports the project) but university indirect costs should not be included for this competitive research fellowship program.

Note: While funds can be used to support travel for conference presentations and publications, you should have great confidence that those expenditures will occur during the one-year project period to include them as a budget item.

Recommendation and attestations

- 10. **Letter of recommendation:** A letter of professional recommendation is required from the faculty supervisor who will serve as Principal Investigator and supervisor for the proposed research or complementary activities. The letter must describe the faculty supervisor's role in supervising the proposed research undertaken as part of the fellowship, in addition to the capabilities and qualities of the applicant; the importance of the proposed work; and ability for the work to be completed within one year. To remain confidential, faculty supervisors must upload a PDF of their letter directly into the eSeaGrant site; the faculty supervisor will receive an invitation with further instruction when the applicant enters the name and contact information into eSeaGrant as they begin the application process. The letter must not exceed 2-pages, single-spaced, with 12-point font.
- 11. **Attestations:** When faculty supervisors submit their letter of recommendation they will be asked to attest to (1) the student's good academic standing and (2) adherence to applicable university codes of conduct. Regarding the latter, supervisors will be asked to promptly (within 10 days of the determination of a finding) notify FSG should the student or mentor be the subject of or perpetrate an ethical violation, which can take the form of harassment, assault, sexual misconduct, or discriminatory behavior. Ethical violations on the part of students and/or

their supervisors can result in the withdrawal of the fellowship award. The student and supervisor will be required to attest to observing high ethical standards during the period of the fellowship. In addition, the faculty supervisor will attest to ensuring that all applicable NOAA compliance documents will be completed and (if applicable) copies of documents provided prior to commencement of work. These compliance documents include, but are not limited to, (1) a Data Management Plan (see NOAA's Public Access to Research Results Plan <https://repository.library.noaa.gov/view/noaa/10169>) and (2) an Abbreviated Environmental Compliance Questionnaire (NEPA Questionnaire; see <https://seagrant.noaa.gov/insideseagrant/Implementation>).

12. **Letter of Institutional Commitment:** Upload a letter of commitment from the relevant institution's sponsored research office. For University of Florida-based students only, in lieu of the letter of commitment, submit your application through UFIRST (in addition to submittal through eSeaGrant).

G. REVIEW PROCESS AND SELECTION

Each application will receive three peer reviews from individuals with expertise related to the proposed research. Peer reviewers will include program staff and advisory committee members, and experts and/or scientists external to the program. A Technical Review Panel comprised of a subset of peer reviewers will be assembled to discuss and rank applications using the results from the reviews. All reviewers will attest to being free of any conflict of interest with respect to the applications they evaluate and discuss. The evaluation criteria include:

- **Strength of the student and supervisor team (50 points):**
 - 25 Points: The strength of the student applicant's academic achievements as provided in the CV, transcripts and the compelling nature of the applicant's career goals as they pertain to NOAA and Sea Grant's mission and vision. Also considered is the strength of the student's supervisor in their field of expertise as evidenced by outcomes of previous projects.
 - 25 Points: Strength of the letter of recommendation from the student's academic advisor/mentor, which attests to strong character, drive and commitment to the applicant's profession and towards others. The applicant's capability for conducting the complementary research and/or outreach proposed and degree to which it strengthens the applicant's advanced degree.
- **Quality of proposed research (50 points):**
 - 20 Points: Innovative. The degree to which the research is novel and addresses an important and relevant topic to Sea Grant and Florida. The extent to which the results would contribute to the peer-reviewed literature or result in a documented practical impact or accomplishment.
 - 20 Points: Integrated. The degree to which the proposed activities build upon, add value to, and complement the applicant's existing research interests. The role of partners in the project.
 - 10 Points: Feasible. The degree to which the proposed activities are well-described and complete, the budget supports programmatic activity, and the timeline is appropriate.

The Florida Sea Grant Director has final discretion to recommend applications for funding based on the reviews and discussions; administrative review; availability of funding; and FSG's objectives, needs, and priorities. Applications recommended for funding will be included in a Letter of Intent to fund selected fellowships that will be submitted by the Director to the applicable Federal Program Officer. Applicants will be notified once the applications are approved by the Federal Program Officer.

If selected, applicants will be asked to provide supplemental documents prior to the award (e.g., Data Management Plans, NEPA Questionnaire, required permits, etc.) and will be provided with information on how to submit a final report in eSeaGrant. Finally, Fellows will be asked to create a blog post on their research and participate in a webinar to present their research accomplishments and activities supported by this fellowship.

APPENDIX

APPLICATION SUBMISSION PROCESS VIA ESEAGRANT

Applications must be submitted through Florida Sea Grant's eSeaGrant system at <https://eflseagrant.ifas.ufl.edu>. New users to this system will need to create an account in eSeaGrant and should do so early in the process to avoid potential problems and risk missing the deadline. With an established account, users can save submission information and work on the application over time.

To establish login credentials:

1. Go to: <https://eflseagrant.ifas.ufl.edu>
2. Click "Create Account" and follow the prompts.
3. After you create your account, you will receive an email with login credentials. (If you do not receive a "Welcome" email with login credentials, contact Taylor Dluzniewski at (tdluzniewski@ufl.edu).
4. Once you login with your credentials, you can change your password. To do so, click your name in the upper-right corner of the screen and select "My Profile."

Existing users can log in with a previously established username and password. If you have forgotten your password, use the "forgot password" feature to trigger a reset. If you encounter any issues, contact Taylor Dluzniewski (tdluzniewski@ufl.edu).

To start an application, or revisit/edit an existing application:

Application components within eSeaGrant correspond to the "Section F. Application Elements" section (above).

1. Click on "Fellowships" on the banner head and/or on the left side of the screen.
2. Search for and click on the application labeled "2024 Graduate Student Coastal and Ocean Fellowship Competition (Fellowship Applications)."
3. Upon entering eSeaGrant, the applicant will be presented with a series of tabs located on the left side of the screen. Each tab represents a section of the application and requires the applicant to add information either by uploading PDF files or entering information directly into a text box. Note that text boxes cannot accept headers, footers or page numbers.

Submission Preview:

You will have the opportunity to view your application before you submit. Please carefully review and, when satisfied, click on the SUBMIT button located on the right side of the window. Proposals are accessible for edit/review up until you click on the SUBMIT button. Once submitted, the application is final and cannot be changed.

For an example of how to submit application elements in the eSeaGrant system, follow the link below:

https://www.dropbox.com/s/9lnopv93ctstfgo/HowToSubmit_FL_eSeaGrant_Example.pdf?dl=0