



NOAA OCEAN ACIDIFICATION PROGRAM

## **Louisiana and Texas Sea Grant / NOAA Ocean Acidification Program Support a new Graduate Research Fellowship in Ocean, Coastal and Estuarine Acidification**

*Deadline: April 17, 2020*

The Louisiana and Texas Sea Grant Programs (LATXSGPs), in partnership with the NOAA Ocean Acidification Program (OAP), are pleased to announce the availability of Ocean Acidification (OA) Graduate Research Fellowships for the two-year period covering the 2020/2021 and 2021/2022 academic years. The fellowship is open to full-time graduate students at any academic institution in Louisiana and Texas who are engaged in coastal and marine research relevant to regional ocean, coastal, and estuarine acidification. In addition to supporting the student's academic expenses, the fellowship will provide additional professional development opportunities throughout its duration, focusing on science communication, management application, outreach, and other Sea Grant and OAP activities and mission priorities. The LATXSGPs and OAP are accepting proposals until 5:00 p.m. ET on Friday, April 17, 2020. This announcement and additional information can be found at each state Sea Grant Program's website. Access to eSeaGrant for submission of proposals, as well as document templates and guidance document, can be found on the eSeaGrant portal hosted by Texas Sea Grant and Louisiana Sea Grant (applicants should use their respective Sea Grant Program for information and applications). Links are provided at end of this announcement.

### **FELLOWSHIP DESCRIPTION**

The overall goal of the fellowship is to develop OA researchers for the Gulf of Mexico region in order for the region to respond rapidly to the anticipated OA. The OA Graduate Research Fellowship will support exceptional graduate students who are engaged in research and education that furthers the goals of the LATXSGPs and OAP (together the 'sponsors'). The fellowship also provides hands-on experience in translating research results to coastal and marine stakeholders, through a professional mentor, and offers fellows professional development training opportunities. Through these fellowships LATXSGPs and OAP will achieve their goals of 1) increasing OA knowledge and research capacity in the Gulf of Mexico region through education and workforce development; 2) addressing key priority research needs on OA within the Gulf of Mexico region, and; 3) transferring fellowship research OA knowledge to relevant stakeholders through outreach and extension.

OA Graduate Research Fellows will address issues relevant to coastal ecosystems and communities related to ocean, coastal and estuarine acidification. The focus should be on improving understanding of the potential ecological consequences of increasing carbon dioxide concentration in regional ocean, coastal and estuarine waters. Projects may encompass natural and/or social science research topics. See links below for some OA priorities identified for the region:

[\*\*NOAA Ocean Acidification Program\*\*](#)

- [2020 Ocean Acidification Research Plan](#)

#### **Gulf of Mexico OA resources**

- [Gulf Fisheries Commission pdf](#)
- [Gulf of Mexico Ocean Acidification Network](#)

#### **LATXSGP**

- [Louisiana Sea Grant Strategic Plan](#)
- [Texas Sea Grant Strategic Plan](#)

Potential OA Graduate Research Fellows are required to be enrolled in an accredited university and to have a faculty advisor who will act as the primary mentor for their education and research. In addition to their faculty advisor, fellows will be expected to work with a professional mentor. Through interactions with their professional mentor, fellows will ensure that their research results are useful and used by stakeholders. Ideally, the professional mentor will work collaboratively with the student throughout the fellowship and be instrumental in the development, implementation and application of the research beyond the academic community. Professional mentors could include Sea Grant extension specialists, educators, federal and state agency professionals, and industry partners. The fellowship will also include professional development training and workshops. Fellows will be asked early in the fellowship to work together with the sponsors to develop a two-year professional development plan.

#### **LATX SEA GRANT PROGRAMS**

NOAA Sea Grant is a national network of 34 university-based state programs. For over 50 years, Sea Grant has supported coastal and Great Lakes communities through research, extension and education. Sea Grant's mission is to enhance the practical use and conservation of coastal, marine and Great Lakes resources in order to create a sustainable economy and environment. The Sea Grant Programs collaborating to offer this fellowship opportunity include [Louisiana](#) and [Texas](#) Sea Grant.

#### **NOAA OCEAN ACIDIFICATION PROGRAM**

The OAP pursues science to improve our understanding of how (and how fast) the chemistry of the ocean is changing, how variable that change is by region, and what impacts these changes are having on marine life, people, and the local, regional, and national economies. In support of NOAA's mission to understand changes in the world's oceans, share that knowledge, and conserve coastal and marine ecosystems, the OAP plays an integral role in maintaining long-term ocean acidification monitoring; conducting research designed to understand marine ecosystems sensitivity to acidification; promoting relevant educational opportunities; engaging in national public outreach activities related to ocean acidification and its impacts; and coordinating activities with other agencies and appropriate international ocean science bodies. As part of its responsibilities, the OAP provides grants for critical research projects that explore the effects on marine organisms, ecosystems and the socioeconomic impacts that can lead to potential adaptive strategies. To learn more visit: <http://oceanacidification.noaa.gov/WhoWeAre.aspx>

## ELIGIBILITY

Applicants must be enrolled in a full-time graduate or professional degree program at an accredited academic institution in Louisiana or Texas prior to the awarding of the fellowship, no later than the fall 2020 semester. Students are expected to complete the fellowship while enrolled at their home institution. Students may be working toward a degree in any discipline as long as they are engaged in research that is related to ocean, coastal and estuarine acidification and relevant to the missions of the LATXSGPs and OAP. The sponsors strongly encourage students who are from underrepresented groups in marine science, women, persons with disabilities, and veterans to apply.

## AWARD INFORMATION

The fellowship provides a total award of \$46,000 per year for two years. For this fellowship, a yearly non-federal match of at least \$11,500 is required. Only non-federal funds may be committed as matching contribution. Pursuant to federal regulation (15 C.F.R. § 917.11), no overhead is permitted on Sea Grant fellowships. It is acceptable to the LATXSGPs for the difference between an institution's federally negotiated overhead rate and the Sea Grant 0% fellowship overhead rate to be applied toward match. See *Budget and Budget Justification* section below for more details.

Contingent upon available federal funding, fellowships are available for two years for M.S. and Ph.D. students. The anticipated start date is September 1, 2020. We anticipate supporting approximately three fellowships, one in Texas and two in Louisiana, starting the fall of 2020.

## FELLOWSHIP REQUIREMENTS

Selected fellows will be required to:

**Submit Reports:** Provide progress reports to the respective state Sea Grant Program on an annual basis, including a final report, and copy of their thesis, dissertation, or capstone project.

**Work with Sea Grant and OAP Communication:** Assist the LATXSGPs and OAP efforts to publicize the fellow's research and activities.

**Collaborate with a Professional Mentor:** Select and work with a professional mentor, and develop and launch an individual professional development plan in collaboration with mentor and sponsors.

**Attend Fellowship Events:** Participate in regular meetings with LATXSGPs and OAP, including:

- An OA Training Session (Location TBD) during the fellowship
- Attend and present at one relevant national meeting.

**Acknowledge Support:** Acknowledge the OAP and LATXSGPs, as well as the OA Graduate Research Fellowship support in all relevant presentations and publications.

## HOW TO APPLY

### *Intent to Apply*

All applicants are strongly encouraged to contact their state Sea Grant Program Director for initial interest and general guidance. Contact Mia Zwolinski at Texas Sea Grant and Katie Lea at Louisiana Sea Grant to discuss the specifics of the application process on eSeaGrant (contact information below).

### *Application Guidelines*

Although awards will be made to the academic institution with the faculty advisor(s) listed as the PI, students are expected to take a leadership role in developing their application, including writing the research proposal, developing a budget, and engaging with their institution's sponsored programs office. Students are responsible for routing the proposal through their institution's sponsored programs office, and for obtaining all required institutional endorsements before submitting to the LATXSGPs.

Adherence to the format requirements is mandatory, and ensures fairness in the review process across all proposals. Proposals not meeting the format requirements may be rejected without review. Several sections have specific page limits. Do not exceed the page limits; excess pages will not be reviewed. Only the requested materials should be submitted; additional documents (e.g., appendices, letters of support, etc.) will not be reviewed. An announcement and this RFP can be found on each participating state Sea Grant program's website under "Ocean Acidification Graduate Research Fellowship". Guidance, forms and templates, and access to eSeaGrant for proposal submission can be found on the respective Louisiana and Texas Sea Grant websites. See links to websites at the end of this announcement.

For application elements A, B, C, F, and H (described below) use Calibri or Times New Roman fonts, no smaller than 11 point. Margins must be at least one inch on standard 8.5 by 11 inch paper throughout these sections. Please include the name of the student in a header or footer on all pages.

### *Application Elements*

Each application must include two major sections with the following elements in this sequence:

#### **PART 1**

- A. ***Signed Title and Research Abstract 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 LATXSGP and matching funds requested for each project year must also be listed. The title page should include a Research Abstract of up to 200 words, summarizing the research project the student will be working on during the fellowship that encompasses objectives, methodology and rationale. Required institutional signatures (Principal Investigator and Authorized Institutional Representative) should be included on the title page; these are often provided by institutional sponsored program offices or equivalent to verify that the institution has reviewed the application. Title Page can be

found on eSeaGrant of the respective Louisiana and Texas Sea Grant Programs (see links at the end of this announcement).

- B. **Career and Professional Development Goal Statement** (*one-page maximum*): The statement should describe the student's educational and professional goals and ambitions, professional growth interests and objectives, and 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 the student's short- (1-5yr) and long-term (>5yr) goals and in particular, how this fellowship would contribute toward those goals. The student should address their leadership potential, communication ability, stakeholder engagement interests or experience, and include any pertinent information that provides insights into their past choices and future interests. The student should illustrate what motivates them today and moving forward with their research and its applications. The LATXSGPs encourage students to include what they hope to gain from their professional mentor relationship, and how that contributes toward their long-term academic and professional goals.
- C. **Professional Mentor and Outreach Plan** (*one-page maximum*): The outreach plan should be developed with both the student's faculty advisor and professional mentor to identify specific objectives of the professional mentoring and outreach activities to be conducted during the fellowship. What does the student hope to gain professionally and academically from the specific outreach activities proposed in the outreach plan? What are the connections between the student's research and the needs and interests of an end-user, and how will the student make these connections happen? Who are the target audiences for the outreach activities on the student's research? What deliverables will the student produce once the research is completed? What deliverables may be planned for after the fellowship, and why are these the best options for the student's target audience(s)? How will the student and the professional mentor interact to achieve these goals (e.g., frequency, timeline, means of communication, topics, etc.)?
- D. **Professional Mentor Letter of Commitment**: The professional mentor letter should indicate a commitment to mentor the student, and include a description of the role the mentor will play in the fellow's academic and professional experience. It is recommended that students identify a single professional mentor. The proposed professional mentor may submit the letter either to the student to be included with the application, or submitted separately through eSeaGrant (see *Recommendation Letter* section below). The letter must be submitted before the deadline. There is no page limit, but the sponsors recommend that they not exceed two pages, and not include attachments.
- E. **Recommendation Letters** (*submitted separately*): Two letters of recommendation should be submitted in support of the student. To maintain confidentiality, letters should NOT be submitted with the student's application; instead, letters should be uploaded to eSeaGrant by their authors to the respective Sea Grant Program website. One letter of recommendation should come from the student's faculty advisor who will serve as the PI on the OA Graduate Research Fellowship award the applicant will be working on during the fellowship. Co-advisors may submit a joint letter, or they may submit separate letters. However, each student is limited to two recommendation letters. There is no page limit for

letters, but the LATXSGPs and OAP recommend that letters not exceed two pages and not include attachments. Referees are encouraged to consider the student's:

- academic and professional performance, including record and relevant experience
- academic and professional potential for future success, including research and professional activities in integrated, trans-disciplinary settings
- responsibility, motivation, integrity, and creativity
- teamwork and leadership skills and potential, and ability to identify and understand the *big picture*, and connections among perspectives
- interest and competencies in the science-to-management process, science communication to non-experts, and capabilities and issues of relevance to their mentor relationship, and outreach activities

For the second letter of recommendation, students are encouraged to consider someone who might know them from a different perspective (e.g., former employer, mentor from a previous relevant internship, someone the student has worked with on an outreach or policy project). It is most important to select someone who will write a strong letter for the student, but an "outside" perspective helps to demonstrate the student's diversity and will likely highlight different strengths and experiences.

- F. **Resumes/CVs** (*two-page maximum per Resume/CV*): A brief CV or resume should be included for the student, faculty advisor(s), and professional mentor. Do not include the CVs of committee members, other associated project participants, or others.
- G. **Undergraduate and Graduate School Transcripts** Unofficial copies of transcripts are acceptable but should clearly indicate name of institution, degree program, courses taken, and GPAs. Transcripts should be included in reverse chronological order (i.e., newest transcripts first).

## PART 2

- H. **Project Narrative** (*four-page maximum, including figures, tables, and other graphics but excluding literature cited and data management plan*): Project title and name of student must be included in the header. The narrative is intended to be a brief summary of the proposed thesis or area of study but should include sufficient detail to evaluate the appropriateness and relevance of the research and outreach approach, and the alignment of the project with the missions of LATXSGPs and OAP.

The narrative should include the following subsections:

- **Introduction**: Provide background information, rationale for the research project, and how the proposed project addresses the research priorities linked to this RFP.
- **Research Plan**: This section should briefly describe the research methods, approaches, and techniques that will be used to meet the project's objectives. Students should describe the experimental design, data sources to be used, how data will be accessed, and any facilities and equipment requirements. Students clearly describe how their research goals, objectives and tasks align with their milestone chart (see below).
- **Outcomes and Broader Societal Impacts**: Describe the research results to be achieved by the project, how these results relate to current knowledge of the topic, and of what

use the research and results will be for specific audiences or end-users. What difference will the research make to society?

- **Fellowship Milestone Chart / Timeline:** Provide a timeline of research, professional development, and outreach activities and accomplishments the student hopes to achieve over the duration of the fellowship. This should include the initial outline of a research and individualized professional mentor and outreach plan. It is expected this chart will align with the research objectives and will be expanded in consultation with the professional mentor and faculty advisor as the research project evolves.
  - **Research Team and Coordination:** Briefly describe the research team and their roles and responsibilities, including the role of the student and the faculty advisor(s).
  - **Literature Cited** (does not count toward page limit).
  - **Data Management Plan** (does not count toward page limit): As required by NOAA Data Sharing Policy for Grants and Cooperative Agreements Procedural Directive (Version 3.0, March 2016) and NOAA's Public Access to Research Results Plan ([http://www.glerl.noaa.gov/review2016/reviewer\\_docs/NOAA\\_PARR\\_Plan\\_v5.04.pdf](http://www.glerl.noaa.gov/review2016/reviewer_docs/NOAA_PARR_Plan_v5.04.pdf)); all proposals must include a data management plan, which is compliant with PARR). The LATXSGPs must ensure all environmental data collected with Sea Grant support are made publicly available in a timely manner and the OAP requires funded PIs to archive their data with National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI) in the OA data portal. The data management plan, no more than two pages in length, should specify the plan for making environmental data available and interpretable, free of charge or at minimal cost, within two years of collection. A detailed data management plan will describe how metadata and data collected as part of the project will be disseminated to the broader community, and will describe plans for longer term archiving of these data. NCEI serves as the data management focal point for the NOAA OA P (<http://www.nodc.noaa.gov/oceanacidification/index.html>). All data resulting from NOAA OAP-funded projects must be archived and accessible through NCEI. Note that during project reporting, LATXSGPs may request information regarding any data requests students have received. Although not required, students are encouraged to consider identifying and pursuing possible databases for long-term archiving of their environmental data prior to application submission. If the project will not generate environmental data, it is sufficient to include a sentence saying so.
  - **National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Abbreviated Environmental Compliance Questionnaire Form** (does not count toward page limit): A completed form will be required by all applicants. [See link](#).
- I. **Budget and Budget Justification:** Fellowships are for two years with \$46,000 available each year. The budget should include \$40,000 each year for stipend, tuition, and fees; \$6,000 is available for travel, supplies, and other expenses. Required travel expenses include funds to attend OA Training Week expenses in year one, and travel to attend at least one relevant national/international conference to present results in year two. Facilities & Administrative (F&A) costs, also known as indirect or overhead, are NOT allowable on Sea Grant fellowships per federal regulation (15 C.F.R. § 917.11). For this fellowship, LATXSGPs and OAP require an annual non-federal match of at least \$11,500. Only non-federal funds

may be committed as matching contribution. In-kind contributions, unrecovered F&A, faculty salaries, and tuition (if allowed by applicant institutions) are all examples of match. Budgets should be developed in the 90-4 budget worksheet (available on Texas and Louisiana eSeaGrant websites, see links at end of the announcement). The budget justification must be a detailed description of each cost item in the 90-4 budget; additional guidance is available on the respective websites. The sponsors strongly encourage applicants to work with their institution's research administration office or sponsored programs office to develop their budgets.

In addition, include a paragraph at the beginning of the Budget Justification detailing the in-kind or leveraged support. This paragraph should provide an explanation of how the proposed research is being supported outside of the fellowship. This may include sources of in-kind support (e.g. agency, organizations, university programs, etc.) and how they are supporting the proposed research. Students are expected to use the project narrative to demonstrate the feasibility of implementing the proposed work, this section will be used to assess if there is adequate funding to complete the proposed work.

### *Application Submission*

Applications must be submitted online via respective eSeaGrant of your state Sea Grant Program ([Texas eSeaGrant](#) or [Louisiana eSeaGrant](#)) by **5:00 pm ET on Friday, April 17, 2020**. We strongly recommend registering for eSeaGrant at least two weeks in advance of the deadline. Beforehand, please notify your state Sea Grant Program with a short, simple email expressing your interest in the fellowship. Please reference "Ocean Acidification Graduate Research Fellowship" in the subject line (see contact information at end of announcement). Instructions on how to register and start an application on eSeaGrant are included below. Additional instructions can be found on the eSeaGrant websites hosted by [Texas Sea Grant](#) and [Louisiana Sea Grant](#).

### *Submitting an Application on eSeaGrant*

Students should carefully review the eSeaGrant submission guidance document located on the Texas and Louisiana Sea Grant Fellowship websites listed at end of this document. Students can register for eSeaGrant by visiting the respective state Sea Grant Program websites ([Texas eSeaGrant](#) or [Louisiana eSeaGrant](#)), selecting the "Register" tab, and completing the required information. If the student does not receive a "welcome" email with login credentials shortly after registering, please contact Mia Zwolinski at Texas Sea Grant and Katie Lea at Louisiana Sea Grant (see contact information below).

To start a fellowship application, or edit an existing application, the student should click on "Current Tasks" on the banner head, and select "Add Fellowship Application" under "2020 Ocean Acidification Graduate Research Fellowship." Once the student has added the fellowship application to their Current Tasks, the student must progress down through the sequence of application sections ("Start Here" through "Submission Preview") listed on the left side of the window to submit the 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.



All application elements must be converted to PDF documents before uploading to eSeaGrant. Adherence to the format requirements and page limits is mandatory, and ensures fairness across all applications. Applications not meeting these requirements may be rejected without review.

To preserve confidentiality, letters of recommendations must be uploaded directly from the referees to the sponsors through eSeaGrant. Students must identify and submit requests to their referees through eSeaGrant, by entering their names and email addresses on the corresponding section.

All elements, including recommendation letters, must be submitted by the deadline. The sponsors will not accept late applications under any circumstances (e.g., internet delays), so please allow ample time to submit applications in advance of the deadline. Confirmation of the application and recommendation letters will be automatically generated and sent by eSeaGrant. If the student does not receive confirmation shortly after submitting the application, please contact Mia Zwolinski at Texas Sea Grant and Katie Lea at Louisiana Sea Grant.

## REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

### *Stage 1 Professional Potential and Technical Review Panel*

The sponsors will assemble a review panel to evaluate the fellowship applications in terms of: 1) the student's academic and professional performance and potential; and 2) the application's scientific, technical and outreach relevance to Sea Grant and OAP. Relevant components to be considered by the panel include the student's professional mentor and outreach plan, research and regional relevance of the research. Each component will be evaluated separately. Overall scoring of the application will be weighted as follows: 40% technical and relevance; 20% leadership potential; 20% communication and problem solving skills; and 20% outreach and professional mentor engagement. The panel will summarize each application review into two categories: 1) qualification of student (qualified; somewhat qualified; not qualified); and 2) quality of the science (fundable; not fundable). Qualification of student will be scored on leadership potential, communication and problem solving skills and outreach and professional mentor engagement. The quality of the science will be scored on the technical and relevance component, as well as the outreach and professional mentor engagement.

### *Stage 2 Final Selection Panel*

A committee comprised of the LATXSGPs Directors and representatives from the National Sea Grant Office and OAP will then select fellows for each state. The committee will review all application elements and will take into consideration the pre-panel application scores and the panel rankings (qualification of applicant and quality of science). Discussion elements include the research plan, professional potential, relevance to region and each state, and broader societal impact(s). A fellow from each state will be selected, if qualified. All Sea Grant awards are contingent upon the availability and timeliness of federal appropriations.

## TENTATIVE TIMELINE FOR FELLOWSHIP COMPETITION

Fellowship announcement released

March 2020

Applications due by 5:00 p.m. EST	April 17, 2020
Stage 1 – Professional Potential and Technical Review Panel	May 2020
Stage 2 –Final Selection Panel	May 2020
Notification of results	June 2020
Awards begin	September 1, 2020

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

All interested students are strongly encouraged to contact their state Sea Grant Program to indicate their interest in the fellowship and for general questions. Students should contact Mia Zwolinski at Texas Sea Grant and Katie Lea at Louisiana Sea Grant for technical questions regarding the application process, including eSeaGrant and document templates.

## CONTACTS

### **Louisiana Sea Grant**

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### **Texas Sea Grant**

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### **Ocean Acidification Program**

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### **National Sea Grant Office**

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