

SEA GRANT KNAUSS MARINE POLICY FELLOWSHIP

Manual for Finalists and Fellows

2011-2012

Page	
2	Introduction
3	Pre-Placement Week
4	Arriving in D.C.
5	Placement Process
7	Sample Placement Week Itinerary
9	After Placement Week
12	Host Relationship
13	Essentials
14	Guide for Legislative Fellows
17	Guide for Executive Fellows
18	Housing
19	Housing 101
24	Contacts

Introduction

Purpose of the Sea Grant Knauss Fellowship Program

The Sea Grant (SG) Dean John A. Knauss Marine Policy Fellowship provides a unique educational experience to students enrolled in graduate programs in fields related to ocean, coastal and Great Lakes resources and in the national policy decisions affecting those resources. The program matches outstanding graduate students with “Hosts” in legislative or executive branch offices located in the Washington, D.C. area, for a one-year paid Fellowship.

History of the Sea Grant Knauss Fellowship Program

In 1979, the National Sea Grant Office (NSGO), in fulfilling its broad educational responsibilities, implemented the National SG Federal Fellows program to initially provide an educational experience in the policies and processes of the Legislative Branch of the Federal Government. Later, the program was expanded to provide opportunities within the Executive Branch of the Federal Government in the Washington, D.C. area. Recognizing the value of this program, in 1987 the U.S. Congress stipulated in P.L. 100-220 that the SG Federal Fellows Program become a formal part of the National Sea Grant College Program Act. The recipients are designated Dean John A. Knauss Marine Policy Fellows in honor of one of SG’s founders and former NOAA Administrator, John A. Knauss [33 U.S.C. 1127 (b)].

Calendar of Application Process

February

Students submit applications to the state SG Program Directors by the deadline set in the NSGO program’s federal funding opportunity announcement.

April

Sponsoring state SG Directors submit applications for the national competition for up to six qualified students to the NSGO.

May

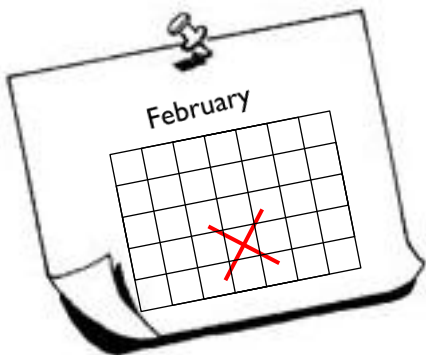
All SG Directors will be notified of the national competition selection results. Following notification, each state SG Director will contact and notify their applicants with the results.

November

Placement Week. Finalists are required to attend interviews with Hosts in Washington, D.C.

February

The first Monday of February, the new class of Fellows begins their assignments



Pre-Placement Week

Money

Make sure you have about \$2000 to set aside for expenses (hotel, travel, food, etc.). You may be able to get a cash advance-check with your state SG Office. Find out how long it will take to get reimbursed, as it may take several weeks. Make sure you save all your receipts during placement week.

Host

Read the Host offerings and look up the offices on the web. Remember, Fellows are not allowed to contact Host Offices, but you can contact current Fellows and ask them questions about their position or experiences. It is important that no finalist has an advantage (or even a perceived advantage) over other finalists; conversely, hosts should be on a level playing field as well.

Recommended Attire

Be prepared to wear suits or other conservative, professional attire. You may want to bring comfortable shoes to wear in between interviews and during transit time, as you will be doing a lot of walking this week.

Men - Suit with dress shirt and tie; business casual would be a non-suit, i.e. a dress jacket (blazer, etc.) with dress slacks, dress shirt, and tie (optional). Dress shoes are an obvious component as well, and make sure that you break them in in advance. Two suits should be plenty for the boys.

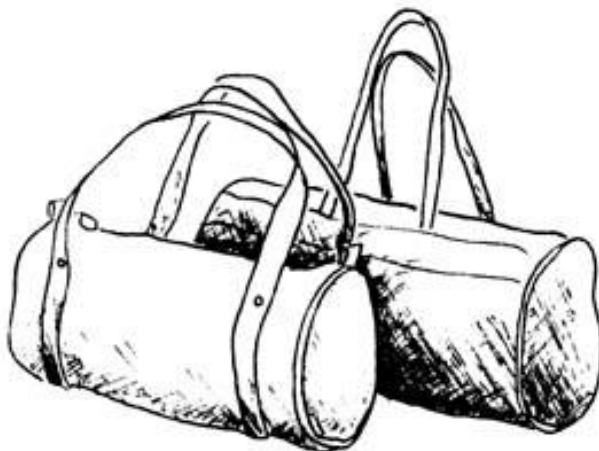
Women - Suits (pants or skirts) with a blouse. Pantyhose is appropriate with skirt suits. Business casual would be slacks or skirt with blouse or dress sweater.

Bottom line: You want to dress according to how you want to be perceived by the Hosts.

Business dress is recommended for Monday through Friday of Placement Week, particularly on days you will be interviewing: 2 days for Leg. Finalists and 2.5 days for Exec. Finalists.

As for other attire, the first night of Placement Week (Sunday night) is dinner and Hosts won't be there. Business casual is okay that night as well as each night that we have evening activities. Feel free to bring athletic attire if you want to go for a run or want to work out. The hotel is 5 blocks from the Mall and you can easily run up and down the Mall to the monuments, etc.

There is no need to bring any part of your application package to your interviews during Placement Week unless you would like to review what you have written. All of your application packages are on file and stored in electronic form. Hosts will have access to your application package via the password-protected website. It is their responsibility to have your application package on hand as a resource for your interviews.



Arriving in D.C.

During the week of November 14-19, 2010 (for the Class of 2011), Finalists are required to travel to Washington, D.C. for interviews with Hosts. This trip is funded by the sponsoring state SG program for up to \$2,000 from the Fellowship award. Your expenses for Placement Week will be out-of-pocket and you will be reimbursed by your local SG program.

Finalists will spend the week in The Four Points By Sheraton (1201 K Street N.W. · Washington, District of Columbia 20005). Information on how to make a reservation will be released nearer the date.

<http://www.starwoodhotels.com/fourpoints/property/overview/index.html?propertyID=1237>

It is advised that you arrive at the hotel in D.C. by 4 PM on Sunday the 14th of November to give enough time to get to the hotel, settled, and ready for the Finalists' dinner on Sunday night. Dinner on Sunday evening (Nov 14, 2010) will start around 5 PM. Back-calculating from there, you will need to leave the hotel by 4:30 PM. This means that arrival into Washington National Airport around 3 PM will give you plenty of time to get to the hotel by 4 PM. Flying into Dulles International Airport or Baltimore/Washington International Airport will translate into a 1.5 hr. minimum to get to the hotel.

It is recommended that you stay at the hotel during Placement Week for the following reasons:

- a. For Legislative Finalists, you will be in close proximity to your interviews on the Hill.
- b. For Executive Finalists, you will be in close proximity to Metro Center station (Red Line) and several interviews downtown (EPA, State, Commerce, NASA, FWS).
- c. Your proximity to these various places will be a major convenience to you. The hotel is easy to get to by public transportation from either National Airport (DCA) or Dulles International Airport (IAD).
- d. Staying at the hotel with the other Finalists will allow you to meet and mingle with them, share experiences and thoughts on the week as it progresses. This is an important interaction as you will formulate impressions, talk to your Finalist colleagues, re-form those initial impressions, and so on. You'll find your colleague's impressions to be informative and influential as you move through your interviews. You'll also enjoy getting to know your colleagues and your predecessors. You'll get an opportunity to do this during the week's evening activities at locations around D.C. which will be in close proximity to the hotel.
- e. You'll be in close proximity to the SG Knauss Manager and the rest of the SG staff during the week, allowing you to ask questions etc.

Placement Process

By the first week of November, the NSGO will make available via its website (<http://www.seagrant.noaa.gov/knauss/knaussplacementweek.html>) information detailing with the Placement Week process. Information will include current Fellows' assignments, information about Finalists' interviews with Hosts (Placement Week), and information from the present class about lessons learned, housing possibilities, personal experiences, and other pertinent information. Selected applicants are known as Finalists, and technically do not become Fellows until they have been interviewed by Host Offices, been accepted by a Host Office, had that acceptance ratified by the NSGO, and the grant awarded by the NOAA Grants Office.

At the start of Placement Week, Host Offices will provide a 10 minute presentation to the Finalists outlining the principle duties of the office and the role the Fellow would play in that office. Hosts will also include their availability during the week for interviews, the location of the interviews, and the person conducting the interviews. One half hour is allocated for each interview.

Finalists can sign up to interview with every Host Office in which the Finalist is interested based on the opinions formed from the Host position descriptions (on the database), the Congressional Research Service briefing for the Legislative Finalists (it will describe the difference between House vs. Senate, personal vs. committee offices), current fellows briefing, and the Host presentations. It is encouraged to interview with as many Host Offices as possible given the factors above as it never hurts to interview and find out what each office is all about. It is well within reason to sign up for 12-15 interviews but it would be ambitious to do more than 20 interviews. Additional interviews may be requested during the Tuesday through Thursday interview period. Contact a Fellowship leader to determine Host availability.

If there are new activities, achievements that you want hosts to know about that aren't on your resume or in your application package, bring this up verbally in your interviews. There's no need to update your resumes/CVs for Placement Week. Giving hosts a verbal update on your credentials will suffice and it will also serve as a good conversation starter.

Preparing for Interviews

- Stay relaxed, be flexible, and stay open-minded.
- Don't pre-determine where you want to be placed.
- Remember this week, as well as the Fellowship itself, is an educational opportunity for you.
- Ask lots of questions.
- Remember that the Hosts want you, you don't have to sell your self like you do in a job interview.
- Contact the current Fellow in the office (if there is one),
- Make sure you can interview or speak with co-workers and your potential immediate supervisor,
- Check to see if the office accepts international students (if applicable)

This section continues on the next page.

Placement Process

On the Friday of Placement Week, Finalists will be notified of the Host Office rankings, and Hosts and Finalists should reach their agreement on Friday, finalizing arrangements Friday afternoon.

After the placement meeting on Friday the remainder of the day should be spent making final arrangements and obtaining signatures on the ratification document. Finalists and Hosts must not make commitments and/or agreements concerning placement before group placement on Friday. This ensures an opportunity for the greatest possible interaction between Finalists and Hosts leading to optimal arrangements. Finalists will meet with the SG Knauss Program Manager to resolve any discrepancies or problems.

It is the principal responsibility of each Finalist to identify an appropriate Host who will accept the Fellow for the following year. The NSGO will assist in this process by providing counsel, but cannot ensure placement in every case. Immediately following ratification of all positions, the NSGO will send an email notification to Hosts, Fellows, and SG Directors as to the final placements. Fellows will start their assignments the first Monday of February. Upon acceptance, Fellows have committed to the Fellowship program for a full year. Early withdrawal from the program (unless approved by the SG Knauss Program Manager) is deemed unacceptable and will forfeit the status and privileges of the Fellowship.

The draft interview week agenda can be found on the next page.

Sample Placement Week Itinerary



Sunday

5:00 pm Dinner
6:00 pm Welcome and Overview of Orientation Week

Monday

Executive Finalists

6:30 am Breakfast at hotel
7:00 am Depart hotel to travel to Silver Spring
7:30 am Meeting in the NOAA NOAA Science Center
7:45 am Overview of day and briefing by potential Hosts
6:15 pm Final group discussion

Legislative Finalists

6:30 am Breakfast at hotel begins
7:30 am Depart hotel to travel to D.C.
8:15 am Congressional Research Service (CRS) workshop at the Library of Congress (LOC)
12:30 pm Lunch
1:30 pm Resume CRS orientation
5:00 pm CRS Seminar Adjourn

6:30 -8:30 pm Evening event in Silver Spring

Tuesday

Executive Finalists

6:30 am Breakfast at hotel
7:30 am Travel to Silver Spring NOAA Science Center
8:00 am Schedule interviews with potential Hosts
1:00 pm Begin interviews with potential Hosts
6:00 pm Interviews end for the day

Legislative Finalists

7:30 am Breakfast at hotel
8:30 am Travel to the Hill
9:00 am Briefing/discussion with current Fellowship class
11:50 am Lunch
12:50 pm Briefing by potential Hosts
3:30 to 4:30 Schedule interviews with potential Hosts*

6:30 -8:30 pm Evening event in D.C.

Wednesday

7:00 am Breakfast at hotel begins (SG Staff available to talk)

Executive Finalists

8:00 am Continue interviews with potential Hosts

Legislative Finalists

9:00 am Begin interviews with potential Hosts

6:00 pm Interviews end for the day
6:30 -8:30 pm Evening event in Silver Spring

Sample Placement Week Itinerary

Thursday

7:00 am Breakfast at hotel begins (Sea Grant Staff available to talk)

Executive Finalists

8:00 am Continue interviews with potential Hosts

4:00 pm Interviews end

Legislative Finalists

9:00 am Continue interviews with potential Hosts

6:00 pm Interviews end for the day

6:30 -8:30 pm Evening event

Friday, November 20

6:30 am Breakfast at the hotel begins

Executive Finalists

6:30 am Host Selection Lists due via email

7:30 am Travel to Silver Spring NOAA Science Center

8:30 am Arrange office placements

12:00 pm NOAA Security and Housing briefing (for NOAA-based Fellows)

1:00 pm Obtain signatures on ratification document and discuss new assignments

Legislative Finalists

9:00 am Continue interviewing with potential Hosts

11:00 am Interviews End

11:30 pm Host Selection Lists due via email

1:30 pm Arrange placements

3:30 pm Obtain signatures and discuss new assignments

6:00 pm ALL RATIFICATION documents returned to the NSGO or designated location

6:00-8:30 pm Evening event



After Placement Week

Health Insurance

Health Insurance coverage is mandatory. Check with the local SG program as to what possibilities are available, if any. Documentation of Health Care coverage needs to be on record with the sponsoring SG program.

- Start checking into this soon-it may take 6-8 weeks for an application to be processed. Depending on your school you may qualify for health insurance through your university.
- Find out about your status (student/non-student) through your university.
- When checking into health insurance, look into the following things:
 - Local/private providers
 - Deductible/co-pay
 - Local treatment if using a program from your own state.

Health insurance costs are covered by the \$9,000 non-stipend funds that come with the fellowship. Moving expenses and fellowship travel are also part of that \$9,000. Second, here's how you get the health insurance ball rolling:

- a. Call your state SG program and check to see if they enroll their fellows in a health insurance plan. Some SG programs will put their fellows on the same health insurance plan as other state SG employees (technically, you are an employee of your state SG program or your college/university, depending on how your money flows to you). If the SG program does in fact enroll you in their program, work with them on the details of how those premiums are paid, the details of the plans, etc. If not, go to step b.
- b. Most fellows not covered by your state SG program will search out health insurance on their own. Some will enroll in a policy in their home state before coming to D.C. Others will enroll in a plan once they get to D.C. There's no conventional wisdom here and where you enroll may depend on how long your current policy runs. Be sure to check on the dates of your current plan as well as the terms of potential plans you're shopping. You want to avoid a lapse in coverage.
- c. Married? If you're married and your spouse has his/her own health insurance plan, you might be able to get incorporated into your spouse's plan. This would circumvent the need to enroll in a policy for just yourself and would free up more money in your \$9,000 for moving expenses and travel.

Your host office does not cover your health insurance.



This section continues on the next page.

After Placement Week

E-mail

E-mail-make sure you are in e-mail contact between the placement week and the start of the Fellowship. Use yahoo, gmail, hotmail, etc. if you're no longer in your school e-mail system.

Pay

Get your payroll paperwork done before you leave your home state. This will help ensure that you get your first paycheck in a timely manner. There have been instances where Fellows did not receive their first paycheck until March 1st or later because of paperwork problems. Make sure that you have spoken to your state SG program about your payments, and have followed their instructions.

Taxes

Neither your state SG program nor the National SG Office are allowed to give tax advice. Thus, we suggest you consult with a tax advisor. Here are some things to think about:

1. In which state should I be paying tax?
2. Will state or federal taxes be taken out of my paycheck?
3. Do I need to estimate them and pay quarterly (or pay penalties)? Here's how: www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p505.pdf

To register to vote in your new locale,

In Maryland: <http://www.mdarchives.state.md.us/msa/mdmanual/41electp/html/local.html>

(You'll have to navigate to your county, but this site provides all sorts of useful government info.)

In DC: <http://www.dcboee.org/>

In Virginia: <http://www.sbe.state.va.us/>

To locate a vehicle registration office, register your car, or get a new driver's license:

In Maryland: <http://mva.state.md.us/>

In DC: <http://dmv.washingtondc.gov/main.shtm>

In Virginia: <http://www.dmv.state.va.us/>

If you get a new driver's license in VA, there is an option to either put your Social Security Number (SSN) or a "Control" number on your license. The Alexandria police strongly suggest getting that control number. They report that the biggest crime wave that they are seeing is identity theft — and that it is a direct result of robbing an innocent of their wallet containing a license with attached SSN.

This section continues on the next page.

After Placement Week

Parking:

If you are going to have a car here, be prepared to pay extra. Apartments will charge more if off-street parking is provided, and on-street parking can be very limited in some neighborhoods. If you need to do on-street parking, you will need to get a permit from the D.C. Department of Motor Vehicles that will allow you to park anywhere in your 'zone' of the city. The annual fee for this permit is cheaper for cars registered in DC (more expensive for non-DC registration). See <http://dmv.washingtondc.gov/serv/parking.shtml> for more info.

Gyms (On the Hill)

There are 3 gyms on the hill. Results and Washington Sports Club (WSC) are both about \$79/month and have a sign-up fee. They both run specials on the sign-up fee only. Results has more equipment and classes than WSC, so it is worth the money. There is a Gold's Gym across from the Ford Building, about half the price of the others, and it's convenient if you work for the House Resources committee. There is a free community pool next to the Eastern Market. There are also many groups for a variety of sports (e.g., Potomac Running Club, Capitol Hill Tennis Club), so be sure to ask around.

(In Silver Spring)

There is a gym facility in building 3 at NOAA. It costs about \$22/month but must be paid in 6-month increments, and has a sign-up fee. The only draw back to this gym is that it is open from Mo-Fri 6:30 AM - 7:00 PM (hours vary some seasonally). The website is <http://www.noaafitness.net>. Silver Spring also has a YMCA located near the beltway on Georgia Ave. The monthly fee varies depending on household or individual memberships and it has a sign-up fee as well. This gym has an indoor and outdoor swimming pool, offers classes, and has weights. There is also a Gold's Gym in the City Place shopping center.

NOAA/NIH has many social clubs that you can join to meet fellow employees while enjoying a favorite activity. Some of these clubs include Aikido, Badminton, Theater, Bicycle Commuter, Camera, Chamber Music, Chi-Kung, Country Line Dancing, Fencing, Golf, Running, Hiking, Tennis, Yoga, Softball, Sailing, and Ski clubs.

For more information, to propose a new NOAA/NIH club or activity, or to get the name of a contact person for a particular group, visit <http://www.recgov.org/r&w/clubs.html>

Banking

Set up a bank account locally as soon as you have a local address and set up direct deposit. This will save you a lot of headaches and the wait for checks from your university. Department of Commerce has a credit union. Many of the other agencies do too. Credit Unions are generally low or no cost, but may have limited hours. Other large local banks include Bank of America, Citibank, FirstUnion/Wacovia, Chevy Chase Bank.

Re-confirm the start date with your Host. This will serve two purposes. It will remind them that you are coming and give you an opportunity to ask about any necessary reading, opportunities to visit the office prior to the start, or possible early travel opportunities with your Host.

Host Relationship

Specific Items Requested of the Fellow

- Maintain contact with the Host Office and supervisor prior to arrival. Arrange start date with the Host Office.
- At the start of the Fellowship, review office policies including work hours; time needed (if any) for work on school commitments; vacation; sick leave; and attendance at Fellowship functions, conferences, hearings, and meetings.
- Arrange and coordinate activities listed above (conference attendance, Fellowship activities, vacation, etc) with the Host Office/supervisor in advance.
- Fellows are asked to make their expectations clear with respect to the items above.

Conflict Resolutions

Participation in the Fellowship program is a privilege not a right for both Fellows and Host Offices. To earn this privilege, Fellows must continue to justify this benefit by demonstrating diligence and adaptability to the Host environment. Likewise, the Host Office should be sensitive to the Fellow's educational needs. The SG Knauss Program Manager, after due consultation with and consideration of the mutual rights and interests of the Fellow, the Host, the sponsoring SG Director, and NSGO, will adjudicate problems that may arise.

Early Withdrawal from the Program

Situations may arise over the course of the Fellowship year in which a Fellow decides to leave the program early. This may be due to personal reasons, conflicts with a Host, or to move on to an employment opportunity. Each situation will be handled on a case by case basis. There will be an open discussion between the Host, Fellow, and the SG Knauss Program Manager to determine the Fellow's transition out of the program in a way that is acceptable to all parties. Fellows that do not complete the Fellowship will not be considered alumni.

Essentials

Reporting Requirements

SG Knauss Fellows will be administratively responsible to their sponsoring SG Directors during their terms in Washington, D.C., but must be responsive to the administrative and technical needs of the Host to whom they report. The role of the SG Knauss Program Manager in the NSGO is one of ombudsman between the Fellow, the Host, the SG Program, and the sponsoring institution.

The SG Knauss Program Manager will conduct a personal mid-year review with all of the Hosts. Regular contact with Fellows will occur throughout the year. If a conflict arises, a meeting with the SG Knauss Program Manager will be scheduled. The NSGO requires an Exit Evaluation Report from each Fellow that discusses his/her experience, particularly as it relates to meeting his/her education objectives.

Start Date

The start date is flexible within 1-2 weeks of February 1. There have been fellows in the past who have needed to start earlier or later due to school- or personal-related matters. The fellowship would simply run 364 days from the time that you start (e.g. Start: Feb 1, 2011; End: Jan. 31, 2012). Having said that, it is strongly recommended that you inform Hosts during Placement Week of your scheduling needs. While Hosts are understanding and flexible on this issue, they prefer not to have any surprises. It is standard for offices to think about their staffing schedules well in advance. Bottom line: Be forthcoming about your scheduling needs with the hosts during Placement Week and all will be fine.

Travel Requests

The additional \$9,000 will be used to cover mandatory health insurance for the Fellow and moving expenses. Any remaining funds shall be used during the Fellowship year to satisfy academic degree-related activities, and for Fellowship-related activities respectively. During the year, the Executive Hosts may provide supplemental expenses for work-related travel by the Fellow, i.e., conferences, workshops, short courses, or similar opportunities. Legislative Hosts, due to their rules, cannot pay for any Fellow's travel.

The Host and the sponsoring SG Director must approve all travel in advance. A letter of request (paper or email) should be initiated by the Fellow and approved by the Host. This request will be sent to the SG Director, explaining the reason for the trip and approximate costs. This process must be completed well in advance to ensure adequate opportunity for the Host and SG Director's comment and approval. If the travel is in question, the SG Knauss Program Manager will mediate the situation as needed. All international travel will have to be approved by the SG Knauss Program Manager in advance.

Guide for Legislative Fellows

Working on the Hill

Office Policy: As soon as you start work, review your office's policy manual. It will be important to conform to office policy as much as possible, but remember that you are not an official employee of Congress so some rules (of course, those about pay or benefits) will not apply to you. Your office does not pay your salary (SG does), so they should accommodate your personal and educational needs (e.g., for days off) to a reasonable extent. Be flexible, as each office has their own approach for working with Fellows. On Senate committees, you will need to fill out quarterly forms verifying that you are paid from outside the Committee, so see your Chief Clerk about these.

Dress Code: When the member is not here and there are no votes scheduled, then the dress is often business casual. Even jeans are acceptable for some offices, unless you are meeting with someone. When the member is here or if floor votes are scheduled, business suits are required. For women, there is more flexibility in what is considered business attire — you will get a feeling for that once you are here — but a suit is always appropriate and often the easiest option. No printed t-shirts, but sandals are OK in some offices. Some offices will have more strict dress codes, so adapt as needed. Those of us who walk to work like to leave our dress shoes under our desks and wear comfy shoes back and forth.

Working Hours: Most offices work 9-6 in session, 9-5 in recess (at a minimum; days often run well into the evening). Be prepared to stay late (perhaps midnight or later) when your work is subject of ongoing floor debate. Sometimes the state time zone makes a difference (e.g., offices of western states may end later).

Days Off: Some offices will give you a set number of days; others will allow days off on an as-needed basis. Try to plan them out of session if possible.

Sick Days: If you get sick, there is a nurse in almost every building. Also, you can call in sick as needed.

Memos and Talking Points: Depending on your office, you may need to write many memos and talking points, up to several each day if a lot is happening. Memos, often one page long, are used to summarize information on evolving issues and update your member as well as other office staff. Talking points are generally short bullet lists of statements that your member can use to summarize his or her understanding of and perspectives on an issue. Each office will have different formats and preferences to guide the writing of memos and talking points. Few issues have never been brought up in Congress before, so if you need to write these, the subject is most likely somewhere on your hard drive in a document written by previous fellows or office staff. The best way of learning office style is to imitate or ask. Don't make more work for yourself by starting from scratch. If there is a corresponding one or two-page document, you can attach it to the memo.

This section continues on the next page.

Guide for Legislative Fellows

Constituent Mail: Some offices will require you to answer constituent mail. If you are on the House side, you may need to attend a Quorum class to learn how the mail system works. You can write form letters to answer 3 or more letters on the same topic, or you can write individual letters to answer 1 or 2 letters or VIPs. There are many examples of both types of letters available in your office from which you can learn.

Dear Colleagues: You may send and will receive many “Dear Colleague” letters. These are general paper/electronic letters that a member sends out to other members of Congress (or an appropriate subset, like members of coastal states) seeking to inform or gain support on a given topic. They generally contain information on what is being sought (for example, a signature on a letter) as well as background information on the issue. There are specific rules to follow when sending these from your office. Your office should already have a contact list that they often use to send out Dear Colleagues; if not, consider creating one.

One-Minutes: One-minutes are speeches a House member may make on the floor, generally related to legislation on the floor schedule for the day. These provide a good opportunity for your boss to comment on an issue.

Lobbyists: Part of your job will be meeting with lobbyists, who are usually based in DC and hired to represent a group in your district. They may dress and talk like they are from your district, but they may not be. They will generally schedule a meeting with you and possibly the member to inform you on an issue and will probably ask for an appropriations earmark. Try to give the member a memo on the group and their request prior to the meeting, if possible. Once you are in an office, you’ll need to learn any other office protocol about handling these meetings. Learn the rules for accepting gifts — there are limits on what you can accept for lunches, travel, entertainment, and other gifts.

Federal Budget: You will need to read the President’s budget when it comes out, probably in February, specifically the sections on NOAA, the Department of Interior’s Fish and Wildlife, and any other agencies relevant to your office. Be looking for items that affect your member’s state. This will lead right into appropriations.

Appropriations: See if you can find copies of what appropriations request letters were sent from your office last year. Definitely, look for requests to Commerce, Justice, State and the Judiciary, as well as any other types of requests. It is likely that a lot of last year’s requests will be repeated, so you need to know who asked for what and how much they got, if any, and how much the President’s budget allots for that area this year.

Congressional Research Service (CRS): The CRS is part of the legislative branch. CRS, which is a department of the Library of Congress, works exclusively as a nonpartisan analytical, research, and reference arm for Congress. The CRS will do research for you on any topic of interest to your Member or Committee. They also offer many types of orientations, seminars, and on-line briefing documents that may be useful to you. Take advantage of all the classes possible while working as Congressional staff. It will make your work life easier and the classes are FREE.

For more information see: <http://www.loc.gov/crsinfo/>

This section continues on the next page.

Guide for Legislative Fellows

As a staff member, you have access to borrow books from the Library of Congress for your personal use (e.g. they have a very complete and current selection of Lonely Planets).

Receptions: Keep aware of evening receptions offered by agencies and special interest groups, as they provide great networking opportunities. Also, the Congressional Legislative Staff Association (CLSA) hosts embassy events and briefings for a \$20 yearly membership, for which you can sign up here: <http://www.uscongressionalstaff.org/?sectionid=60§iontree=60>

Other Things to Know —

Capitol Tours: Staffers may give Capitol tours without a reservation by entering through the staff-led tour door. Reservations will make the process smoother, but even without one you may still have to wait in line.

Mail: All DC mail, even your home mail and FedEx, is now being irradiated, so it takes a little longer to get to you.

Resume Bullets: Consider adding some form of these to your resume:

- One of 10 graduate students chosen to manage legislative affairs involving oceans, fisheries, environment, energy, interior, and agriculture policy in a Congressional Office.
- Responsible for drafting and tracking legislation and appropriations requests; formulating position statements; writing speeches, testimony and floor statements; and responding to constituent requests.

Guide for Executive Fellows

Office Policy: As soon as you start work, review your office's pertinent documents. It will be important for you to understand the "official policy" of your office, as you are now a representative and will be working toward those objectives. In some offices, this may be more important than others. You should also be familiar with any legislation that guides your office or projects.

Dress Code: Individual offices have different dress codes. Generally, business casual is acceptable. Even jeans are acceptable for some offices, unless you are meeting with someone. For women, there is more flexibility in what is considered business attire — you will get a feeling for that once you are here — but khaki dress slacks (or skirt) are appropriate and often the easiest option. Sandals are OK in some offices. Some offices will have more strict dress codes, so adapt as needed. Ask the current or past Fellows if you need more guidance.

Working Hours: Some offices offer flextime or flex-hours. Each office policy will vary. Some offer 4 ten-hour days per week, others offer 9 nine-hour days, with the tenth day off. The standard, work hours are 5 eight-hour days. Check with your office to find out if there are core hours, flextime, or flex-hours.

Don't forget to take time for events (Fellowship-sponsored activities, Hill events, etc.) and talk to your supervisor about taking time off for these activities.

Days Off: Some offices will give you a set number of days; others will allow days off on an as-needed basis. There is no set policy. Ask what your office/supervisor will allow. Make sure you let your office know if you are planning to take time off for conferences or school. These do not count against your vacations days.

Sick Days: If you get sick, there is a nurse at SSMC #2 in the NOAA office in Silver Spring on the 9th floor. Also, you can call in sick as needed.

Security: Security will differ between agencies. In general, you will be required to wear a security badge. Be prepared for a full security check with the names and addresses of previous employers, roommates, and character references (and they do check).

If you are going to have visitors at work, you will need to notify security in advance. Each agency has a specific protocol for this, so ask your office.

Housing

Apartment Hunting

Realtors are helpful; often you can make an appointment and they can show you several places at once. Don't be afraid to ask people gardening if they know of any places available if you like the neighborhood — it's a good way to get someplace before it's in the paper. Spend plenty of time walking around looking for signs and explore all the options. Once you find a place you like, be prepared to pay a \$20-40 application fee.

Apartment Hunting Websites: Check out hillzoo.com, rollcall.com, yarmouthmanagement.com, johnformant.com, washingtoncitypaper.com (new listings online every Tuesday), and washingtonpost.com. Many DC-area universities also have on-line housing services that the public can access. Another company with good Hill rentals (but no website) is FitzGerald Properties based in McLean, VA.

Apartment Security: When looking for an apartment, walk by it at night to make sure you are comfortable with the neighborhood. Each police precinct has someone who will give you a crime report for that area.

The real estate section of <http://www.washingtonpost.com/> has detailed crime reports by area.

If you feel you need extra protection, the Alexandria Police department (and likely other cities as well) has FREE police inspections of your apartment for crime prevention



Housing 101

Contributor: Felix A. Martinez, Class of 2003

The purpose of this guide is not to tell you where to live but to help you make the decision yourself... wisely!

First, the timing of placement week and the beginning of the Fellowship year are unfortunately too far apart to effectively search for and secure a place that week. If you are not familiar with DC, you should take that week as an opportunity to learn about the city and its environments so you can decide where in general you would like to live for that year.

Another important thing is that if you do not come from a major metro area, be prepared for rental sticker shock. Your \$800 dollar, two bedroom apartment in Smallville, USA is a cardboard shack by the Greyhound depot in DC.

The three most important considerations when you look for housing should be:

- 1) How easy is it to get to work?
- 2) Will you treasure going out regularly in the evenings?
- 3) How much open space do you need?

We will try to tackle these first and then give some general tips on finding that place of your dreams.

The Commute

Where you choose to work should weigh heavily into where you live. Moving around the metro area is not really that bad as long as your commute does not involve driving on the beltway. However, parking for your car once you get to work can be scarce and very expensive. The best advice is to live within walking or biking distance. The DC area is not bike friendly per se, but it is also not bike hostile. Most office complexes will have some sort of gym/exercise room where you could shower (better yet workout) before work if need be.

Come winter, biking might get tricky so the metro will be your next best friend. The metro is very accessible from most of the cool neighborhoods to live in DC, but you need to consider that it does get crowded during rush hour (at least it's not remotely as bad as in Japan). Best bet is to minimize the number of stops you will need to take to get to work. On the other hand, if none of those things bother you, it would be a nice place to sit (if you start from one of the first stops) and read a book or the newspaper.

Note:

- Many people in downtown (even up at Silver Spring) do not own a car. You can always take a cab from the grocery store or rent a car if you want to get away for the weekend.
- Motorcycles can park for free in the Silver Spring campus parking lot.

This section continues on the next page.

Housing 101

Contributor: Felix A. Martinez, Class of 2003

Going Out in the Evenings

If you are interested in experiencing the culture of DC, you need to be wise about where you move to. The perfect example is if you work at NOAA in Silver Spring it makes sense to live nearby to minimize the commute and take advantage of cheaper housing, than living in central DC.

Open Space

Given the rental rates in the DC area, space can be a major consideration. Rents for 1-2 bedrooms in DC can range from ~ \$1500 to well over \$2500 in a luxury place. Cheaper places in DC can be found in the form of studios and “English Basements” (more on this later). However, you will be hard pressed to find anything for less than \$1000 in the nicer neighborhoods.

If you need space you will most likely need roommates to get a large place. You can then find places for \$850-\$1200 per person. Living out in the suburbs is an option to find more affordable larger places, but then you need to consider the commute.

A word of caution when looking for a place with roommates is that a limiting factor is not *bedrooms but bathrooms*. A 3 bedroom house or apartment will most likely only have 2 full bathrooms, so you must be prepared to share. The typical dwellings in DC are apartment buildings and row-houses that are either single homes or are split into apartments. Out in the suburbs you can find a larger selection of apartment types, town-homes, and single family homes. To put rents in perspective, you can pay outside the beltway for a 3-4 bedroom single house what you pay downtown for a 1 bedroom apartment.

What is an “English basement”? Many row-houses in downtown DC have large walk-in basements that are half sunken in. They are typically converted into separate rental units. They are either studio or 1 bedroom units. Most will have plenty of windows and depending on their location some will get plenty of light. Although they are set for one person, their rent rates tend to be fairly high for the nice ones.

So what is the best strategy?

First sit down and be honest with what your priorities are. Do not let actual rent be the main consideration (a \$1800 apartment where you will not have to commute will in the end be cheaper than a \$1500 that requires daily metro rides and / or driving).

This section continues on the next page.

Housing 101

Contributor: Felix A. Martinez, Class of 2003

Stay a couple of days after placement week to look around the areas you might be interested in.

You should plan on coming back at least once more to finalize your search. Driving around is not a good strategy. Very few places post “For Rent” signs. Visit first a real estate office with a leasing division in the area you might like to live in and ask for their listing. They will ask the type of place and budget and give you a listing before they take you out. Most agencies do not post their rental properties on their websites. You will have to go in personally and ask.

Note: If you know a real estate agent in your hometown, they might be able to tap into the “Multiple Listing Service” and find out information for you ahead of time. The MLS listing will have a description of the house, most often a photo, and the contact info of the agent.

You could also take advantage of the “calls for roommates” from people in the Fellows loop. These will be forwarded to you by the Fellowship leader. The website www.craigslist.com can help you find a place to stay and/or housemates, and apartment directory booklets are available in the newspaper stands in each metro station exit.

The down and dirty

So where are the good places to live in DC?

Like any big city, the DC metro area has both good and bad neighborhoods. They are also much intertwined. Rule of thumb is visit, look around and pay attention to what the neighbors’ places look like. Buy a street guide of the DC area before you do anything else so you can write notes of the neighborhoods as you walk, drive around (Rand McNally’s Thomas Guide is the best). The guide will also come in handy when you start moving around DC to do things

What follows is not a comprehensive listing of desirable areas, but it should give you a good idea:

DC:

Capitol Hill — obviously close to the congressional offices. It is very ‘neighborhoody’ with Victorian architecture and has many bars and restaurants for going out. It is also the home of the Eastern Market (an eclectic place to shop). Somewhat safe but don’t leave your bike outside. There is easy access to the Metro

Dupont Circle / Adams Morgan — this is a very hip area with lots of bars, boutiques, and restaurants. It has plenty of apartment buildings along the main streets and Victorian row-houses on the side streets, has relatively easy access to the Metro, close to the National Zoo and Rock Creek Park.

Woodley Park to Tenley Town (along the Red line) — these areas are similar to Dupont Circle, but not as hip and becoming more residential. It is safe to live, but starts getting far from most workplaces, calling for longer commutes.

Georgetown — the name says it all. It is a cool place to live but it is also a very pricey neighborhood. It is very eclectic with lots of things to do, but no direct access to the metro. A cab or bus can take you to the closest metro stop. Will require a roommate.

This section continues on the next page.

Housing 101

Contributor: Felix A. Martinez, Class of 2003

Suburbs: (Maryland)

Silver Spring — around the NOAA campus there are several apartment buildings and condo/duplex type places within easy walking or biking distance. The immediate north and northwest of Silver Spring downtown are relatively safe. As you move north and northwest past the beltway, there are some nice older neighborhoods where retired people are mixed with younger families (Kensington, Wheaton, Forest Glen). The Wheaton town center has lots of ethnic markets and mom and pop restaurants, but can become unsafe at night.

Takoma Park — just south of Silver Spring is this cool enclave of nice old homes. It is an artsy area with a few restaurants and shops. There is a Nice Farmer's Market Coop. It Does have some dangerous areas so visit first.

Bethesda / Chevy Chase — far from downtown DC and a long metro ride to Silver Spring (you need to loop down and around on the Red line). You could commute to Silver Spring by car, bus, or bike. It has a nice downtown to go to for eating and an Art Film theater complex. It also has a Farmer's / Flea Market place to visit. It has two nice public swimming pools, an outdoor complex and an indoor complex with an exercise room. The neighborhoods -mostly single-family homes- are nice, but pricey. There are some town-home complexes in the area.

College Park — home of the University of Maryland, has somewhat of a college town feel and the rents are lower. There is an REI store and a cool organic foods grocery store. It is, however, a longish commute to both DC and Silver Spring.

Hyattsville — between DC and College Park, this town is an up-and-coming area. Houses are still a bit cheaper than the rest of the other suburbs (but not likely to last too long). It has a few nice places to grab a bite and beer (i.e., Franklin's). The commute is shorter than from College Park.

Rockville — typical suburban area with lots of brand new housing, malls, etc. It's the end of the line for the Red line and quite a long commute on the metro. Bus and car, as well as MARC train, commuting is possible to Silver Spring.

Suburbs: (Virginia)

Alexandria / Arlington — both are for the most part commuter heavens for DC. Both are serviced easily by the metro but will be long (time-wise) commutes if you are not working in an agency in Virginia. They have plenty of shopping / restaurant districts. Alexandria has a quaint historic district.

Where NOT to go

As we said before, like in all big cities some areas of DC can be dangerous. Far east of Capitol Hill, as you go beyond the Eastern Market neighborhoods, is especially unsafe, as well as north / northeast from the Capitol up to Walter Reed Army Hospital. Along the way, areas around Rhode Island Ave., Catholic U., Columbia Heights pretty much up to Takoma (DC side) can be unsafe even in daylight.

This section continues on the next page.

Housing 101

Contributor: Felix A. Martinez, Class of 2003

It is only fair to say that lately, there have been active neighborhood renovation projects in DC so that some areas traditionally labeled as bad are not anymore, with the benefit of prices being still comparatively low.

In the end...

Don't sweat too much finding a place, keep an open mind and think that you can move somewhere else later. However, don't choose too quickly, as a difficult housemate and / or a bad place can make a year seem to last a lifetime.

Pleasant surprises...

If you like to take in some greenery or exercise to detox from the urban madness, there are plenty of things to do right after work, especially in the extended summer hours.

-Brookside Gardens in the Wheaton Regional Park has a very beautiful collection of trees, flowers, and aquatic plants, with benches to sit down and let your karma re-energize. The Park itself has a few trails to run or hike as you wish in relative safety. For more info on the park go to: <http://www.montgomeryparks.org/brookside/>

-Rock Creek Park is a National Park in DC proper with miles of trails to hike and ride, but safety can be more of an issue here. For more info on the park go to: www.nps.gov/rocr

-The Patuxent Wildlife Research Center is also within drivable distance for a nice hike. The north tract is "wilder" and popular with bird watchers but the trails are restricted because it used to be part of Ft. Meade. For more info on the park go to: <http://patuxent.fws.gov/>

-The C&O Canal offers plenty of miles of trails (easy and strenuous) plus kayaking in the Potomac (both flat and white water). For more info on the park go to: www.nps.gov/choh

-Great Falls Park (Virginia side) has good trails and decent rock climbing. There is also a very active kayaking community that paddles here. For more info on the park go to: www.nps.gov/grfa

-There are also plenty of masters swim clubs throughout the area, but workouts are mostly late at night (~ 8:30ish). Terrapin Masters (my team.) at U. of Maryland has reasonable evening workouts (6:30PM). To check out all team go to the USMS website: <http://www.usms.org/links/usmsclubs.htm>

- Glen Echo Park, although a National Park, is oriented towards the arts. It offers classes during four terms yearly on everything: ceramics, jewelry, photography, drawing, painting, and dancing. The catalog is available on their website. For more info on the park go to: www.nps.gov/glec

We greatly thank Felix A. Martinez and other Fellowship alumni for their contributions to this article. Please note that Housing 101 reflects the views of Felix A. Martinez and other alumni and does not necessarily those of the SG College Program. Furthermore, it dates to 2003 and may no longer be accurate.

Contacts

National Sea Grant College Program

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
US Department of Commerce
NOAA Sea Grant Office, 1315 East West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910
Phone: 301-734-1066
Fax: 301-713-0799

Chelsea Lowes, Fellowship Program Manager
Tel: 301.734.1085

NOAA Sea Grant, Silver Spring, MD
E-mail: OAR.SG.fellows@noaa.gov

www.seagrant.noaa.gov/knauss