

Surviving Placement Week



Finalists

Including:

- What to expect
- Placement Week Testimonials
- Metro Etiquette!

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Placement Week

What is placement week?

Placement week is a full week event in which Sea Grant Knauss Finalists travel to the Washington, D.C. area to interview with, and ultimately be placed in, a federal agency (executive) or congressional office (legislative).



When does placement week occur?

The timing of placement week varies from year to year, but usually takes place either right before Thanksgiving, or a few weeks into December. This timing is intended to allow for enough time for finalists to find housing in the DC area between finding out their final placements and the beginning of the fellowship year on February 1.

Placement Week Prep

Finalist & Host Communication

We try to maintain a level playing field for both finalists and host, therefore finalists are not permitted to contact host offices prior to placement week. Communication with a host office before placement week may be grounds for dismissal of the finalist from the Sea Grant Knauss Fellowship. This includes contacting an agency or office that is not currently a host office and asking them to be a host office for the upcoming year.



Making Travel Arrangements

Work with your state Sea Grant program prior to making any travel arrangements for placement week. Some programs are able to pay for your flights and/or hotel rooms up front

instead of having the finalist pay and get reimbursed later. Not all programs can do that - but it doesn't hurt to ask!

Airports:

DCA: Washington Reagan National Airport - closest to the hotel, Metro accessible, and/or a cheap taxi ride, leave ~20-30 min travel time

BWI: Baltimore-Washington Airport— not Metro accessible, simplest option is to use SuperShuttle service, leave ~1 hr travel time

IAD: Dulles International Airport—farthest from the hotel leave ~1.5 hrs travel time, accessible by shuttle bus to the Metro, then Metro into the city



Lodging

Each Sea Grant Knauss Fellowship award includes money set aside for placement week costs, including staying at the specified placement week hotel.

Placement Week Prep

Dress Code

Dress code for placement week is business professional – meaning suits for both men and women. There are a few events, such as the welcome dinner on Sunday evening, that are business casual. Wear the shoes that you plan on wearing during interviews and make sure you break them in and can comfortably wear them all day. We recommend you bring comfortable shoes to change into throughout the week when traveling around the DC area for interviews – *you will get blisters if you are wearing heels or new shoes that haven't been broken in.*

Don't shell out a ton of money for a new wardrobe for that week. Some of the offices don't require you to wear a suit every day of your fellowship, and some do – so until you know where your final placement is - check out Marshall's, T.J. Maxx, Burlington Coat, Factory, Target, Goodwill, etc. before you go and buy a bunch of designer suits. This is not a reimbursable expense of the fellowship.



Things to Bring

- snacks (at least some granola bars as you might forget to eat!)
- cash
- at least one suit
- comfy shoes- dress shoes
- a good attitude
- If you have a smart phone download the free "DC Rider" app!

During Placement Week

Host Offices

Host office recruitment starts in the late summer and early fall prior to placement week. The Sea Grant Knauss Fellowship Manager recruits host offices within federal agencies throughout the DC area. As agencies are recruited and commit to taking part in the placement week process, they will enter their information into the Sea Grant Knauss Database, found here:

pier.seagrant.noaa.gov/ Finalists can register as users to view the host office information and their position descriptions.



We recommend that you learn about host offices before you arrive in DC and think about what you want to get out of the Fellowship – but also be prepared to come with an open mind and to try new things. On Monday (executive finalists) and Tuesday (legislative finalists) you'll get to hear short presentations from each host office. This is an opportunity to revisit your list, learn about different offices that you might not have previously

Interviews

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.
- Make sure you can interview or speak with co-workers and your potential immediate supervisor,
- Check to see if the office accepts international

During Placement Week

Call-backs

Executive Finalists: Executive finalists are allowed to call -back their top-three host offices at the end of their interview schedule. At no time should a finalist state a numerical rating, such as telling a host office that they are your number one choice. An example call-back would sound something like this: “Hello so-and-so. This is (insert name). I interviewed with you on Tuesday and wanted to call you back and let you know that your office is in my top three. Please let me know if you have any follow-up questions for me. Otherwise, I appreciated the opportunity to meet you and interview with your office.”



Legislative Finalists: Due to the smaller number of finalists and associated host offices, finalists do not need to make call-backs to host offices. Call-backs on the legislative side are not permitted.

Placements

Once interviews have concluded, host offices will provide a ranking sheet of the finalists they have interviewed. Those rankings will be provided to the finalists on Friday, and from those lists, finalists will choose their host office in order of ranking. Once placements have concluded, finalists will be asked to return to their new host office to sign a commitment form with that office. At this point, finalists officially become fellows.



During Placement Week

Other Opportunities During Placement Week

During the course of the week, we have evenings during which host offices are welcome to join finalists during their dinner. Attendance is not mandatory for finalists, but is encouraged. Past fellows will attest to the their utility.

Getting around DC

The easiest way to get around in DC is on the Metro system. We recommend that you purchase a “7-day rail fast pass” for placement week . The Pass is available only on a SmarTrip® card and can be used for 7 consecutive days of unlimited rail travel. This card can be reloaded, so they can be used when you begin your fellowship. You can purchase them online prior to placement week and have them mailed to you, or you can purchase them from a SmarTrip fare machine at 47 different Metro stops, including Reagan National Airport and Gallery Place - Chinatown, which is the closest stop to your hotel. You can also purchase them from most CVS and Giant stores in the DC area.

<http://www.wmata.com/>

A free app for your smartphone called “DC Rider” can help you plan your trip and inform you about travel times and train schedules.

Throughout the week you will likely have to utilize a taxi or two as well - so make sure you are carrying some cash for taxi fare. Also, make sure to ask for a receipt - otherwise you may not be able to get reimbursed from your state Sea Grant program!

Testimonials

“I had a great placement week experience! I look back on it as a pivotal moment in my life. Although it was stressful and difficult, it’s ultimately extremely rewarding! Everything seems like peanuts compared to going to 14 interviews in 2.5 days basically cold.”

“Intimidating at first. You meet a lot of people and are forced to soak up a lot of information while staying on top of your interviewing game. However, everyone was so positive and welcoming that it was much better than I anticipated”

“Over a dozen interviews in a couple days seemed tough, but I knew the offices were hopeful to get a Fellow and excited to meet us. That helped me focus on this great opportunity to meet and learn from so many different coastal and marine affairs professionals.”

“Placement Week was exhausting, but I went home with so much confidence and new knowledge. It was a great experience.”

“Exhausting. Fun. Challenging. Rewarding. Everything went smoothly and worked out in the end, even though we all had doubts on how Friday would work, it does!”



DC Metro Etiquette

- Eating and drinking in the system are prohibited. This includes trains, platforms, and the areas in front of the farecard machines. If caught, you can be fined.
- Figure out where you're going before you go. Figure out whether you'll need to transfer, and if yes—where. (See map on next page)
- You need your farecard/SmarTrip card to get in AND out of the metro system.
- Most people remain silent while on the trains. That's normal—and you'll probably get a few strange looks if you talk loudly during your ride!
- When going up or down escalators, stand to the right. Locals like to walk/run on the left.
- If you've got large suitcases or strollers, head for the elevators or make sure you're clearly on the right side of the escalators. Above-mentioned locals walk/run on the left—don't block them.
- When you get to the bottom or top of an escalator, don't stop! The escalator keeps depositing people on the ground, and if you're stopped they have nowhere to go but into you. Move to the side while figuring out which way to go.
- Let people exit the train before you get on.
- Once on the train, hold on! If you don't, you'll be thrown into the person next to you when the trains stops or starts without warning!
- The pole in the train is not for you to wrap your entire body around or to be used as a foot rest. Please just use it to hang on.
- Most importantly, be courteous and mindful of your fellow passengers and you'll be fine!



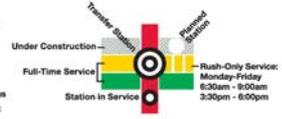
DC Metro System Map



wmata.com
Customer Information Service: 202-637-7000
TTY Phone: 202-638-3780

- Legend**
- **RD** Red Line • Glenmont to Shady Grove
 - **OR** Orange Line • New Carrollton to Vienna
 - **BL** Blue Line • Franconia-Springfield to Largo Town Center
 - **GR** Green Line • Branch Ave to Greenbelt
 - **YL** Yellow Line • Huntington to Fort Totten
 - **SV** Silver Line • Future Dulles Corridor Line

- Station Features**
- Bus to Airport
 - Parking
 - Hospital
 - Airport
- Connecting Rail Systems**
- AMTRAK
 - A.M.E.T.C.



MetroRail Operating Times

- Mon-Thu** 5am-midnight
- Fri** 5am-3am
- Sat** 7am-3am
- Sun** 7am-midnight

Times are approximate; check station kiosks or online for exact times.

Metro is accessible.

- No Smoking
- No Eating or Drinking
- No Animals (except service animals)
- No Audio (without earphones)
- No Littering or Spilling
- No Dangerous or Flammable Items

For more information, please contact:

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<http://seagrant.noaa.gov/knauss/>

