

LA Space Grant & Sea Grant Graduate Interjurisdictional Research Award Fellowship (**GIRAF**) Program

Offered in Partnership by

Louisiana Space Grant (LaSPACE) & Louisiana Sea Grant (LSG)



Under the authority of the
NASA Space Grant Program & NOAA Sea Grant

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LA Space Grant and Sea Grant Graduate Interjurisdictional Research Award Fellowship (GIRAF) Program Application Guidelines

About the GIRAF Program

The joint Louisiana Space Grant and Sea Grant Graduate Interjurisdictional Research Award Fellowship (GIRAF) Program invites interdisciplinary proposals from across the state. **The fellowship requires the use of data from vast archives and remote-sensing capabilities available through the National Aeronautics and Space Agency (NASA) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to address a high-priority research need within Louisiana's nearshore environs, coastal areas, wetlands, watersheds, and/or human activities in these areas (e.g. aquaculture).** Successful proposals must adeptly utilize relevant measurement instruments and/or remote-sensing data sources from NASA, NOAA, and/or other sources that can include, but are not limited to, radiometers, spectroradiometers, satellite sensors, LIDAR, aerial imagery, and other data collected from airplanes, unmanned aerial vehicles, and/or uncrewed submersibles in the execution of the proposed work.

This is a competitive fellowship program supported by Louisiana Space Grant in partnership with NASA and Louisiana Sea Grant in partnership with NOAA. Awards are based on scientific merit, adherence to the instructions of this RFP, availability of federal funds, and in recognition of applicants' high academic achievement and anticipated results.

Applications must clearly demonstrate relevance to work at both federal agencies, NASA and NOAA, as well as align with priorities for the Sea Grant and Space Grant programs. Both NASA and NOAA are interested in 1) STEM workforce development in the state, 2) applications for Artificial Intelligence in research and development projects, and 3) risk mitigation for public safety. Please explain how your proposed work supports any or all of those three areas of interest.

2026-2027 GIRAF Program Focus Areas:

Coastal Louisiana and North Carolina are extremely vulnerable to the loss of sediment in our coastal systems and the resultant impact to our coastal habitats and biota. Both states need new information and approaches to help generate mitigation and adaptation responses. Sediment loss is driven by landside as well as water-side processes. Both are relevant topics for this opportunity, and we welcome applications focused on either, or both.

- **Sediment Budgets;**
- **Erosion;**
- **Habitat transformations and the resultant impact on biota;**
- **Management Response as it relates to developing mechanisms, methods and/or tools to help natural resource managers make optimal decisions.**

Collaborative Approach: Louisiana Sea & Space Grant Programs and North Carolina Sea & Space Grant Programs will facilitate a regional partnership to jointly fund graduate students in both of our jurisdictions to concurrently study one or more of the above phenomena. Our hope is that by addressing the problem in both states concurrently, we will create synergies and additional understanding beyond what would have occurred if

the work occurred independently in each state, while also creating a unique professional development opportunity for the funded graduate students. The students (and their faculty mentors), while working on their own independent project, are required to engage with each other as a cohort. The sponsoring agencies will help ensure that this collaboration occurs. The facilitated collaboration will allow for the transregional aspect of this effort to develop and provide targeted professional development opportunities for each student, as well as ensure that lessons learned in both states will be transferred broadly across each region represented. Appropriate collaborative efforts will be generated based on clear areas of overlap and may be limited to outreach activities. The graduate student researchers will be introduced early on and offered guidance in identifying commonalities for collaboration.

2026-2027 GIRAF Call for Applications: Louisiana Space Grant and Sea Grant will accept applications for the 2026-2027 cycle for a twelve-month Graduate Research Fellowship. Applicants must be a full-time, enrolled graduate student at an accredited college or university within Louisiana, an affiliate of Louisiana Space Grant, and a citizen of the United States. The proposed research must be focused on at least one of the proposed focus areas listed above and must be supervised by a faculty mentor. The research activity should continue for the duration of the fellowship period. The period of performance will be June 1, 2026 to May 31, 2027. Fellows are expected to communicate regularly with their counterpart(s) in North Carolina and to collaborate on at least one product resulting from their concurrent research. Fellows are required to present their research findings at a meeting, conference, or other formal gathering of professional organization(s), association(s), etc. among peer researchers, policymakers, or another relevant audience. Fellows should expect to present their ongoing work at the annual Louisiana Space Grant (LaSPACE) meeting to be held in October or November 2026 at Tulane University in New Orleans.

About Louisiana Sea Grant and Space Grant Programs

Louisiana Sea Grant

The National Sea Grant College Program (Sea Grant) is authorized by P.L. 89-688, the National Sea Grant College Program Act of 1966, as amended (33 USC § 1121 et seq. Sea Grant). The Sea Grant College Program Act authorizes the awarding of grants and contracts to initiate and support programs at Sea Grant colleges and other institutions for research, education, and advisory services in any field related to the conservation and development of marine resources. A joint federal, state and local investment, Sea Grant provides solutions for the issues affecting our Nation's coastal communities (including the Great Lakes, Gulf of Mexico and communities on the Atlantic, Caribbean, and Pacific coasts), yielding quantifiable economic, social, and environmental benefits.

Sea Grant is a unique program within NOAA that sends 95% of its appropriated funds to coastal states through a competitive process to address issues that are identified as critical by public and private sector constituents and coastal communities throughout the United States. Sea Grant fosters cost-effective partnerships among state universities, state and local governments, NOAA, and coastal communities and businesses, leveraging nearly \$3 for every \$1 appropriated by Congress. Louisiana Sea Grant is one of these 34 university-based programs located in every coastal and Great Lakes state, Puerto Rico, and Guam. The network draws on the expertise of more than 3,000 scientists, engineers, public outreach experts, educators and students to help citizens better understand, conserve and utilize America's coastal resources.

Louisiana Sea Grant (LASG) solicits research proposals in approaches that align with at least one or integrate across the following four focus areas (<https://www.laseagrant.org/about/strategic-initiatives/>):

- A. Healthy Coastal Ecosystems
- B. Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture
- C. Resilient Communities and Economies
- D. Environmental Literacy and Workforce Development

Louisiana Space Grant

The Louisiana Space Grant Consortium (LaSPACE) led by a team at LSU is part of the National Space Grant College and Fellowship Program in partnership with the Louisiana Board of Regents. LaSPACE supports programs at affiliated academic institutions and other Louisiana organizations that address the NASA mission, federal CoSTEM goals, and state education and economic priorities. LaSPACE programs for Research, Higher Education, Workforce Development, K-12 Teacher Development, and Public Outreach, strengthen the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) education needed for a robust technical workforce, and develops the research and economic infrastructure to boost Louisiana's contribution to NASA research priorities.

NASA initiated the National Space Grant College and Fellowship Project (Space Grant) in 1989. Space Grant is a national network of colleges and universities. These institutions are working to expand opportunities for Americans to participate in NASA's aeronautics and space projects by supporting and enhancing science and engineering education, research, and student engagement efforts.

NASA 2022 Strategic Plan

NASA's 2022 strategic plan aligns the Agency's future activities along four strategic themes of Discover, Explore, Innovate, and Advance

- DISCOVER references NASA's enduring purpose of scientific discovery.
 - EXPLORE references NASA's push to expand the boundaries of human presence in space.
 - INNOVATE references NASA's broad mandate to promote the technologies of tomorrow.
 - ADVANCE references the capabilities, workforce, and facilities that allow NASA to achieve its Mission.
- The complete plan can be downloaded [here](#).

Graduate Interjurisdictional Research Award Fellowship (GIRAF)

Program Details

Fellowship Amount

\$10,000 per award

Number of Fellowships

At least two LA GIRAF fellowships are anticipated for 2026-2027, subject to sufficient funding and quality of the received applications.

Duration

The research activity should be continuous throughout the course of the fellowship. The start date is June 1, 2026. All work must be completed by May 31, 2027.

Eligibility

The Graduate Research Fellowship applicant must be:

- A United States citizen.
- Enrolled full time in an advanced graduate degree program of study at an accredited college or university in the State of Louisiana, which is an affiliate of LaSPACE.
- Conducting a faculty-mentored research project relevant to this call for proposals.
- In good academic standing.

Interested students must complete an online application. Undergraduate students may not apply for funding, but research projects that include undergraduate participation are accepted. Please read all program guidelines, including applicant eligibility and reporting requirements, before submitting your application.

The application must be submitted online, and all information must be complete, or the application will not be reviewed. The key components of the application are discussed in more detail below.

Graduate Interjurisdictional Research Award Fellowship (GIRAF)

Application

Apply for the Graduate Interjurisdictional Research Award Fellowship (GIRAF) via [LSG's online system](#).

Proposals must describe the research project, with sections 2 through 4 below totaling no more than five pages (excluding figures and tables). Item 7 should be no more than two pages. The proposal should be in a standard font 11 or 12-point with 1-inch margins. Incomplete and/or late applications will not be accepted.

Application Format

1. Cover Page: Complete the provided cover page, which includes student name and contact information, academic institution, major, and faculty mentor contact information.
2. Description of Proposed Research Project: A statement written by the student in consultation with a faculty mentor should describe: (1) The key elements of the proposed research and plan of study, including how it aligns with one or more of the four specified focus area/s, stated research question/s and data instruments and/or sources to be used; (2) What the student intends to accomplish; and (3) Clear description of how the proposed work has applications of interest to **ALL THREE** of the following entities: NASA/LA Space Grant, NOAA/LA Sea Grant and the State of Louisiana. Additionally, both NASA and NOAA are interested in 1) STEM workforce development in the state, 2) applications for Artificial Intelligence in research and development projects, and 3) risk mitigation for public safety. Please explain how your proposed work supports any or all of those three areas of interest.

3. Methods: Describe the proposed methods so that reviewers can decide the appropriateness of the proposed approach, including statistical analyses and design approaches, for achieving the stated objectives. If you are using NOAA or NASA remote sensing data or other resources for your work, please reference that here.
4. Clearly defined Tasks and a Timeline to complete the tasks.
5. A Plan to Present Findings: (1) To present research methodology and/or research findings at a meeting, conference, or other formal gathering of professional organization(s), association(s), etc. among peer researchers, policymakers, or another relevant audience (presentation of research at the 2026 La Space Grant Annual Meeting is expected); and (2) For purposes of public outreach (e.g., a presentation at a school, maritime center or planetarium, or presentations to audiences that may include professionals, precollege students, etc.). The Plan to Present Findings **does not** count toward the four-page limit described above.
6. Data Management Plan: In addition to the above application, to comply with NOAA's data and publication sharing directive for grants and contracts, [version 3.0](#), each applicant must develop and submit with their application a data management plan (DMP). The DMP **does not** count toward the four-page limit described above. Plans should be no more than two pages and should include descriptions of the types of environmental data and information expected to be created during the course of the project, the tentative date by which data will be shared, the standards to be used for data/metadata format and content, methods for providing data access, approximate total volume of data to be collected, and prior experience in making such data accessible. If your project is not expected to develop any environmental data, then your DMP may simply include the declaration: "This proposal is not expected to generate environmental data; therefore, a Data Management Plan is not required."
7. Budget plan: This award will be distributed directly to the student in stipend installments after milestones have been met. Milestones are a combination of the proposed workplan you share in your application and the required deliverables associated with this award program included in the application guidelines, such as completing all requirements to set up the award, submitting scheduled reports, participating in the LaSPACE fall meeting, etc. The required administrative milestones should be included in your section 4 timeline. GIRAF funds are awarded in real dollar installments via direct deposit to the awarded graduate student. This is not a subaward and will not be distributed through a university departmental account. Our expectation is that a good portion of these funds would be used to simply supplement traditionally low rates of pay for graduate students and that the remainder would be used to support professional development activities associated with the work proposed. For example, the funds could be used for registration fees and travel costs for conferences, professional memberships and subscriptions, as well as costs associated with some field work, data collection activities, and supplies. It is the graduate student's responsibility to manage their budget and determine how the funds will be used to cover expenses needed to accomplish their research project. Please include a statement here as to how you intend to spend your \$10K, anticipating a \$2500 stipend 4 times over the course of the 12-month period of performance. Final details on the amounts and schedule of disbursements are to be determined in conjunction with LSU administrative offices.
8. Current student CV (limited to two pages)
9. Letter of support from the applicant's faculty mentor. Up to two additional letters of support from end-users and other appropriate parties may be included if they enhance the application but are not required.
10. Additional forms: NEPA, LaSPACE Student Participant, media releases, etc. will be required upon notification of intent to award.

The proposal can contain a Literature Cited section, if needed, which is **NOT** included in the page limits.

Deadline

Application period opens: Thursday, February 12, 2026.

Application materials must be received by 5:00pm local time Wednesday, April 8, 2026.

The submission portal will automatically close at the deadline, so please plan to submit your application with time to deal with any technical issues.

Review Process

A proposal review panel will include the LA Sea and Space Grant Core Management Team and other experts as needed. Proposals will be ranked based on their relevance to the identified focus areas, the quality of the proposed work, and adherence to the instructions provided in this request for proposals.

GIRAF Evaluation

Each proposal will be evaluated using the following evaluation form.

GIRAF Evaluation Form

Institution	
Grad Student Name	
Project Title	
Funding Recommendation	

Proposal Formatting and Required Contents
All sections are present and in the right order

Relevance to & Alignment with NASA / NOAA Sea Grant
Explicit alignment and relevance to NASA/Space Grant, NOAA/Sea Grant, and the state of Louisiana must be clearly demonstrated.

Project Specific Requirements
Relevance to at least one of the four specified topic areas; inclusion of workforce development, application of AI in the research plan, and/or impacts to public safety and risk reduction are encouraged.

Overall Quality of Proposal
Clearly stated research question and objectives

Faculty Mentor Letter of Recommendation
Quality of the letter/s of support

Evidence of Likely Completion of the Project
Appropriate methods and timeline to meet objectives in one-year

Contribution to Public Outreach
Thoroughness of plan to present findings

Additional Comments
Additional Comments

Award Funding

The successful applicant will be notified no later than **April 30, 2026**, with projects beginning **June 1, 2026**. The fellowship award will be distributed as a stipend, with funding dispersed in four installments over the course of the period of performance.

- ~June 10 (pending deliverables)
- ~September 10 (pending deliverables)
- ~January 10 (pending deliverables)
- ~May 31 (pending final report)

Awardee Deliverables

General Requirements:

Fellows are required to Formally Accept the award and submit the following: by **Wednesday, May 6, 2026**:

- Complete required forms from Sea & Space Grant;
- Work with program administrators to set up account for payments;
- Provide a photo (professional style headshot + action shot) and professional biographical sketch upon selection; and
- Agree to abide by all reporting requests from LA Sea Grant and LA Space Grant.

Research Outcomes:

Fellows are required to:

- Submit two Progress Reports, approved by the Faculty mentor, due by August 15, 2026 and **December 15, 2026** (with a reflection on known results/progress for the North Carolina participant)
- Submit a Final Research Report by **Friday, May 15, 2026**, that shall include a detailed summary of research results and an award impact statement (with a reflection on known results for the North Carolina participant) and plans for future research. This information will be shared for review and use within LA Space Grant and/or LA Sea Grant;
- Present their findings at a meeting, conference, or other formal gathering of professional organization(s), association(s), etc. among peer researchers, policy-makers, or another relevant audience. Present project progress at the annual LA Space Grant 2026 fall meeting;
- Generate a news story appropriate to a public audience, include content from peer researcher as appropriate.
- Respond to academic and employment follow-up surveys administered as required by Louisiana Space and Sea Grant programs.

Communications:

Fellows are required to:

- Work with the LA Sea Grant and LA Space Grant team to develop and implement a plan to share their research experiences, including but not exclusively on social media, in print and on program websites.

- In coordination with the NC Grad Fellow Peer(s): Develop and deliver a presentation that encourages interest in the research topic (Why does this research matter?) among the general public, policymakers, and/or K-12 school students. **This will be discussed in more detail with student awardees, program management teams, and faculty advisors.**
- In coordination with the NC Grad Fellow Peer(s) by **Friday, May 15, 2027**: Translate the results of their project into a public forum or educational setting (two-page flyer/white paper /presentation/video).
- Translate the results of their project into a blog post or article for publication in media outlets such as the Sea Grant and the Space Grant news webpages.

Contact Information

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