



## News

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# UA student selected for Knauss Marine Policy Fellowship

By: *Melissa Schneider* / Published: Jul 21, 2021



*Sakinat Ahmad*

Sakinat Mojisola Ahmad, a Ph.D. student studying geology at The University of Alabama, has been selected as a finalist for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) [Sea Grant John A. Knauss Marine Policy Fellowship](#).

As a Knauss fellow, she will spend one year in Washington, D.C., gaining experience in policy-making in agencies and committees that deal with marine and coastal issues at the federal level. This fall, she will participate in virtual interviews with several executive and legislative offices to determine where she will work during the fellowship, which begins in February 2022.

"My career goal is to bridge the science-policy gap by becoming a seasoned coastal science researcher, who is actively involved in policy formulation and science communication to coastal communities," Ahmad said. "The Knauss fellowship will provide me career growth, mentorship by the finest coastal science professionals and a better understanding of marine policy formulation in the

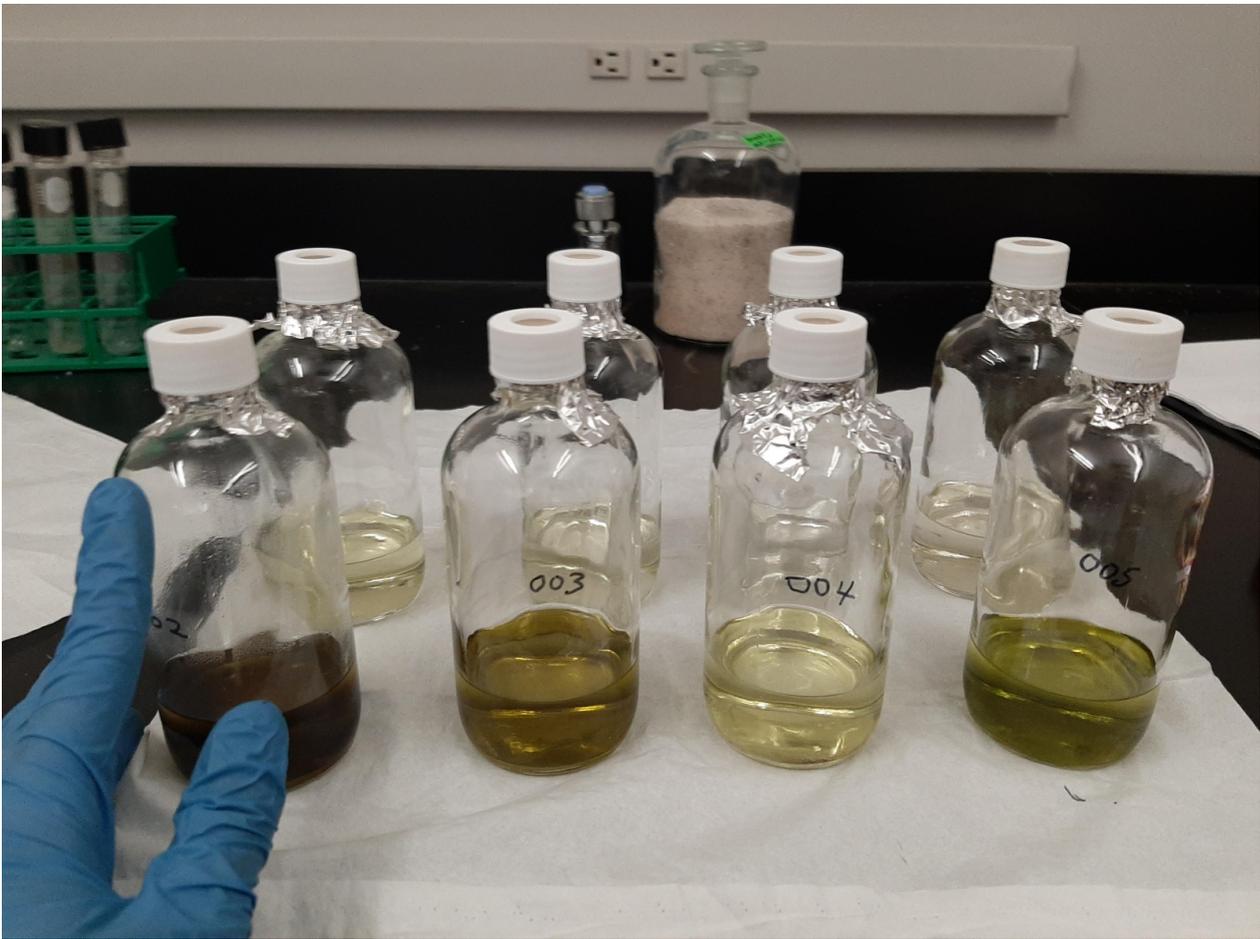
U.S. NOAA is a global template; being a part of this organization is an opportunity to contribute my quota to making the world a better place."

She is an intercontinental scholar who has obtained degrees from universities in Nigeria, Italy and Spain. Her undergraduate degree is in water resources management and agrometeorology, with a major in hydrology, from the Federal University of Agriculture (Abeokuta, Nigeria). She holds master's degrees in environmental assessment and management from the University of Bologna (Italy) and water and coastal management from the University of Cadiz (Spain).



*Sakinat Ahmad processes tree cores for organic contaminant analysis while working on her master's thesis at the University of Bologna, Italy. (Photo by Emanuela Fabbri)*

Her Ph.D. research at The University of Alabama focuses on organic matter and contaminant tracing using molecular biomarkers. She also is assessing microplastic pollution in Mobile Bay sediment.



*Extracted sediments from Mobile Bay await molecular analysis as part of Sakinat Ahmad's Ph.D. research at The University of Alabama. (Photo courtesy of Sakinat Ahmad)*

Through a highly competitive process, Ahmad was selected to serve as one of 74 Knauss fellows. [The Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium](#) endorsed her application for the fellowship, and she is the only finalist from an Alabama or Mississippi university.

“Sakinat Ahmad is one of the top applicants I have interviewed over the last 20 years,” LaDon Swann, director of the Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium, said. “She is an exceptionally well-qualified scientist and a great communicator. Also, she truly believes that science should serve humanity and that people should be at the center of science.”

National Sea Grant College Program Director Jonathan Pennock made the final recommendations for the Knauss Fellowship Class of 2022.

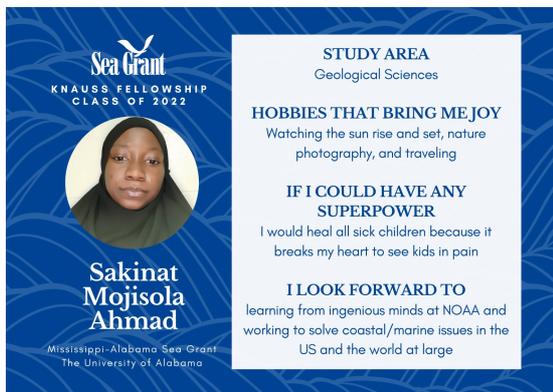
“At both the state and national levels, Sea Grant’s active recruitment and student engagement efforts supported one of the most robust applicant pools in fellowship history,” he said. “I have no doubt that the finalists’ diverse perspectives will provide great insight towards addressing critical marine policy and science challenges. We look forward to welcoming the 2022 class of Knauss fellows.”

The finalists are students and recent graduates from 51 distinct universities, including 11 minority-serving institutions. The completed coursework and research in a range of fields, such as agronomy, anthropology, ecology, environmental policy and law, fisheries, geology, marine and coastal sciences, several disciplines of oceanography, tourism management, and urban and regional planning.

The Knauss fellowship program started in 1979 and is named in honor of John A. Knauss, a former NOAA administrator and a founder of the National Sea Grant College Program. The 2022 Knauss

finalists will become the 43rd class of the fellowship and will join a group of nearly 1,500 professionals who have completed the program, becoming leaders in science, policy and public administration roles.

Want to learn more about the Knauss Fellowship? [The Knauss Blog](#) shares stories from the 2021 Knauss class on fellowship experiences and their journeys to D.C.



**Sea Grant**  
KNAUSS FELLOWSHIP  
CLASS OF 2022

**Sakinat Mojisola Ahmad**  
Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant  
The University of Alabama

**STUDY AREA**  
Geological Sciences

**HOBBIES THAT BRING ME JOY**  
Watching the sun rise and set, nature photography, and traveling

**IF I COULD HAVE ANY SUPERPOWER**  
I would heal all sick children because it breaks my heart to see kids in pain

**I LOOK FORWARD TO**  
learning from ingenious minds at NOAA and working to solve coastal/marine issues in the US and the world at large

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