

**U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
Greater Research Opportunities (GRO) Undergraduate Fellowship**

**Fellows' Handbook**

**2013**



## WELCOME

Congratulations on becoming an EPA GRO Undergraduate Fellow!

My name is Georgette Boddie and I am the Project Officer (PO) for the Greater Research Opportunities (GRO) Undergraduate Fellowship Program and the Contracting Officer Representative (COR) for your Fellowship. I also oversee a contract with CSS, Inc. for support of the summer internship portion of the Fellowship.

We have tried to minimize the rules and paperwork burdens of this program, but we cannot eliminate them entirely – they’re legal requirements that are not in our power to control. They are necessary to manage the program effectively, protect you, and allow us to comply with reporting requirements.

We’ve compiled this short handbook to help you understand how the program works. Most of the questions that you will have during the life of your fellowship are answered in the handbook, so we urge you to read it and refer to it first when you are seeking answers about the program. Of course, as your Project Officer, I am always happy to assist you if the handbook does not answer your questions.

As the Manager of the GRO Undergraduate Fellowship Program and as your Project Officer, I am here to help you. I want your fellowship and internship to be an unforgettable and positive experience.

Welcome and best wishes,

Georgette Boddie

Contact Information	
GRO Fellowship Program: Georgette Boddie, Project Officer U.S. EPA Phone: 703-347-8049 Email: <a href="mailto:boddie.georgette@epa.gov">boddie.georgette@epa.gov</a>	Summer internship: Jane Koska CSS, Inc. Phone: 703-877-3392 Email: <a href="mailto:jkoska@css-dynamac.com">jkoska@css-dynamac.com</a>

## Contents

WELCOME .....	1
Overview of the GRO Fellowship Program .....	5
Purpose of the Program .....	5
Administration.....	5
Provisions .....	5
Financial Support.....	5
Fellowship Agreement and Award Number .....	6
Finding Your Way Through EPA .....	6
People You Should Know .....	6
Project Officer (PO) .....	7
Grant Specialist (GS).....	7
What You Can Expect From Your Grant Specialist.....	7
Financial Specialist (FS).....	8
What You Can Expect From the Financial Specialist.....	8
What the Financial Specialist Can Expect From You.....	8
Mandatory Fellowship Activities.....	8
Summer Internship.....	8
Internship Security .....	9
Entering Personal Data into the CDX/iBoard System .....	9
Fingerprinting .....	10
Conference Attendance .....	10
Fellowship Information Inventory (FII2) Database.....	11
University Personnel .....	12
Reporting.....	12
Completion (or “Close-Out”) Phase .....	12
Completion of Studies Form.....	12
Frequently Asked Questions .....	14
What is my Award Number?.....	14
What should I do if my address, name, or contact information changes?.....	15
Can I change my academic advisor? If so, what do I need to do? .....	15
Can I change the academic institution I’m attending? If so, what do I need to do? .....	15

Can I change the project and program area in which I applied? .....	16
Can I receive other financial assistance while I'm a GRO Fellow? .....	16
Am I allowed to have outside employment while I'm a Fellow? .....	16
If I want to purchase equipment for my education and research, what do I need to do? .....	16
Who owns any equipment I purchase? .....	16
Should I have direct deposit for my stipend? .....	16
What if there's a discrepancy in the tuition and fees I expect to receive? .....	17
What do I do if EPA overpays my tuition and fees? .....	17
What do I do if EPA overpays my stipend? .....	17
What needs to be done with any unspent funds at the end of my fellowship? .....	17
Is my Fellowship taxable? Who is responsible for paying those taxes? .....	18
What is my expense budget? .....	18
May I charge any personal expenses to my Fellowship expense account? .....	18
Does my Fellowship include health insurance? .....	19
Does the program allow domestic travel? .....	19
Does the program allow international travel? .....	19
What procedure do I need to follow for approval of foreign travel? .....	19
Should I have a Power of Attorney? .....	20
Do I need to acknowledge the Fellowship if I publish a paper? .....	20
Summer Internship Program .....	21
Fellows' Responsibilities .....	21
People to know .....	21
Frequently Asked Questions – Internship .....	22
What are the requirements of my internship? .....	23
Who keeps track of the progress of my internship? .....	23
What happens at the end of the internship? How do I close out my internship? .....	23
What kind of report will I write? .....	23
What does the internship evaluation consist of? .....	24
How long is my internship? .....	24
Can I take time off from my internship? .....	24
Can I take summer classes during my internship? .....	25
What do I do if I have to end my internship early? .....	25
What is my work schedule? .....	25

What do I do if I have to miss work? .....	25
Can I work from home, telework, or go on a flex work schedule?.....	26
Do I have to fill out a time sheet?.....	26
Who finds my housing for the summer? .....	26
What kind of help is available when I'm looking for housing?.....	26
Can I get money for my local commuting expenses during my internship? .....	26
My internship project requires driving. Can I use a government vehicle?.....	27
Who do I go to if I have questions about my stipend during the summer? .....	27
Do I receive any benefits, such as vacation time, while I'm working at EPA?.....	27
Do I get health or accident insurance through EPA? .....	27
What should I do if there's a problem with my internship?.....	27
What kind of training can I expect during my internship? .....	28
Can I get academic credit for my internship? .....	28
Is there any kind of confidential information or documents I'm not allowed to see?.....	28
What happens to the materials I create during the summer? .....	28
If my hosts publish a paper that includes my research, will my work be acknowledged?.....	28
What do I do if I'm called for jury duty during the summer? .....	29
General Workplace Policies that Apply to Your Internship.....	29
Health and Safety .....	29
Safety – Duty to Warn .....	30
Substance Abuse.....	30
Workplace Violence .....	30
Discrimination.....	31
Liability.....	32

## Overview of the GRO Fellowship Program

### ***Purpose of the Program***

The purpose of the GRO Undergraduate Fellowship Program is to encourage promising and committed students to obtain advanced degrees and pursue careers in environmentally-related fields. This goal is consistent with the mission of EPA, which is to provide leadership in the nation's environmental science, research, education, assessment, restoration, and preservation efforts. Both the public and private sectors will need a steady stream of well-trained environmental specialists if our society is to meet the environmental challenges of the future. While you have no obligation to EPA beyond performing to the best of your ability in your studies and research, we sincerely hope that you will dedicate yourself to a meaningful environmental career.

### ***Administration***

The GRO Fellowship Program is administered in EPA by the National Center for Environmental Research (NCER), which is a component of the agency's Office of Research and Development (ORD). See the section below on [Finding Your Way Through EPA](#) for more information about how we administer this program.

### ***Provisions***

- ◆ EPA will provide support to students in a Bachelor's degree program for up to 21 months.
- ◆ GRO Fellowships must begin in the year the award is made.
- ◆ The Fellowship must be terminated when the degree is conferred, even if the initial award period was for a longer duration (e.g., if the Fellow graduates early, the fellowship is terminated at that time).

### ***Financial Support***

The fellowship provides a maximum of \$50,000 per year of support, divided as follows:

- ◆ A monthly stipend of \$800, paid directly to the student
- ◆ Up to \$11,000 per year for tuition and fees, paid directly to the institution on behalf of the Fellow
- ◆ An annual expense budget of \$2,500, paid directly to the institution on behalf of the Fellow
- ◆ \$8,600 for stipend, travel, and relocation allowance for a 12-week summer internship at an EPA research laboratory or facility, paid directly to the student. (Details are found in the summer internship payment schedule attached to your Fellowship Agreement.)

Please see the [Frequently Asked Questions](#) portion of this handbook for information on taxes.

## ***Fellowship Agreement and Award Number***

Your Fellowship Agreement is very important. Keep a copy of it readily accessible at all times. You'll need to refer to it should you have to contact EPA regarding the administration of your Fellowship, including financial matters. You'll also need it when you report to your summer internship.

Your Fellowship Agreement includes your Award Number. Keep this number handy, as you'll use it in correspondence, etc., related to your Fellowship.

The Award Number is also called the Fellowship Number, Fellowship Identification Number, GAD ID Number, GAD Grant Number, or Assistance ID Number.

It begins with "MA" and looks like this: MA-91712301-0.

**Include the prefix and the first six digits (for example, MA-917123) on every piece of correspondence related to your Fellowship.**

## **Finding Your Way Through EPA**

The **National Center for Environmental Research (NCER)** is responsible for reviewing, recommending funding, and managing research grants and fellowship programs, including GRO. NCER is a component of EPA's Office of Research and Development (ORD) and is located in Arlington, VA.

The **Grants and Interagency Agreement Management Division (GIAMD)** is the organization within EPA that is empowered to award grants and fellowships. This division, located in Washington, DC, is responsible for issuing, modifying, and terminating all grants, fellowships, and other assistance, except for those originating in one of EPA's ten regional offices. GIAMD is responsible for developing all Agency assistance policies and for enforcing compliance with those policies.

The **Financial Management Center** located in Las Vegas, NV (FMC-LV) is responsible for the financial administration of contracts, grants, cooperative agreements, and fellowships issued by EPA headquarters. This is the office that disburses your money.

## **People You Should Know**

Within EPA, three individuals play key roles in managing your fellowship: the Project Officer, Grant Specialist, and Financial Specialist. Each person performs a unique duty to support you and help you succeed with your fellowship. A description of each person's role and responsibilities follows.



## **Project Officer (PO)**

Georgette Boddie serves as the GRO Undergraduate Project Officer (PO) for the overall management of the Program. Her office is in the National Center for Environmental Research (NCER).

*The PO is the first person you should contact if you have questions about your Fellowship.*

The PO:

- ◆ Is your primary contact for all matters except those relating directly to the process of issuing checks
- ◆ Recommends approval of all changes to your Fellowship that require that an amendment be prepared. (The Grant Specialist will not grant any amendments without written approval from the PO.)
- ◆ Approves in writing any other changes to your Fellowship. This must be done before you undertake any changes.
- ◆ Informs you when it is time to submit renewal paperwork during your fellowship.
- ◆ Oversees the summer internship program management activities of the contractor.

Ms. Boddie can be reached by phone: 703-347-8049, or by email: [boddie.georgette@epa.gov](mailto:boddie.georgette@epa.gov).

## **Grant Specialist (GS)**

The GS processes your application, submits the award offer, issues all modifications to your fellowship, and notifies you, the PO, and the Finance Office of relevant actions.

*Although you may never have direct contact with your Grant Specialist, the GS is in many ways the most important person to you.*

You can find the name and contact information for the GS assigned to you on the first page of your Fellowship Agreement.

When communicating with your GS, you must always refer to your Fellowship Agreement for your award number. The GS will not recognize you by name; their automated files are stored and sorted by award number. Each GS is an expert in the workings of grants and fellowships; they manage hundreds of projects, though, so do not be disappointed if they do not know who you are when you call.

### **What You Can Expect From Your Grant Specialist**

- ◆ The GS will process your award and modifications efficiently, retain official records, and notify the appropriate individuals of actions taken.
- ◆ Your GS should be respectful at all times and if your question is one that should properly be directed to them, they are expected to provide an answer in a reasonable amount of time and convey it to you in a helpful manner.
- ◆ If you ever have trouble obtaining information from your GS, please contact your PO.

## ***Financial Specialist (FS)***

Unless otherwise notified, your FS is Luis Rivera, of the Financial Management Center in Las Vegas. He issues the checks for the GRO Fellowship Program. In addition, you will submit your Completion of Studies Notice to Mr. Rivera when you complete the fellowship, as described in your award package. Mr. Rivera's email is: [rivera.luisE@epa.gov](mailto:rivera.luisE@epa.gov).

The address to which you send the Completion of Studies Notice is:

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
Las Vegas Finance Center  
P.O. Box 979087  
St. Louis, MO 63197-9000

## ***What You Can Expect From the Financial Specialist***

The FS is responsible for the financial management of over 300 fellowships, as well as numerous other activities, so please provide your fellowship number when you contact him. You can expect him to respond to your inquiries in a timely way and to correct any funding discrepancy that arises.

## ***What the Financial Specialist Can Expect From You***

Fellows must:

- ◆ Notify the FS immediately of any changes of address, name, or other status in your fellowship that might affect issuance of checks
- ◆ Notify the FS and your PO as soon as possible if EPA has overpaid or underpaid your stipend, tuition, or fees.
- ◆ If it is necessary to contact the Financial Office regarding a funding problem, provide all of the necessary information in a coherent and effective way
- ◆ Treat the FS with respect as he attempts to solve your problem

## **Mandatory Fellowship Activities**

As a Fellow, it is imperative that you read the Terms and Conditions attached to your Fellowship Agreement. Below are mandatory program requirements we wish to highlight.

### ***Summer Internship***

Each Fellow will participate for 10 to 12 weeks in the EPA GRO Summer Internship Program at an EPA facility (located in the U.S. or its territories), during the first year of EPA fellowship support. Each Fellow must complete a summer project that is designed to complement and enhance the training received

under the fellowship program, and also a brief report on the internship for the GRO Program. Fellows will be contacted by the EPA contractor, Jane Koska, CSS, Inc., early in their first year to begin the internship placement process. [See the [Summer Internship Program](#) section of this Handbook for specific information.]

### ***Internship Security***

Before they can begin their summer internships, GRO Fellows must meet security requirements to obtain an EPA-issued ID badge. Homeland Security Presidential Directive-12 (HSPD-12) establishes the requirement for a mandatory Government-wide standard for secure and reliable forms of identification for all personnel. HSPD-12 requires all nonfederal personnel to meet the same federal criteria; however, GRO Fellows are not eligible for an HSPD-12 badge because the internships are less than 6 months in duration. All so-called “ineligible” applicants are required to have a favorable fingerprint result on record, prior to beginning work at the agency.

In advance of the start of his/her internship, each Fellow must

- ◆ Enter his/her personal data into EPA’s Central Data Exchange iBoard application (located at <https://cdx.epa.gov>), and
- ◆ Have his/her electronic fingerprints taken at an EPA Badge Office

---

*Your internship start date may be delayed until you’ve entered all your data into iBoard and had your fingerprints taken. Start this process immediately, once you receive the email notification from Georgette Boddie.*

---

As the Contracting Officer Representative and Project Officer for the GRO Undergraduate Fellowship, Georgette Boddie is responsible for ensuring the GRO Fellows meet the above initial security requirements.

### ***Entering Personal Data into the CDX/iBoard System***

1. Go to <http://www.epa.gov/oaintrnt/iboardcdx/iboard-cdx-user-guide.pdf>. Read the iBoard User Guide and follow the instructions in the red boxes. Note: Read Section 1 of the User guide to access the iBoard and CDX Registration for New Users.
2. Follow the guidance for *Grantees*. Note: Fellows are not ‘contractors’ and are not eligible for the EPASS badge because the internships are less than 6 months.)
3. When asked, enter the following information in the iBoard/CDX System:
  - ◆ Point of Contact (POC): Georgette Boddie, GRO Contracting Officer Representative
  - ◆ Email Address: [boddie.georgette@epa.gov](mailto:boddie.georgette@epa.gov)

- ◆ Phone Number: 703-347-8049
- ◆ Program Office: Office of Research and Development (ORD)
- ◆ Badge should be classified as “Grantee”

---

### *Questions?*

*Contact EPA’s Personnel Security Branch by email at  
[personnel\\_security@epa.gov](mailto:personnel_security@epa.gov).*

---

### ***Fingerprinting***

Each GRO Fellow must make arrangements to get his/her fingerprints taken. This can be done in advance of the internship at the nearest EPA Badge Office (see the attached list of locations), once instructed to do so by email. You may also wait until you arrive at your internship location, particularly if no Badge Office is within a reasonable distance of your school.

EPA Badge Offices require that you present the email from the Personnel Security Branch (PSB) requesting that you be fingerprinted in order to complete this step. Please confirm a date and time when you can get fingerprinted. On the first day of your internship, make sure you have a copy of your Fellowship Agreement and an email from PSB ([personnel\\_security@epa.gov](mailto:personnel_security@epa.gov)), with either of the following notices:

- ◆ A “fingerprints needed” email or
- ◆ An “onboarding” email.

The EPA internship host office will:

- ◆ Make arrangements with the facility security/badging office for electronic fingerprinting
- ◆ Escort the Fellow to the facility security/badging office for electronic fingerprinting.

It will take up to five working days to obtain your ID badge. Therefore, the host office must sign you into the facility until your fingerprint results have been returned and are favorable.

### ***Conference Attendance***

As a condition of the fellowship award, Fellows are expected to attend one technical/scientific conference while they are participants in the GRO undergraduate program. Resources to support your travel are to be taken from the expense allowance.

## ***Fellowship Information Inventory (FII2) Database***

The Fellowship Information Inventory (FII2) was recently created to help EPA stay connected to its current and former Fellows in the Greater Research Opportunities (GRO) Undergraduate and Science to Achieve Results (STAR) Graduate Fellowship programs. This on-line information system was created to track various important measures of Fellows' achievement both while in the program and thereafter, to assist EPA in responding to Congressional inquiries about the success of these two fellowship programs.

As each government program tracks and reports its successes, we need your own success stories to be documented. Current and alumni GRO Fellows should log in to the FII2 and update their personal data.

- ◆ To create an account: [http://www.scgcorp.com/fellowship/new\\_fellow.aspx](http://www.scgcorp.com/fellowship/new_fellow.aspx).
- ◆ To log in once you have an account, <http://www.scgcorp.com/fellowship/>

---

*Please visit the FII2 regularly and keep us updated on your academic progress and professional successes.*

*Fellows are **required** to keep their information up-to-date in the FII2 during the time of their fellowship.*

*Fellows are **strongly encouraged** to keep their information up-to-date for at least 5 years after leaving the program.*

---

To access your personal record in the FII2 database, use your fellowship identification number (GAD ID Number) that begins with "MA" and is followed by six numbers (e.g., MA917123). Once you are in the database, you will create your own personal username and password in order to continue to login and access your individual data pages. For New Users, the opening page provides valuable instructions for regularly updating your own information.

Within your individual record, you'll find different sections like personal fellowship facts, biographical and contact information; etc. As a GRO Fellow, you're expected to update your own information in a timely manner not only during the duration of your fellowship, but after your Fellowship has ended.

In terms of your post-fellowship activities, the GRO Fellowship Program is especially interested in information like:

- ◆ Are you attending graduate school?
- ◆ What employment position(s) have you found?
- ◆ Have you received other scientific award(s)?
- ◆ Have you published a scientific article(s)?

## ***University Personnel***

Each university operates differently, but someone at the institution will be responsible for receiving your tuition and fee payments and coding them to the proper account. Someone will establish an expense account in your name and manage it on your behalf.

If at all possible, the university should **not** mix your tuition and fee money with your expense account. This complicates reporting and can result in over-expenditure from your expense budget, for which you would be responsible.

## ***Reporting***

Fellows are expected to manage their fellowship funds efficiently and effectively and make sufficient academic progress for each year of fellowship funding. The fellowship agreement includes your terms/conditions implementing this requirement.

In order to retain your funding, fellowship recipients must provide their EPA Project Officer (Georgette Boddie) with an annual, written statement from their advisor stating that they are maintaining the same criteria under which they were selected (i.e., transcript with acceptable grade-point average, full-time student, and still in the same discipline).

## **Completion (or “Close-Out”) Phase**

At the end of your fellowship agreement, it is necessary to close out the award. If you are due to graduate before the end of your fellowship award period, you must initiate the process of closing out your agreement. You may not receive or spend any funds after your graduation date, even if funds remain in your account. Your school should return unspent funding to the following address:

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
Las Vegas Finance Center  
P.O. Box 979087  
St. Louis, MO 63197-9000

---

*To close out your fellowship, it is important to read the Terms  
and Conditions in your Fellowship Agreement*

---

## ***Completion of Studies Form***

You must complete this form and submit it to the address given in your award package. EPA prefers that you submit the Completion of Studies form either immediately before or after the termination date of your fellowship, but by regulation you **must** submit it within 90 days of the termination date or you are in violation of the terms of your agreement.

This form **must be signed and dated** by your permanent advisor.

A “Fillable” PDF copy of EPA Form 5770-9 can be found on the “Forms/Format” drop-down tab of your FII2.

To assist EPA staff, convert the Completion of Studies form into a PDF document and:

- ◆ Upload it into the FII2
- ◆ Email it to Luis E. Rivera ([rivera.luisE@epa.gov](mailto:rivera.luisE@epa.gov))
- ◆ Email it to your Project Officer, Georgette Boddie ([boddie.georgette@epa.gov](mailto:boddie.georgette@epa.gov))

### ***Final Transcript***

The final official transcript that shows your graduation date should be transmitted to EPA. There are two ways to do this:

- ◆ Have an official transcript mailed to:  
Georgette Boddie  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
ORD/National Center for Environmental Research  
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue NW (8723P)  
Washington, DC 20460
- ◆ Or have an official electronic transcript sent to Georgette Boddie at [boddie.georgette@epa.gov](mailto:boddie.georgette@epa.gov).

## Frequently Asked Questions

[What is my Award Number?](#)

[What should I do if my address, name, or contact information changes?](#)

[Can I change my academic advisor? If so, what do I need to do?](#)

[Can I change the academic institution I'm attending? If so, what do I need to do?](#)

[Can I change the project and program area in which I applied?](#)

[Can I receive other financial assistance while I'm a GRO Fellow?](#)

[Am I allowed to have outside employment while I'm a Fellow?](#)

[If I want to purchase equipment for my education and research, what do I need to do?](#)

[Who owns any equipment I purchase?](#)

[Should I have direct deposit for my stipend?](#)

[What if there's a discrepancy in the tuition and fees I expect to receive?](#)

[What do I do if EPA overpays my tuition and fees?](#)

[What do I do if EPA overpays my stipend?](#)

[What needs to be done with any unspent funds at the end of my fellowship?](#)

[Is my Fellowship taxable? Who is responsible for paying those taxes?](#)

[What is my expense budget?](#)

[May I charge any personal expenses to my Fellowship expense account?](#)

[Does my Fellowship include health insurance?](#)

[Does the program allow domestic travel?](#)

[Does the program allow international travel?](#)

[What procedure do I need to follow for approval of foreign travel?](#)

[Should I have a Power of Attorney?](#)

[Do I need to acknowledge the Fellowship if I publish a paper?](#)

### *What is my Award Number?*

This number can be found on the front of your initial award and on your amendments. It looks like this: "MA-91712301-0."

The Award Number is also known as your "Fellowship Number," "Assistance ID Number," or "GAD Grant Number."

**Include the prefix (MA) and the first six digits of this number (for example: MA-917123) on every piece of correspondence regarding your Fellowship.**



(Note: The "01" means that you are in the first budget period of the award. This number will not change during the life of the Fellowship. The "-0" at the end means that the agreement has not been amended. If EPA adds funds to your agreement or modifies it in other ways, this number will reflect those actions.)

### *What should I do if my address, name, or contact information changes?*

**You are responsible for notifying EPA of any change in your contact information as soon as possible.**

There is no automated way to ensure that all necessary parties receive the updated information, so when changes occur you should simultaneously notify:

- ◆ Georgette Boddie, your PO
- ◆ Your Grant Specialist
- ◆ Luis Rivera, your Financial Specialist

If the change occurs while you are preparing for and completing your summer internship, you should notify Jane Koska, who manages the internship process.

### *Can I change my academic advisor? If so, what do I need to do?*

A change in advisor is taken seriously by EPA. Any request to change advisor will be studied carefully. In order for EPA to make a decision to approve a change, you must send your PO:

- ◆ A written request from the Fellow
- ◆ A statement from the advisor as to the advisability of the proposed change

If EPA does not approve a change and you change advisors anyway, you will forfeit your fellowship.

### *Can I change the academic institution I'm attending? If so, what do I need to do?*

To justify a change in a Fellow's academic institution, EPA requires you to send several items, including these, to your PO:

- ◆ A detailed explanation of the change being requested
- ◆ Proof of acceptance into the new program and institution
- ◆ The proposed new advisor
- ◆ The new advisor's address, phone, and e-mail
- ◆ The effective date of the change
- ◆ The new payee address
- ◆ An explanation of any delays that the transfer would cause in the expected date of graduation.

### *Can I change the project and program area in which I applied?*

Although Fellows are selected based in part on the project and program area in which they apply, EPA understands that on occasion it may be in the student's best interest to make a change. With an appropriate and sufficient justification and concurrence from the PO, we may agree to approve such a change. Approval is not automatic, however, and is granted on a case by case basis.

### *Can I receive other financial assistance while I'm a GRO Fellow?*

Students are not prohibited from receiving other assistance during the period of this award, **but in most cases you may not receive any additional FEDERAL assistance.** Grants, fellowships, or scholarships from private or other university sources are allowed, but the Fellow does have to account for this additional assistance.

Certain categories of federal assistance that do not involve stipends may be allowable on a case-by-case basis. **Contact your PO if you wish to apply for or accept any outside assistance.** The ruling of your PO is final.

### *Am I allowed to have outside employment while I'm a Fellow?*

Outside employment is not specifically prohibited under the GRO Fellowship, although the primary purpose of the award is to free the student from the pressures of having to work to support themselves while they conduct their studies. Students will be expected to reveal the sources of outside employment, including the number of hours they worked, amount of payment, and source of funds.

### *If I want to purchase equipment for my education and research, what do I need to do?*

Purchases of over \$1,000 from the Fellow's expense allowance require a justification and three estimates.

- ◆ You will need to: Describe the reasons why you need the purchase, particularly in terms of your educational and research requirements.
- ◆ Give at least three estimates, with verification information such as a web site or a contact phone number.

Requests may be submitted by email to your PO.

### *Who owns any equipment I purchase?*

Any equipment purchased by the GRO fellow under this agreement belongs solely to the fellow both during and after the duration of the fellowship.

### *Should I have direct deposit for my stipend?*

EPA strongly urges fellows to sign up for direct deposit of their stipends. A direct deposit form is included with your original award package. Stipend amounts are usually credited to the account on or

about the fifth of the month. If your account does not reflect the stipend deposit by the tenth of the month, contact Luis Rivera in Las Vegas (702-798-2495 or [rivera.luisE@epa.gov](mailto:rivera.luisE@epa.gov)). Be certain to have your award number handy.

#### *What if there's a discrepancy in the tuition and fees I expect to receive?*

Often, the actual tuition and fees will be different from what EPA originally provides. Perhaps the final tuition was not yet announced by the university at the time we submitted the paperwork for your award. Perhaps you decided to take an additional course or you learned that you were not eligible for in-state tuition rates. Within the bounds of the program, EPA will provide any necessary funds for tuition and fees, **but you must notify us immediately of the discrepancy**. If you are requesting additional funds, you must provide a statement from the bursar, a university web site reference, or other proof to justify the request.

#### *What do I do if EPA overpays my tuition and fees?*

EPA closely budgets the fellowship account. To be certain that we have enough money to cover all of our fellowship obligations, **we ask you and your institution to notify us immediately of any significant overpayments of tuitions and fees**. Each year, the university must provide a statement of the estimated balance that will remain in the fellow's tuition and fee account at the end of the academic year. Except in the last year of the fellowship, any overpayment of tuition will be deducted from the next year's request. Overpayments that remain in the account at the end of the fellowship must be returned to EPA.

#### *What do I do if EPA overpays my stipend?*

You are responsible for monitoring your stipend payments. Any time you believe you have been paid a stipend that you should not have received, you must notify your PO and the Finance Office as soon as possible. If you leave the program early, but you have already received a stipend payment for the next month, you must return it to EPA immediately.

#### *What needs to be done with any unspent funds at the end of my fellowship?*

At the end of the fellowship the university is responsible for returning any unspent tuition and fee money to EPA. All unspent expense money must be returned to EPA at the conclusion of the fellowship. Fellows who receive stipend payments they are not entitled to must return them to the Agency.

Send unspent funds to EPA at this address:

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
Las Vegas Finance Center – Attn: Luis E. Rivera  
P.O. Box 979087  
St. Louis, MO 63197-9000

### *Is my Fellowship taxable? Who is responsible for paying those taxes?*

Stipends are taxable. For reasons that are beyond NCER's control, EPA does not withhold these taxes and does not report the income to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS).

Fellows are, however, still responsible for paying taxes on the fellowship stipend.

***The GRO Fellowship stipend amount is taxable.***

***EPA does not withhold any taxes nor does it generate a W-2 form for the Fellow.***

***Each Fellow is responsible for maintaining a record of his/her stipend amount and for filing his/her own income taxes.***

For more information, refer to *IRS publication #970 Scholarships, Fellowships, Grants, and Tuition Reductions* (<http://www.irs.gov/publications/p970/ch01.html>) and *Topic 421, Scholarship and Fellowship Grants* (<http://www.irs.gov/taxtopics/tc421.html>).

EPA cannot give tax advice. Fellows are urged to consult a tax professional about making estimated tax payments and filing for refunds.

### *What is my expense budget?*

As part of your fellowship, EPA provides an annual expense budget of \$2,500. This budget remains available to you for the life of the fellowship. Any unspent funds from one year carry over to the next year. At the end of the fellowship, however, all unspent funds revert to EPA. Your original award includes a list of allowable expenses to serve as a guide for your use. If you have any questions about whether an intended expense is allowed, contact your PO for permission in advance. If you make purchases without permission that are later determined to be unallowable, you will be held liable for these costs.

The expense budget is paid directly to the academic institution, to be made available to you as needed for necessary expenses. Allowable expenses include items and activities for the direct benefit of your education, such as health insurance, books, supplies, equipment, assistants, and travel to research sites and technical meetings.

Institutions are discouraged from charging an administrative fee for managing this account. However, if they insist, they may charge a fee not to exceed 2% of the total expense budget. This arrangement is strictly between the student and the university.

Universities should be discouraged from mingling expense money and tuition and fee funds. At any time, the university should be able to provide an exact accounting of the expenditures for tuition, fees, and expenses. Mingling the accounts complicates that process and causes confusion.

### *May I charge any personal expenses to my Fellowship expense account?*

The only personal expense you may charge to your expense account is health insurance. You may **not** use your expense account to pay for dental expenses, rent, insurance other than health insurance, etc. In rare cases, your PO may approve non-traditional uses of the expense budget if it is clearly related to your research and there are no other reasonable solutions.

*Does my Fellowship include health insurance?*

EPA may not pay your health insurance directly, even if it is considered a mandatory fee by your university. You may use your expense budget to pay for health insurance.

*Does the program allow domestic travel?*

Fellows may pay for program-related domestic travel using their fellowship expense funds. Most trips do not require approval. Any single purchase, such as a plane ticket, that exceeds \$1,000 must be approved in advance by the Project Officer.

*Does the program allow international travel?*

Fellows who are in a Study Abroad Program are allowed \$2,500 for all expenses, including travel. If it becomes necessary to travel outside the U.S. or its territories, you must notify the Project Officer **2 months** in advance. If research is involved, you will be required to obtain local permits in other countries to conduct research there. The Project Officer will obtain the necessary EPA and State Department approvals before the fellowship funds can be used for this activity. Fellows who travel overseas using federal funds will be required to comply with the provisions of the Fly America Act. This law states that individuals who are flying on U.S. Federal dollars must travel only on American carriers except in some extremely unlikely situations.

*What procedure do I need to follow for approval of foreign travel?*

As soon as you know that you are considering a foreign trip that will be paid for, at least in part, with fellowship money, you must write your PO with the following information:

1. Award Number (also called Fellowship ID Number or GAD Grant Number )
2. EPA Project Officer contact information: Georgette Boddie, 703-347-8049
3. Proposed dates of trip: From: To:
4. Destination
5. Purpose of trip:
6. Abstract/Narrative: N/A
7. Permits: N/A
8. In-country contact:
9. Budget and project periods:
10. Program Resource Code:
11. Agency goal which supports this activity (comes from the EPA Strategic Plan):  
Goal 4: Healthy Communities and Ecosystems, Objective 4.4: Enhance Science and Research
12. Statutory Authority related to your Fellowship:

Clean Air Act: Sec. 103 \_\_\_\_  
Clean Water Act: Sec. \_\_\_\_  
FIFRA: Sec. 20 \_\_\_\_  
Safe Drinking Water Act: Sec. 1442 \_\_\_\_  
Solid Waste Disposal Act: Sec. 8001 \_\_\_\_  
Toxic Substances Control Act: Sec. 10 \_\_\_\_

13. EPA total project cost: \$
14. EPA total travel cost:
15. Signed recommendation is attached. (Note: Your PO will provide this document)
16. I will be using an American-owned airline for air travel.

Your Project Officer will use the information you submit to prepare a request to EPA's Office of International and Tribal Affairs (OITA). **You may not travel unless you are notified by the Project Officer that the trip has been approved.** The approval will be sent to the PO and the PO will notify you when the trip is approved. If the trip date is approaching and you have not heard that you may go, contact your PO for confirmation that your trip has been confirmed.

#### *Should I have a Power of Attorney?*

If you will be out of the country or doing research in the field, and it is difficult to reach you for an extended period of time, you should consider granting a limited power of attorney to someone locally, who can sign the legal fellowship documents on your behalf. It is not difficult to grant a limited power of attorney. This is especially important if you plan to be away during the time when your award or amendments are due to arrive. Without a valid signature on the agreement within 30 days of the time that we make the offer, your fellowship may be rescinded

#### *Do I need to acknowledge the Fellowship if I publish a paper?*

Fellows may publish during or after their fellowship. You are required to acknowledge the fellowship when referring to any data or research effort that was supported at least in part by the fellowship. The following standard language is usually sufficient:

"This [*publication, poster, article, presentation, etc.*] was developed under GRO Fellowship Assistance Agreement no. [*your Fellowship Number*] awarded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). It has not been formally reviewed by EPA. The views expressed in this [*publication, poster, presentation, etc.*] are solely those of [*insert your name as it appears on your original Fellowship Agreement*], and EPA does not endorse any products or commercial services mentioned in this [*publication, poster, presentation, etc.*]."

## Summer Internship Program

As a GRO Fellow, you're required to complete a 10- to 12-week summer internship at an EPA facility or office during the first summer of your fellowship. The goal of this hands-on activity is to complement your academic training to provide a well-rounded and practical environmentally-oriented education. Your internship at EPA is not intended to be merely a short-term experience, but rather a valuable opportunity for you to learn lifelong career development skills, expand your horizons, and increase your knowledge, interests, and professional contacts.

You will have opportunities to meet and work with a variety of professionals working in different environmental fields, not only in your area of interest, but also in others. Interacting with them will broaden your knowledge and understanding of the environmental community. How you translate these contacts and experiences into future opportunities depends on your own initiative.

### ***Fellows' Responsibilities***

As a GRO Fellow, you have the following responsibilities related to the internship program:

- ◆ During the Fall of the year preceding your internship, prepare your application package according to the guidelines provided and submit it within the announced deadlines
- ◆ Review the descriptions of possible internship projects
- ◆ Select three projects of interest
- ◆ Participate in telephone interviews for the three projects
- ◆ After being placed in an internship, locate housing for the summer and make your plans for relocation
- ◆ Carefully review this handbook concerning the details of the internship program and its requirements
- ◆ Conduct yourself in the professional manner expected and required in your EPA host office
- ◆ Complete the requirements of your internship (project-specific requirement, final report, evaluation)

### ***People to know***

**Jane Koska**, CSS, Inc., is the CSS Project Manager. She is the contractor responsible for administration of the internship program. She will:

- ◆ Identify projects
- ◆ Distribute materials
- ◆ Schedule and facilitate interviews
- ◆ Make the final placements
- ◆ Help in dealing with policy and procedural requirements

- ◆ Monitor the progress of your internship
- ◆ Review and provide feedback on your final report
- ◆ Collect evaluations of the internship from you and from your hosts

Ms. Koska can be reached by phone at: 703-877-3392, or via email: [jkoska@css-dynamac.com](mailto:jkoska@css-dynamac.com).

**Georgette Boddie**, your PO, is the final authority on any matters related to the internship. She is also responsible for the Fellowship as a whole and should be contacted regarding any non-internship questions.

Your EPA **Project Advisor** (PA) and **Intern Manager** (IM) are your hosts for your summer internship. The PA has primary responsibility for designing the project. Either or both may be your day-to-day supervisor during the summer. They will answer your questions, guide you in your research, and be your mentors during the internship.

### ***Frequently Asked Questions – Internship***

[What are the requirements of my internship?](#)

[Who keeps track of the progress of my internship?](#)

[What happens at the end of the internship? How do I close out my internship?](#)

[What kind of report will I write?](#)

[What does the internship evaluation consist of?](#)

[How long is my internship?](#)

[Can I take time off from my internship?](#)

[What do I do if I have to end my internship early?](#)

[What is my work schedule?](#)

[What do I do if I have to miss work?](#)

[Can I work from home, telework, or go on a flex work schedule?](#)

[Do I have to fill out a time sheet?](#)

[Who finds my housing for the summer?](#)

[What kind of help is available when I'm looking for housing?](#)

[Can I get money for my local commuting expenses during my internship?](#)

[My internship project requires driving. Can I use a government vehicle?](#)

[Who do I go to if I have questions about my stipend during the summer?](#)

[Do I receive any benefits, such as vacation time, while I'm working at EPA?](#)

[Do I get health or accident insurance through EPA?](#)

[What should I do if there's a problem with my internship?](#)

[What kind of training can I expect during my internship?](#)



[Can I get academic credit for my internship?](#)

[Is there any kind of confidential information or documents I can't see?](#)

[What happens to the materials I create during the summer?](#)

[If my hosts publish a paper that includes my research, will my work be acknowledged?](#)

[What do I do if I'm called for jury duty during the summer?](#)

### ***What are the requirements of my internship?***

During the internship, each GRO Fellow must complete a project that is designed to complement and enhance the training received under the Fellowship Program. EPA provides support for temporary relocation and provides a living stipend during the summer internship.

Failure to satisfactorily complete the full period of the internship and the required work product(s) may adversely affect the Fellow's stipend and/or standing in the Fellowship program.

### ***Who keeps track of the progress of my internship?***

CSS GRO Internship staff will conduct project monitoring primarily through telephone and email contacts with GRO Fellows and their Project Advisors. CSS will contact each Fellow and Project Advisor at least two times per month by telephone or email. Site visits may be made.

Conference calls may be made at the beginning, at the midpoint, and toward the end of each Fellow's project. All parties will assess how well the project is progressing, and whether the intern's expectations (and those of the EPA Project Advisor) are being met. The calls provide an opportunity to make any adjustments to the project to enhance the internship relationship and the Fellow's educational experience.

### ***What happens at the end of the internship? How do I close out my internship?***

The EPA Project Advisor will ensure that the GRO Fellow successfully completes the summer internship project and submits all project deliverables before the end of the internship.

The CSS Project Manager will ensure that the Fellow submits the final 1-2 page report within 2 days of the last day of the internship.

Four weeks before the internship ends, CSS will send evaluation forms to both the GRO Fellow and the EPA Project Advisor.

When the evaluation forms are received by CSS, this will complete the internship close-out procedures.

### ***What kind of report will I write?***

The Fellow will prepare and complete a short final report summarizing the results of his/her summer internship project. The EPA Project Advisor and Intern Manager will provide guidance and feedback.

CSS will collect each Fellow's report during the last week of his or her internship. CSS Program Staff will provide proofreading, editing, and technical writing assistance to ensure that the final reports are complete and professionally prepared. Marked-up copies of the reports will be returned to the Fellows during September for final review and concurrence before all reports are submitted to the Program Director for posting on the NCER website.

### *What does the internship evaluation consist of?*

Each EPA GRO Fellow and EPA Project Advisor will submit an evaluation of the project to CSS at the conclusion of the internship.

EPA GRO Fellows will be asked to analyze their experiences with respect to career relevance, their relationship with the EPA Project Advisor and the host office, and their interactions with CSS staff, among other things.

EPA Project Advisors will be asked to evaluate the EPA GRO Fellow's technical competence and work habits, professional development and potential, and their interactions with CSS staff.

CSS will forward evaluation forms to the Fellows and the EPA Project Advisors, and will make follow-up telephone calls, as needed, to clarify any comments that are made.

### *How long is my internship?*

A GRO Fellow's summer internship must be 10 to 12 weeks in length. The internship is a requirement of the Fellowship program. The Fellow should consider the necessity of having sufficient time to complete the summer internship when making other plans for the summer.

If extenuating circumstances make it difficult for a GRO Fellow to complete the entire 10 weeks, a GRO Fellow may obtain approval from the EPA GROUSF Program Director to shorten the internship. Such exceptions are infrequently granted. Consequently, appropriate adjustments would be made in the stipend disbursements to match the shortened timeframe.

In the event that an internship requires additional time beyond the 12-week period, permission is required in advance and in writing from the GROUSF Program Director. However, no additional funding will be provided for any extensions beyond the 12-week period.

### *Can I take time off from my internship?*

Fellows do not accrue vacation or personal leave during the summer. If you need time off from your internship for a valid reason, e.g., to attend a scientific meeting, to participate in an academic activity like a field trip, or because of a family event, you should communicate anticipated absences during the interview and placement process. Do not wait until you have started your internship to inform your hosts and the CSS PM. Requests for time off should be kept to the absolute minimum.

The CSS Project Manager will advise Fellows on the procedures to follow in the case of an [unanticipated absence](#), e.g., due to illness. At a minimum, you must communicate with your Project Advisor and Intern Manager as soon as possible.

### *Can I take summer classes during my internship?*

You may enroll in summer classes at an academic institution at the internship location. Attendance at summer classes must not interfere with your ability to carry out a normal work schedule at the EPA facility. **Classes must be taken outside of normal work hours.** If you're interested in taking summer classes, you should communicate your plans to the CSS PM and your EPA Project Advisor as early as possible in the internship preparation process.

### *What do I do if I have to end my internship early?*

If it is necessary for a Fellow to terminate his/her project early, the Fellow must contact the GROUSF Program Director, Ms. Georgette Boddie ([boddie.georgette@epa.gov](mailto:boddie.georgette@epa.gov); 703-347-8049), immediately and follow up with a letter stating the date and reason(s) why the Fellow wishes to terminate. The Fellow should also inform the CSS Project Manager, Jane Koska ([jkoska@css-dynamac.com](mailto:jkoska@css-dynamac.com); 703-877-3392), of his/her wish to end the internship early.

The Fellow should expect adjustments to be made to his/her stipend payments from the date of termination.

### *What is my work schedule?*

Fellows are not paid on an hourly basis; however, due to security requirements at all EPA facilities, you must establish a 5-day per week work schedule with your EPA Project Advisor. For some projects, longer days may be required due to field trips, etc. In those cases, your work schedule may be adjusted to compensate. Both you and your hosts are encouraged to maintain a record of your hours in the office for reference if questions should arise about attendance.

### *What do I do if I have to miss work?*

Once you and your hosts have established a normal work schedule, you must inform your hosts (and in some cases, the CSS PM) of any deviations, as listed below.

- ◆ The Fellow must report any unexpected absence to his/her EPA hosts by telephone no later than 2 hours after the time s/he typically starts work for the day.
- ◆ The Fellow must report any unexpected absence by email to the CSS PM on the day of the absence.
- ◆ The Fellow must communicate with his/her EPA hosts by phone or email daily during unexpected absences (e.g., illness) of more than 1 day.
- ◆ The Fellow must provide the CSS PM with the duration of any unexpected absences (number of days out of the office) once s/he has returned to work.

You'll be asked to provide your local address and the name and phone number of an emergency contact to the CSS PM. The information will be kept confidential and will be used only in case of emergency or if you fail to communicate your status to your hosts and the CSS PM during an absence of more than 1 day.

### *Can I work from home, telework, or go on a flex work schedule?*

Permission for a Fellow to work from home, telework, or flex work during the internship is almost never granted. An exception may be made only if it is absolutely impossible for the Fellow to get to the office. If working from home, you must submit a daily report to your host summarizing the work completed. Work from home for more than 2 days must also be approved by the CSS PM.

### *Do I have to fill out a time sheet?*

GRO Fellows are Grantees, and are not paid on an hourly basis; therefore, you are not required to complete weekly timesheets (work schedule verification forms). For the internship period, a written weekly work schedule for the GRO Fellow may be required in light of increased security at EPA buildings. If needed, the schedule should be prepared by the Project Advisor or Intern Manager and distributed to EPA staff and the facility's security contractors.

### *Who finds my housing for the summer?*

The GRO Fellow is responsible for finding his/her housing for the period of the summer internship.

### *What kind of help is available when I'm looking for housing?*

If you are relocating to a project location and are unfamiliar with the area, you may contact your EPA Project Advisor and/or Intern Manager for advice and recommendations on convenient and safe areas in which to look for temporary housing.

**While EPA Project Advisors and Intern Managers are usually more than willing to assist you, they are not responsible for finding you housing for your internship.**

You're encouraged to do a thorough Internet search to identify housing opportunities. Sites that are likely to provide helpful information include:

- The local newspaper's website
- The local chamber of commerce
- The local convention and visitor's bureau
- Area colleges and universities
- [www.craigslist.org](http://www.craigslist.org)

### *Can I get money for my local commuting expenses during my internship?*

Daily transportation costs in the area of the EPA facility during the internship are NOT covered separately under your funding agreement, and must come out of the Fellow's stipend for living expenses. Fellows are not eligible for any form of commuting voucher such as may be offered by EPA to students interning under other programs.

### ***My internship project requires driving. Can I use a government vehicle?***

Fellows may not operate a government -owned vehicle (GOV) (EPA or General Services Administration (GSA) vehicle); however, they may ride as a passenger in a government-owned vehicle. This also applies to watercraft.

### ***Who do I go to if I have questions about my stipend during the summer?***

Fellows should direct any questions to the EPA GRO Project Officer, Ms. Georgette Boddie ([boddie.georgette@epa.gov](mailto:boddie.georgette@epa.gov); 703-347-8049).

Fellows should promptly report any stipend discrepancies to Mr. Luis E. Rivera at the Financial Management Office in Las Vegas, NV ([rivera.luis@epa.gov](mailto:rivera.luis@epa.gov); 702-798-2495).

EPA is responsible for processing the GRO Fellows' monthly stipend funds. Jane Koska of CSS, Inc. is not involved in this process.

### ***Do I receive any benefits, such as vacation time, while I'm working at EPA?***

Fellows do not. You are EPA grant recipients, not EPA, Federal government, or CSS employees. As such, you:

- Do not accrue personal or annual leave
- Are not entitled to health or life insurance benefits
- Do not have taxes withheld from their stipend checks

### ***Do I get health or accident insurance through EPA?***

GRO Fellows are grantees, and do not qualify for any type of health or accident insurance through EPA. Each GRO Fellow is encouraged to continue his/her existing health, accident, and auto insurance coverage. If a Fellow believes that additional insurance is necessary, s/he is encouraged to purchase it; however, s/he will not be reimbursed for this expense.

### ***What should I do if there's a problem with my internship?***

EPA and CSS make every effort to achieve successful matches between GRO Fellows and their summer internship projects; on rare occasions, however, problems can arise. If that happens, you should try to identify the source of the problem and discuss it objectively with your Project Advisor in a professional and timely manner. You're encouraged to contact the CSS Project Manager as soon as possible to discuss your concerns. The CSS PM will work with you and your Project Advisor to propose a solution, and then follow up at regular intervals to assess the situation.

You must also inform the GRO Project Officer, Ms. Boddie, within 10 days of any problems that arise.

As needed, the GRO PO and CSS PM may facilitate discussions between you and your Project Advisor to resolve the problem. If necessary, the PO will ask a certified mediator from the NCER staff to mediate.

In the event that mediation is unsuccessful, and the experience is no longer productive, the internship may be ended. This should be a last resort.

### *What kind of training can I expect during my internship?*

If you're assigned to conduct fieldwork or to work in a laboratory you will be included in any required onsite safety training. EPA will provide you with all necessary monitoring and appropriate personal protective equipment.

You should inform the CSS PM and the GRO PO, Ms. Boddie, immediately if you believe you're not receiving the necessary instruction and attention in this area.

### *Can I get academic credit for my internship?*

This depends on your academic institution. You're responsible for making any arrangements for academic (or other) credit for the summer internship with your school. Neither your academic advisor, nor EPA GRO Fellowship Program staff, nor CSS personnel can be involved in any discussions between you and your academic institution regarding credit for your work in the internship program.

### *Is there any kind of confidential information or documents I'm not allowed to see?*

Your host office must ensure that you're not allowed access to or use of Confidential Business Information or enforcement-sensitive information. If you inadvertently come across such information, you must inform your EPA Project Advisor or Intern Manager immediately.

### *What happens to the materials I create during the summer?*

Any material produced by a GRO Fellow as part of his/her internship project belongs to the EPA office or laboratory sponsoring the project. Failure to return materials produced during the internship may adversely affect your standing in the GRO Program.

If a Fellow develops intangible property under a Fellowship Agreement (e.g., copyrighted software), EPA reserves a royalty-free, nonexclusive and irrevocable right to reproduce, publish, or otherwise use the work for Federal purposes, and to authorize others to do so. EPA's requirements for dealing with such intangible property are found at §30.36 of EPA's Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Non-Profit Organizations.

### *If my hosts publish a paper that includes my research, will my work be acknowledged?*

EPA sponsors may, but are not required to, list authors, artists, etc., when they choose to print work to which an EPA GRO Fellow has contributed. Sponsors may, but are not required to, list the Fellow as an author or otherwise acknowledge his/her contribution, when they choose to print work to which the Fellow contributed.

### *What do I do if I'm called for jury duty during the summer?*

EPA complies with all Federal and State laws regarding jury duty leave.

You may receive a notice from the court to report for jury duty during the period of your summer internship. Postponing jury duty can allow you to obtain the maximum benefit from the unique environmental educational opportunity that the summer internship provides. Your geographical relocation and the limited timeframe of the internship may be sufficient reasons to support a request for postponement of jury duty until you return to your regular residence.

Should you receive a notice to report for jury duty, and choose to request a postponement, you should carefully follow the directions enclosed with the notice that outline how to do so.

You should contact your EPA Project Advisor, the CSS Project Manager, and the GRO Project Officer immediately if you prefer to report for jury duty at the time specified on the notice or if your request for postponement of jury duty is denied.

## **General Workplace Policies that Apply to Your Internship**

### *Health and Safety*

All GRO Fellows are expected to work diligently to maintain safe and healthy working conditions and to adhere to proper operating practices and procedures designed to prevent injuries and illness at their internship assignments.

EPA sponsors are required by law to provide training and personal protection per related Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulations.

The Fellow should contact the GRO PO if s/he does not receive onsite safety training, supervision and monitoring, and appropriate protective equipment identical to that provided to full-time employees performing similar tasks.

All EPA GRO Fellows are responsible for adhering to the following procedures, which are designed to reduce the possibility of injury to themselves or their co-workers:

- ◆ Ask the EPA Project Advisor for information, OSHA regulations, and education on all safety policies, including: (a) blood-borne pathogens; (b) riding in government vehicles safety; and (c) exercising maximum care and good judgment at all times to prevent accidents and injuries
- ◆ Report all injuries, regardless of how minor, to your EPA Project Advisor
- ◆ Report unsafe conditions, equipment, or practices to your EPA Project Advisor
- ◆ Request and use safety equipment provided by your EPA Project Advisor at all times
- ◆ Observe all safety rules and regulations at all times
- ◆ Notify your EPA Project Advisor, before the beginning of the workday, of any medication you are taking that may cause drowsiness or other side effects that could lead to injury to yourself or your co-workers

### *Safety – Duty to Warn*

To advance EPA's overall safety policy, the Fellow has a duty to report to his/her Project Advisor and the GRO Project Officer (PO) if s/he is aware of or suspects any problematic workplace activity, situations, or incidents that involve other GRO Fellows, employees, former employees, or visitors. Examples include threats, acts of violence, aggressive behavior, or offensive acts or comments. A report made by a GRO Fellow pursuant to this policy will be held in confidence to the extent possible. Any form of retaliation against any GRO Fellow for making a report under this policy will not be condoned.

### *Substance Abuse*

EPA prohibits alcohol and drugs (controlled substances) on any of its premises, at project assignment locations, in its vehicles, and during work hours. Any use of alcohol or controlled substances off EPA premises or away from project assignment locations that affects or may affect job performance or conduct is likewise prohibited.

As a condition of the GRO Fellowship grant, the Fellow is expected to comply with this policy as well as with all of the provisions of the Drug Free Workplace Act Certification, which is enclosed with the Fellows' Welcome Packet. As an additional condition of the Fellowship grant, the Fellow must sign and return a copy of that Certification. Failure to do either of the foregoing may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

### *Workplace Violence*

Verbal and physical fighting will not be tolerated on EPA premises at any time or for any reason.

If a fight does occur, an investigation will be conducted and witnesses will be interviewed to determine the circumstances surrounding the altercation.

The GRO Fellow(s) will be expected to cooperate in any such investigation.

If, after the investigation, EPA management determines that discipline is appropriate, an offending EPA GRO Fellow will be subject to discipline, up to and including termination.

EPA expressly prohibits any acts or threats of violence by persons engaged in business with or on behalf of EPA, on or off EPA premises, at any time. These acts include, but are not limited to, obscene or abusive language or gestures.

EPA will not condone any acts or threats of violence by any individual against EPA GRO Fellows.

If an EPA GRO Fellow commits an act of violence or threatens violence, EPA will take prompt remedial action, up to and including termination. Additionally, EPA may notify the police or other law enforcement personnel and prosecute violators of this policy to the full extent of the law.

EPA prohibits GRO Fellows, including any former EPA GRO Fellows, from bringing unauthorized firearms or other weapons onto EPA premises.



## *Discrimination*

All GRO Fellows have the right to be treated with respect and dignity.

It is EPA's policy that all of its facilities support an environment free from unlawful discrimination, including freedom from sexual harassment. It is EPA's policy that no individual may harass another. In addition to sexual harassment, harassment based on age, color, disability, gender, national origin, race, religion, ancestry, or sexual orientation is also illegal.

Harassment, other than sexual harassment, has been defined as conduct that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual because of his/her protected status, or that of his/her relatives, friends, or associates, and that (a) has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment; or (b) has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance; or (c) otherwise adversely affects an individual's employment opportunities.

Sexual harassment is defined as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:

- ◆ Submission or rejection of such advances, requests, or conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of employment or a basis for employment decisions
- ◆ Such advances, requests, or conduct have the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance by creating an intimidating, hostile, humiliating, or sexually offensive work environment

Although it is not possible to list all the circumstances that constitute sexual harassment, the following are some examples of conduct that, if unwelcome, may constitute sexual harassment, depending on the circumstances:

- ◆ Requests for sexual favors in exchange for actual or promised job benefits, such as favorable reviews, salary increases, promotions, increased benefits, or continued employment
- ◆ Use of sexual epithets, written or oral references to sexual conduct, gossip regarding one's sex life, comments on an individual's body, comments about an individual's sexual activity, deficiencies, or prowess
- ◆ Displaying sexually suggestive objects, pictures, or cartoons
- ◆ Leering, whistling, brushing against the body, sexual gestures, suggestive or insulting comments
- ◆ Inquiries about one's sexual experiences
- ◆ Assault or coerced sexual acts

Any EPA GRO Fellow who believes that s/he has been subjected to or witnessed harassment has the right to make a complaint or report it to EPA. This may be done in writing or verbally to the Project Advisor, GRO Project Officer, or EPA's National Human Resources Office.

EPA takes allegations of harassment seriously. When we receive the complaint or report, we will contact the host office to coordinate an investigation of the allegation in a fair and expeditious manner. Confidentiality will be maintained to the extent practicable under the circumstances. Upon completion of the investigation, if it has been determined that inappropriate conduct has occurred, we will act promptly in conjunction with the host office to eliminate the offending conduct and impose such corrective and disciplinary action as is appropriate, up to and including termination. Further, any

retaliation against an individual who has complained about or reported harassment or cooperated with an investigation of a harassment complaint or report is similarly unlawful and will not be tolerated.

In addition, if you believe you have been subjected to harassment, you may file a formal complaint with the Federal Government by contacting the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) or with your state government's fair employment practices agency. The toll-free number for the EEOC is 1-800-559-4000. Using our complaint process does not prohibit you from filing a complaint with these agencies. There are, however, limited time periods for filing claims with these agencies. Confirm any time restrictions directly with the relevant agency.

### *Liability*

Regarding liability related to an injury to a GRO Fellow incurred while performing his or her Fellowship tasks:

- ◆ The GRO Fellow is not an employee of EPA, the Federal government, or CSS. As the recipient of a stipend that comprises grant monies, the Fellow is a grantee. As a grantee, the GRO Fellow is not entitled to compensation for on-the-job injuries under the Federal Employees Compensation Act (FECA), 5 U.S.C. §§ 9101 et seq.
- ◆ However, in the event that the Fellow's injury or property damage is the result of the negligence of an EPA employee, the Fellow may be eligible for compensation under the Federal Tort Claims Act ("FTCA"), 28 U.S.C. §§ 1346, 2671-2680.

Fellows must travel for research purposes at their own risk; neither EPA, the Federal government, nor CSS is responsible for any accident that may occur.

Fellows may not operate a government (EPA or General Services Administration (GSA)) vehicle, including watercraft; however, they may ride as a passenger in a government vehicle.

Regarding liability related to injury to others by the GRO Fellow, in the execution of his/her research duties:

- ◆ Because the Fellow is not an EPA employee, the government generally is not liable under the FTCA for any injury that results from a GRO Fellow's negligent acts. As a result, Fellows are vulnerable to significant personal liability for any damage or injury that results from their acts, and EPA recommends that Fellows be fully informed of their exposure to personal liability.
- ◆ EPA Project Advisors should not place the Fellows in hazardous situations or in situations where a considerable potential for accident or injury exists.