

Use Your **Expertise** to Create Better Policy

Have you thought you could make a difference by applying the knowledge you've gained as a scientist or engineer to the pressing challenges facing society? The Commonwealth of Virginia Engineering and Science (COVES) Fellowship program will give you firsthand exposure to how policy is made at the state level, helping you determine if this is a good choice for you.

Developed by the Virginia Academy of Science, Engineering, and Medicine, the COVES Fellowship program enables young researchers to spend 12 weeks during the summer serving as science and technology advisors in legislative offices and executive agencies as well as with prominent Virginia companies and nonprofits.

As a COVES Fellow, you will:

- Work hand-in-hand with public policy leaders as you use your expertise to develop solutions to pressing challenges facing Virginia.
- Receive training, professional development, and mentorship from some of Virginia's top scientists, engineers, and policy professionals.
- Receive a summer stipend of \$8,500 and access to professional development funds.

The COVES Fellowship is modeled after successful programs at the federal level developed by such organizations as the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine and the American Association for the Advancement of Science. States like California, Missouri, and Idaho have created similar programs.



“This experience solidified my career path and made me realize I want to continue on to science policy. Additionally, this fellowship helped me to start building my network and exposed me to opportunities for the future.”

—Sarah Hall, Virginia Tech
Host Office: Virginia Biotechnology Association

“We are working more to inform the public and our members of all of the great policy work we do for them and having a COVES Fellow helped us spread the word and craft messaging.”

—Virginia Biotechnology Association

About VASEM

The Virginia Academy of Science, Engineering and Medicine is source of independent, impartial expertise on the science and technology policy challenges facing Virginia. It is composed of elected members of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine, as well as other Virginians who are leaders in these fields. Through its nonpartisan network of experts, the Virginia Academy provides rigorous analytical, technical, and scientific support to inform policy decisions critical to the future of the Commonwealth.

vasem.org/covesfellowship





Nick Walker, George Mason University
Host Office: Department of Conservation
and Recreation-Dam Safety

“Our fellow was helpful, prompt, and reliable. He greatly contributed to dam safety’s data management and broadened our opportunities for collaboration. Nick was able to crunch data and produce maps for various population groups, within specific geographies, which can now be utilized for future research and policy development.”

—Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation

The Elements of COVES Fellowship

The COVES Fellowship program was carefully designed to ensure that both fellows and host offices gain maximum benefit from the experience:

- The program begins with a science policy bootcamp and orientation, which introduces fellows to the fundamentals of science policy and communication as well governance and policy-making in the Commonwealth of Virginia.
- Fellows are matched with host offices based on mutual interests and the offices’ need for assistance researching policy proposals, drafting policy documents, or organizing policy meetings and events.
- In addition to their work in policy offices, COVES Fellows are paired with a mentor from the Virginia Academy and will participate in academy briefings, committee meetings, and the annual summit.

Who Is Eligible?

Fellows are current graduate students from participating universities and are selected based on career interests, desire to learn, and scientific integrity. In 2020:

- George Mason University, the University of Virginia, Virginia Commonwealth University, Virginia Tech, and the College of William & Mary all supported a COVES fellow.
- The Chan Zuckerberg Initiative, established by Mark Zuckerberg and his wife, Priscilla Chan, provided funding for a fellowship at one of Virginia’s historically black colleges and universities—Hampton University, Norfolk State University, or Virginia State University.

Making a Worthwhile Contribution

Virginia’s part-time legislators draft new legislation during the summer. As a result, the fellows’ participation with groups helping to shape policy is particularly useful.

The COVES Fellowship program has already had an impact. During its first year, COVES fellows served in the Office of the Secretary of Natural Resources, the Department of Conservation and Recreation, and the Department of Health, the Office of State Senator Ghazal Hashmi, the Virginia Biotechnology Association, and the Public Policy Department of Dominion Energy.

The host offices were so impressed by the caliber of work fellows did that they asked four of the initial six fellows to join them for continuing part-time work.

To find out more, please contact info@vasem.org.