BEAR Seminar – Fellowship Workshop

Karen Sullivan

<Refer to green handout>

Year One: Request for Proposals for specific fellowship competitions. Also apply for continuing graduate student fellowship competition.

Travel Grants: One through the Graduate Assembly and one through the Graduate School of Education. GSE awards up to $300.

Parent Grants: Student parents can get up to $5000 per semester; depends on what is on a student’s FAFSA

Summer Grants: For students working on a particular project, such as working on a class, position paper, research design. The criteria are straightforward with what GSE is looking for.

Summer Foreign Language Area Studies: Application available in spring

SSRC Dissertation Proposal Fellowship Program: Dissertation proposal support program

AERA: research and dissertation grants available through AERA, as well as Minority Dissertation fellowship program

Mentored Research: Work involves diverse population – on nominee selected by GSE

American Association of University Women and Soroptomist International Founder Region Women’s Fellowships – dissertation support for women

Ford Dissertation Fellowship/UC Dissertation-Year Fellowship/UC ACCORD/SPENCER Fellowship.

*Filing Fee: should occur in the final semester of your dissertation writing. Faculty do work with students during filing fee periods to help finish up dissertations. Filing Fee is $400.

*The Dissertation Completion Fellowship – after advanced to candidacy all our eligible for DCF. Grad Div. recommends waiting a year, perhaps after data collection. The academic year before DCF, one should be working as a GSR/GSI to fund yourself for that academic year. Students are encouraged to graduate in 5 to 6 years.

Faculty Panel – Mark Wilson, Sophia Rabe-Hesketh, David Pearson

Mark: Received a Spencer Postdoc; on the AERA fellowship panel. For those interested in methodological issues, realize that the panel will be composed of Educational Researchers from many different context; so, the proposal must be able to explain ideas to economists, historians, curriculum specialists, etc. This can be challenging for methodologists. Must state that you are trying to improve educational research. However, the letters of support can help explain the ‘larger agenda,’ so it’s important to choose people to write letters of support who can help explain your broader research agenda. Recommend starting several months ahead with writing
proposal drafts and communicating with letter writers. Also, try to find out about IES postdoc opportunities.

David: Most recently, on the Spencer Post-doc award panel. WT Grant also has post doc awards that are focused on child development. Emphasizes that the prose must be publically accessible; the prose must be able to convey the significance and methodological detail to folks who are not as familiar with methodological field. Panels are also very careful about conflicts of interest – institutional affiliation is immediate grounds for conflict of interest. Many proposals fall down on the quality of the writing. Proposal must be compelling and clearly communicate why the study is being done. For Spencer, the proposal must be devoted to understanding or improving educational phenomenon. One common pitfall is lacking in overall significance; second pitfall is that methodology is too vague, it may be helpful to look at previous body of research to organize rationale for methods. Yet, the task is difficult because of proposal word-limits. Proposal must specify what the research will contribute to overall body of research. Two judgements are made for post-docs, one about the research and one about the individual. The tougher the reputation of the letter-writer, the better off the candidate. Unfortunately, you will not receive proposal feedback from the Spencer fellowship committee. Spencer is very mindful of giving the awards to a broad distribution of sub-fields in education.

Sophia: Include equations because they don’t take up much space. Reviews individual awards and IOPS. Important to be aware of the fellowship audience. Always show the related literature so your study can seem novel. The proposed study should be feasible and publishable. Reviewer must be convinced that you are qualified to do the work, this comes from the CV – reviewers look for research experience in the CV as well as conference presentations. Also, be sure to list publications in progress or under review. Remember to proofread CV for consistency and grammatical errors. Make sure to do the sort of GSRs and internships to add to the CV. Also, read applications for Post Docs; when making the decision, the CV was very important. On the CV, it is important to list relevant courses as well. On the short list, reviewers also look at pieces of writing. It is important to have a piece of writing ready and able to defend the writing, while remaining open minded. But, you have to get used to rejection and not lose confidence and try again. This includes fellowships, awards, and journal articles. Don’t be shy and apply, but don’t lose confidence if you don’t get the award.

Question and Answer

Q: How common/advisable to get letters of support from employers or others outside the University?

A: It should be the person who knows you and your research best, which is usually an academic, so it should be an academic.

Q: What really makes a stand-out proposal?

A: Making sure the question is interesting and will have impact. The 15 word abstract should be compelling, but it’s not going to make or break the application. Decisions of consequences are not made on the abstract.
Q: How does the selection process work?
A: For Spencer, a score is assigned to the proposal and the individual, which represents a combination of accomplishment and promise. More often than not, it’s the letters of recommendation that help a reviewer understand the individual. The meetings last for two days.

Q: Is there an advantage to having a long CV?
A: If there is actual content, than a longer CV is preferable. But it must be very well organized, with a very clear heading. However, quality is better than quantity. Look at current CVs to get an idea of how to format. Ask for exemplars from people who have received fellowships.

Student Panel – Allysa Sayavedra, Andy Maul, Katherine Castellano

Allysa: When applying for graduate school, also applied for NSF fellowship. You can also apply during your first year – it’s a three-year fellowship. The three main pieces for the NSF fellowship is a personal statement, previous research experience, and a research proposal. Allysa only had her undergraduate experience, so it’s important to understand that NSF isn’t focused on what you’ve already accomplished, but more so on talent and potential. The research proposal was not binding. The research proposal is not a commitment, but must show that you are able to put together a research proposal. Alyssa drew heavily on the work from her adviser to help inform the research proposal. The personal statement was very similar to GSE application. NSF looks at individual merit and impact.

Q: Besides stipend and tuition, are there other resources?
A: There may be support for travel/conferences as well as opportunities for summer grants/travel.

Q: How was the process of you putting together the proposal and communicating with your adviser?
A: Made an outline of what NSF was looking for and what she had to offer. Also, it might be good to include headings to clarify ‘intellectual merit’ versus ‘impact.’

Sophia: Spell out very nicely how the research you propose is relevant to the grant application – make the connection explicit

Andy: Started about a year out with applying for the fellowship – postdoc is available five years out of graduating. When thinking about a project, pitched ideas to colleagues, etc. Created a draft of a proposal two months in advance to give to colleagues for feedback. Specifically, he gave it to colleagues in other disciplines to make sure it was readable and understandable to people with different backgrounds. Solicited advice and opinions which was very helpful. The Spencer reviewers also put on webinars to help with the application process. Andy’s Dept. Chair at the tie was Derek Briggs, a former student of Marks as well as a Spencer Post Doc recipient. So, Derek was very helpful. Also, get in touch with letter writers as soon as possible about writing letters. Andy was interested in the measurement of affective skills – such as effort and emotional intelligence. All the measurement work done thus far has been primitive. In his pitch, Andy said
that people care about these measures and it’s clearly a hot topic; however, the measurement component is critical. Andy made sure to include implications for social justice. Andy applied during the fifth year after his graduation.

Q: What is the scope of the proposed researched, and what were the deliverables

A: Proposed that he would create new a better measure of affective skills. He discussed the general framework approach for creating the measures; however, he did not give too much detail about the kind of outcomes that would result from the work. Not as specific about the outcomes, but very specific about the process.

Q: Did you have to report the outcome?

A: Yes, one big part of the fellowship is flying out to DC for three trips to report on research progress. After the 2nd year, needed to report outcomes.

Q: How was this process of talking to people and putting the application together helpful for you? What were the lessons learned?

A: The process of doing this was very helpful – the biggest gain was connecting myself to larger issues of educational policy. It forced me to reach out to people outside my area and think about how my work contributes to the larger field of education.

Katherine Castellano: Received the Gulliksen fellowship and also served on the committee to select this year’s fellow. In preparing the application for the dissertation fellowship, it was a bit stressful, but it’s important to have some sense of what you want to do; however, it’s not expected that you have everything figured out, just a solid plan. The clearer you are, the better. This application has two stages. The first stage is the letter of intent. It’s good to be specific in this stage; only 3 of 20 were selected to submit a full proposal. The other fellowship received was the IES postdoc; this application was very similar to a faculty application. This required a proposal, interview, and job talk. This is more about what you’ve done and the areas you are interested in. Many testing companies have post-doc opportunities.

Q: When should we start thinking about applying for a postdoc?

A: Most deadlines are in the spring, which could be before you’ve submitted your dissertation. The fall of your second to last year is the best time to start looking.

Q: How long does it take to put together a research proposal? What did you propose?

A: The first deadline was in November, which was the November before dissertation work starts. The second stage was due in January. Nobody checks to make sure that you actually do what you say you’re going to do. A big part of the process was having a mentor within ETS. ETS wants to see that you are improving something that is already out there or extending something – they’re not looking for something that’s 100% applied.

Q: What was the audience for your fellowship application?
A: The ETS position was really measurement specific. In the application guidelines, there is a link to the major areas of research within ETS that applicants can build off of. People in QME are at an advantage.

Q: Do you need to know somebody within ETS to get the fellowship?
A: You don’t necessarily need to have been an intern or know anyone.

Q: Why should someone want to do a postdoc? What is the value?
A: It’s useful to get to know different perspectives in the field. Also, a postdoc gives you a lot of freedom to work on papers and think about what you want to do without a tenure clock to worry about.

Sophia: People may apply for faculty and postdoc positions at the same time.

Q: How many postdocs can one do?
A: I don’t know the motivation for doing more than one. Usually, it’s a stepping stone to the next stage of your career. The important thing is that during those years, you take the time to publish.