



2018 Dissertation Fellowships in Disability Policy Research

The dissertation fellowship program provides financial support to outstanding doctoral students from diverse fields conducting high-quality research in areas of significance to disability policy. Mathematica is pleased to offer up to four such fellowships in 2018. This opportunity is funded by a cooperative agreement between Mathematica and the Social Security Administration (SSA), through its Disability Research Consortium (DRC). SSA developed the DRC to research and evaluate a wide array of topics related to the Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) programs.¹ The DRC aims to provide rigorous evidence about the interactions between the SSA disability programs and other programs, the factors affecting disability program participation, and the well-being of disability beneficiaries, to address the broader social and economic contexts of program administration and operation.

An essential criterion for funding under the dissertation fellowship program is the extent to which proposed research projects are linked to current SSA disability program issues and consistent with the DRC's aims. Research topics may include determinants of federal disability application or receipt or implications of federal disability program rules on beneficiary behavior and well-being. Projects may emphasize vulnerable or underserved populations that come into contact with federal disability programs including (but not limited to) individuals with mental illness or co-occurring conditions, minority populations, youth transitioning from school to adulthood, or the prison population. Projects may also consider issues relevant to other programs used extensively by Social Security disability beneficiaries. These include Medicare and Medicaid; Rehabilitation Services Administration programs; Veterans Administration disability programs; and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, among others.

Each selected dissertation fellow will receive a stipend totaling \$28,000.² Fellowship recipients may be requested to present the findings from their funded work at SSA in Washington, DC or Baltimore.

Complete applications must be received by ***Monday, June 25, 2018 at 11:59pm EST*** to be considered. A review committee will evaluate applications and conduct phone interviews with finalists during early April. The committee will notify selected fellows of their award in July 2018.

¹ More information about the DRC can be found at <https://www.ssa.gov/policy/drc/index.html>.

² We cannot advise about the tax implications of this stipend; please consult with your tax professional.

Program Eligibility

Eligible applicants include students who:

- Are currently enrolled in a doctoral program at a U.S. institution of higher education and have entered the dissertation or “ABD” phase of their studies.³ Students must have completed all required coursework for their program. Eligible programs of study include economics, sociology, psychology, political science, public policy, public administration, special education, public health, social welfare, or a related discipline.
- Demonstrate high academic performance in their chosen field of study and a commitment to a career in research with a focus on disability policy.
- Have a dissertation topic approved by the applicant’s advisor or dissertation committee chair with an identified data source and proposed methodology (quantitative or qualitative).
- Are available to pursue their research training on a full-time or nearly full-time basis, normally defined as 30-40 hours per week, for the year starting in August 2018.
- Will not have any concurrent sources of federal funding during the grant period, which runs from approximately August 1, 2018 through July 31, 2019.
- Have identified an advisor or dissertation chair who will mentor and supervise the applicant. The primary sponsor should be an active investigator in the applicant’s field of study and be willing to submit a letter of recommendation based on the outline provided below.

All eligible persons are welcome to apply. We strongly encourage applications from individuals with disabilities, students enrolled at minority serving institutions, and students from under-represented racial and ethnic groups.⁴

Application Requirements and Selection Criteria

To apply, interested candidates should submit the following materials:

1. **Curriculum vitae** that includes the candidate’s contact information, relevant experience, and any publications to date.
2. **Graduate transcript** (unofficial or official) from current Ph.D. program documenting progress toward degree.

³ We anticipate that most applicants will expect to complete doctoral studies in or after spring 2019. Students expecting to finish in or after the fall 2018 semester may still be eligible for partial funding; please contact us with details of your particular situation prior to the application deadline for guidance.

⁴ Including Historically Black Colleges or Universities (HBCUs), Tribal College or University (TCUs), Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSIs), Predominantly Black Institutions (PBIs), Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Institution (AANAPISIs), and other minority-serving institutions as defined by the United States Department of Education.

3. **Two letters of recommendation, one from the candidate's advisor or dissertation committee chair and the other from another faculty member in the candidate's department of study who can attest to the candidate's performance in the program and the strength of the proposed research plan.** The letter from the advisor or committee chair should: (1) indicate that the candidate is in good standing and in the dissertation phase of the graduate program, having passed all required exams and having an approved dissertation prospectus; (2) acknowledge having read the candidate's research proposal and supporting its methodology as appropriate to the field of study; (3) document why the applicant is a strong candidate for the fellowship; and (4) make a commitment to advising or mentoring the candidate through the dissertation phase of study.
4. **A project proposal**, described in detail below.

Project Proposal Requirements

All project proposals should be 12 pages or fewer, in Times New Roman, 1.5 line spacing, 12-point font, with one-inch margins. Please see the proposals on Mathematica's website⁵ for examples of successful past fellowship applications.

The proposal must include the following information, (approximate lengths of each section as shown):

- **Cover page (1 page):** This should contain your name, contact information, dissertation title, institution, department, and advisor or dissertation committee chair. It should also indicate the names and contact information from the individuals who will be writing your letters of recommendation.
- **Project abstract (1 page):** A succinct description of the proposed work that can stand alone when separated from the full application. The abstract should include a statement of the problem, hypothesis, data collection, and significance of findings.
- **Project description (9 pages maximum):** The project description should contain the following sections with the length of each determined by the applicant:
 - **Statement of the problem:** A description of the hypothesis being tested or theory to be explored (if using qualitative methods).
 - **Background and significance:** Statement of the problem that the research addresses, a brief review of related existing literature, and a discussion of the significance of findings for disability policy.
 - **Analysis plan:** A description of the data to be used, model specification, and analysis plan.
 - **Research schedule and timeline:** The proposed schedule should indicate that the project can be completed during the year of funding, no later than April May 2019.
- **References (1 page)**

⁵ <https://www.disabilitypolicyresearch.org/disability-research-consortium/fellowships>

Submission Instructions

Individuals with questions or seeking more information about the program should email DRCDissertationFellows@mathematica-mpr.com . Applications (with all supporting materials included as Microsoft Word or PDF files) should be ***submitted via email to*** ***DRCDissertationFellows@mathematica-mpr.com***.⁶ Complete applications must be received by ***Monday, June 25, 2018*** at 11:59 PM EST to be considered. An email confirming receipt will be sent to applicants; please contact the address above if you do not receive that confirmation.

⁶ Letters of recommendation may be sent in a separate email, but please ask the reference to indicate the candidate's name in the subject line.