



Dear Applicant:

Thank you for your interest in the Spencer Dissertation Fellowship. By means of our Dissertation Fellowship Program, the Spencer Foundation aims to strengthen the educational research community by supporting early career scholars from a wide range of fields. Each year, the program funds a small group of outstanding advanced doctoral candidates so that they can devote themselves full-time to the completion of their dissertation. In addition to the \$25,000 stipend, fellows are invited to participate in two workshops. While these meetings offer dissertation writing support, they also provide professional development opportunities designed to expand fellows' networks and support their transition into professional roles. Spencer thus aims to encourage long-term commitment to research relevant to the improvement of education, and productive engagement within the educational research community.

Spencer fellows are selected through a highly competitive process. As such, please review carefully the eligibility and procedure requirements before beginning an application. This year we anticipate receiving approximately 500 applications and awarding about 30 Fellowships.

A Selection Committee of eight scholars from diverse fields assists the Spencer Foundation in choosing the award recipients. Basic criteria for selection include: the importance of the research question to education, the quality of the research approach and feasibility of the work plan, and the applicant's future potential in educational research. Please be aware that the Fellowship is intended to support the writing of the dissertation during the last year(s) of doctoral work and cannot be used during the data collection phase of your dissertation.

Please read all of the following materials and instructions carefully to determine your eligibility and to assure the best presentation of your candidacy to those who will review your application. Completed applications must be submitted electronically by 5pm Central Standard Time (CST) on Wednesday, November 1, 2006.

Answers to commonly asked questions about the Dissertation Fellowship Program can be found on our website at spencer.org. If you have any other questions, please do not hesitate to contact us by email at fellows@spencer.org. On behalf of the Spencer Foundation, I wish you well as you move toward completion of your doctoral work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jack E. Rossmann".

Jack E. Rossmann
Senior Advisor, Spencer Foundation

DISSERTATION FELLOWSHIPS
GENERAL INFORMATION

Mission of the Spencer Foundation

The Spencer Foundation was established by Lyle M. Spencer, founder and president of Science Research Associates, Inc. (SRA). Because Mr. Spencer's wealth derived largely from SRA's success in publishing educational materials, he wished the Spencer Foundation to dedicate its resources to "investigating ways in which education can be improved, around the world." To achieve this goal, the Spencer Foundation supports research that gives promise of yielding new knowledge about education, in any of its many forms, in the United States and abroad. The Foundation assists studies with a wide variety of disciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches to this end.

Purpose of Spencer Dissertation Fellowships

Through its Dissertation Fellowships, the Spencer Foundation seeks to encourage a new generation of scholars from a variety of fields to undertake research relevant to the improvement of education. The Foundation believes that scholarly insight from many different disciplines can contribute to an understanding of education as a fundamental human endeavor and advance our ability to address significant current issues in education. Therefore, the Spencer Dissertation Fellowships support individuals whose dissertations show potential for bringing fresh and constructive perspectives to the history, theory, or practice of formal or informal education anywhere in the world.

Eligibility

Applicants need not be citizens of the United States; however, they must be candidates for the doctoral degree at a graduate school within the US. These fellowships are not intended to finance data collection or the completion of doctoral coursework, but rather to support the final analysis of the research topic and the writing of the dissertation. For this reason, all applicants must document (on the online application) that they will have completed all pre-dissertation requirements by June 1, 2007, and must provide a clear and specific plan for completing the dissertation within a one or two-year time frame.

Funding Priorities

Although the dissertation topic must concern education, graduate study may be in any academic discipline or professional field. In the past, fellowships have been awarded to candidates in anthropology, architecture, art history, economics, education, history, linguistics, literature, philosophy, political science, psychology, public health, religion, and sociology, but

eligibility is not restricted to these academic areas. Candidates should be interested in pursuing further research in education once the doctorate is attained.

Awards and Conditions

Approximately 30 non-renewable fellowships will be awarded. Recipients of the fellowships will receive \$25,000 to support completion of the dissertation. This amount must be expended within a time limit of up to two years and in accordance with the work plan provided by the candidate in the application. It is expected that Fellows will not accept employment other than as described (if any) in the application nor will they accept other awards providing duplicate benefits without the written permission of the Senior Advisor. Applications must be submitted electronically by 5pm Central Standard Time (CST) on Wednesday, November 1, 2006. The letters of recommendation as well as the graduate transcript must be *received* by the Spencer Foundation no later than November 1, 2006. [Letters of recommendation may not be submitted electronically.] Notification of awards will occur in late April 2007. Fellowships may begin no earlier than June 2007.

DISSERTATION FELLOWSHIPS
SELECTION CRITERIA

Basic selection criteria are the following:

1. Importance of the research question to education
2. Quality of the research approach and feasibility of the work plan
3. Applicant's future potential as a researcher and interest in educational research

However, while completing your application, also keep in mind the more specific questions that Selection Committee members consider in their deliberations:

- To what extent does the narrative discussion of the dissertation show an in-depth knowledge of relevant research in the field? To what extent does it display an adequate grounding in theory?
- To what extent are the design and the methods appropriate to answer the research question(s)?
- To what extent is the study's argued relevance to education convincing? To what extent is the study likely to yield new knowledge about an important educational issue?
- To what extent does the narrative discussion display strong authorship skills, with a clear organization and structure?
- Is the applicant likely to complete his/her doctoral studies within the time-frame the fellowship allows (one year full-time or two years half-time), or soon thereafter?

Getting feedback from colleagues and others who can provide constructive criticism is strongly encouraged. It may be especially helpful to enlist a colleague whose focus is different from your own to ensure that your proposal can be understood by the Selection Committee members whose disciplinary background is different from yours. Make sure that the narrative discussion of your research has been written in a way so that it is accessible to readers outside of your discipline/research area.

We also recommend reading "The Art of Writing Proposals," an article published by the Social Science Research Council, which is available on their website at:

www.ssrc.org.

DISSERTATION FELLOWSHIPS
APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

Once you create an online account, you will be able to manage your application online. It is not necessary to complete your application in one session. You will be able to save your work and come back to your submission.

All materials must be submitted in English.

The Foundation does not accept any materials other than those requested.

No additions or revisions to an application will be accepted after the deadline.

Completed applications must be submitted electronically by 5pm Central Standard Time (CST) on Wednesday, November 1, 2006. Hard copies of the application and narrative will not be accepted.

The two letters of recommendation as well as the graduate transcript must be received by the Spencer Foundation no later than 5pm Central Standard Time (CST) on Wednesday, November 1, 2006. We encourage applicants to request letters from the recommenders and request transcripts early as late materials will not be accepted. Applicants are asked to collect the three items and mail them together with a cover letter providing their full name, institution, and citing the email address to which their online account is registered. Please mail these items in one envelope to the following address:

Spencer Foundation
Dissertation Fellowship Office
625 North Michigan Avenue
Suite 1600
Chicago, IL 60611

A completed application is comprised of several sections. They are as follows:

1. **Background Information.** Once you create an online account you will be asked to provide the following information: demographic data, educational history, employment history, a list of scholarships, fellowships, and assistantships you have received or for which you have applied, a list of honors and awards, a list of your publications and presentations, information about the completion of your pre-dissertation requirements, language(s) proficiency, information about your two letter writers, and the work plan for your dissertation.
2. **Dissertation Abstract.** In a single-spaced paragraph of no more than 200 words, summarize the substantive focus and research design of your dissertation and its contribution to education.

3. **Narrative Discussion of Dissertation.** In no more than 2,000 words, describe your dissertation. Include the goals of the project, its contribution to the field, and the significance of the work, especially as it relates to education. Place the project in context and outline the theoretical grounding and the relevant literature. Describe the research questions and research design, the methods of gathering and analyzing data, and interpretation techniques. If you have preliminary findings these should be described briefly. *Please keep in mind that your proposal will be reviewed by some scholars familiar with your field and by others less familiar; thus, language specific to a field should be situated within an argument persuasive to a generalist audience.* This narrative discussion should not exceed 2,000 words or ten double-spaced typed pages. An additional one-page, single-spaced bibliography of the sources most important to your research should be appended (works cited in the narrative discussion should be included).
4. **Work Plan.** The Spencer Dissertation Fellowship is intended to support the writing of the dissertation rather than data collection or course work. It is the expectation of the Foundation that you will have a completed dissertation at the end of the Fellowship period or soon thereafter. Ordinarily, the Fellowship of \$25,000 supports one year of full-time work on the dissertation, and your work plan specifies when this year begins and ends. Applicants who cannot work full time on their dissertations may specify a work plan of up to two years that allows for part-time work for the duration of the Fellowship or for alternating periods of dissertation work and income-producing work. The Fellowship can begin as early as June 1, 2007 and end as late as May 31, 2009.
5. **Personal Statement.** In no more than 400 words, describe: 1) how your educational and work experiences up to this point have prepared you for doing research on this dissertation topic; and 2) what career path you hope to pursue after completing your dissertation.
6. **Two Letters of Recommendation.** Two letters of recommendation, one from your dissertation director/chair and one from another faculty member are required. Please give each the appropriate form (having filled in your name and dissertation title). Our form provides directions for the recommender (the forms appear below). *We strongly encourage applicants to discuss with their recommenders the principal issues the letter should address as outlined by our form.* Your recommenders must provide you with a hard copy of the letter in a signed and sealed envelope. Only two letters will be accepted. Please forward the appropriate forms to your recommenders early. You need to allow sufficient time to ensure that your letters reach us in time to meet our application deadline. Note: Occasionally applicants face difficulties obtaining a letter by the deadline due to circumstances such as sabbatical leaves or illness. In the event that you anticipate this kind of problem, please contact the Foundation as early as possible to discuss the submission of a late letter. Because our process moves forward quite quickly, we can make no guarantee that late letters will be included in the early stages of the review process.
7. **Graduate Transcript.** Ask the Registrar of your current graduate institution to provide you with an official sealed transcript. Photocopies are not accepted. Please request your transcript early. The two letters of recommendation as well as the graduate transcript must be received by The Spencer Foundation no later than 5pm Central Standard Time (CST) on Wednesday, November 1, 2006. We encourage applicants to request letters from the recommenders and request transcripts early as late materials will not be

accepted. Applicants are asked to collect the three items and mail them together with a cover letter providing their full name and citing the email address to which their online account is registered. Please mail these items in one envelope to the following address:

Spencer Foundation
Dissertation Fellowship Office
625 North Michigan Avenue
Suite 1600
Chicago, IL 60611

Answers to commonly asked questions about the Dissertation Fellowship Program can be found on our website at www.spencer.org. If you have any other questions, please do not hesitate to contact us by telephone at (312) 274-6526 or by email at fellows@spencer.org.

DISSERTATION FELLOWSHIPS
FORM TO ACCOMPANY LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION

Applicant: _____

Dissertation Title: _____

Please check one: ☐ Dissertation Director/Chair's Recommendation
 ☐ Faculty Letter of Recommendation

Through the Dissertation Fellowship Program, the Spencer Foundation aims to build capacity in the education research community by supporting a new generation of scholars from a wide range of fields. The program annually funds a small group of outstanding advanced doctoral candidates so that they can devote themselves full-time to the completion of their dissertation writing. In addition to the stipend, fellows are invited to participate in two forums. While these meetings offer dissertation writing support, they also provide professional development opportunities designed to expand fellows' networks and support their transition into professional roles. Spencer thus aims to encourage long-term commitment to research relevant to the improvement of education, and productive engagement within the educational research community.

We would appreciate your evaluation of the individual named above as a candidate for a Spencer Dissertation Fellowship of \$25,000. Please comment directly on three issues: 1) your relationship to the student; 2) the strength of the proposed dissertation research and its relevance to educational improvement; 3) the student's future potential as a scholar and likelihood that his/her research continues to address education, broadly conceived.

Please write your recommendation on university letterhead and attach it to this form. Seal both in an envelope, sign across the seal to ensure confidentiality and return to your student. Letters of recommendation must be received by the Spencer Foundation no later than 5pm Central Standard Time (CST) on Wednesday, November 1, 2006 to be considered.

Recommender's Name (please print)

Recommender's Signature

Recommender's Department/School

Recommender's Institution

Recommender's Title

Date

DISSERTATION FELLOWSHIPS
FORM TO ACCOMPANY LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION

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