

MSS Spring 2018 Committee Report

Committee Name: Scholarship

Committee Chair: Lisa Kort-Butler

Date of the Report: May 4, 2018

Sessions or programs offered by your committee at the annual meeting (2018).

The SDC sponsored the panel session "Taking Your Research from Concept to Funding to Finish." The goal was to highlight the work of the SDC and MSS funding opportunities. Three past awardees talked about their experiences applying for and carrying out their MSS-funded projects, and how it led to further research. The panelists and SDC members then answered questions from the audience. The session was well-attended and we had a lively discussion.

Main issues and agenda items discussed at committee meeting.

- I. The committee had the opportunity to discuss the 2019 annual meeting program with Tom Gerschick.
- II. The committee reviewed seven award applications, four submitted by graduate students and three submitted by faculty. Our reviews consider overall sociological merit of the research project (e.g., filling gaps in the literature; innovative ideas), the quality of the research plan (e.g., whether the design addresses the research question), and the budget justification (e.g., reasonability; feasibility). As in previous years, the SDC was committed to being good stewards of MSS funds and funding only high-quality proposals. We funded four projects. Two awardees (Emily Hallgren of University of Illinois – Chicago and Emma Cohen of Indiana University) received the full amount of \$2500 each. Two applicants (Matthew Cousineau at Auburn University and Chase Billingham at Wichita State University) received partial funding, \$400 and \$670 respectively. As in past years, partial funding was awarded with an eye for elements of the proposal that could be leveraged for expanding a research project and/or for applying for other funding.
- III. The committee reviewed progress reports submitted by the 2017 awardees. All awardees were making good progress.
- IV. The committee discussed revising the call to emphasize exactly the elements we are looking for when accessing the applications. (For example, there tends to be variability in the degree to which budgets are itemized.) We hope that doing so will improve overall application quality. The chair will work with the executive office to revise the call.
- V. The committee discussed the decline in applications and brainstormed means to increase applications in the future. In 2016, the first year the call was open to graduate students, we had 17 applications. In 2017, we had nine, and in 2018 we had seven. Although we had no clear explanation for this decline, we speculated the shift away from a newsletter and toward social media and other platforms may have contributed. One SDC member also suggested that cuts to research officers at some schools may have contributed. With those ideas in mind, we suggested the following:
 - a. Ensure the call is VISIBLE on the website (<https://www.themss.org/awards-grants>). A member noticed that the website made it appear that "applications [were] suspended until further notice." This line applied to visiting scholars but was directly above (with no spacing) "Grants for research." We suspect that some people did not apply because they thought they could not.
 - b. Work with social media director for posts specifically for the call
 - c. Write a specific email to the memberships with "grant opportunity" (or similar) in the funding line.
 - d. Push out the call via email to state directors
 - e. Use a portion of our budget to print a banner/sign to place in the meeting Commons with QR code (or similar). Sign could be reused year-to-year
 - f. Use a portion of our budget for an additional ribbon on SDC members' name tags ("Ask me about funding" or similar)

How did committee work relate to the strategic plan?

Describe Activity 1.

Given our intentions to sponsor another panel session in 2019 and to make a concerted effort to increase the visibility of MSS research funding opportunities, the SDC's work meets:

Strategic Direction 5: Provide & Facilitate Professional Development Across MSS Membership; Objective 3: Enhance communication surrounding research grants opportunities Strategic Direction 6: Build Public Engagement & Social Media Presence; Objective 3: Communicate intentionally to the membership and general public regarding the mission of MSS

Are there specific resources you need to meet goals for the coming year?

We have no specific resource needs outside of our usual budget.

Will your committee be seeking funds from the board in the next fiscal year?

\$14,000

The committee requests the same level of funding for next year, \$14,000. Although we spent nowhere near this amount in 2018, we hope that our efforts to increase the quality and number of applications will bear fruit and lead to more awards. As noted we are also considering using a small portion of this budget for promotional materials.

Is your committee interested in having the Chair complete a 2-year term?

Yes

Do you have nominations for the Board to fill positions on your committee (they must be MSS members)?

Jynette Larchus

The current chair is halfway through a two-year term. The committee in general agrees that a minimum of a two-year chairship is beneficial for this and other committees. Jynette Larchus, whose term ended this year would like to stay on another term. The committee chair appreciates the continuing support and professionalism of the executive office!