

**Scholarship Development Committee, Midwest Sociological Society**  
*2017 Annual Report*

The Scholarship Development Committee met on 1 April 2017 during the annual meeting of the MSS in Milwaukee.

Members present: Erik Larson (chair), Chris Conner, Peter Hart-Brinson, Lisa Kort-Butler, Jynette Larshus, Robert Wazienski  
Apologies: Tiffany Davis, Fetene Gebrewold

**Research Awards**

Both graduate student members and members with a Ph.D. are eligible to apply for the MSS Research Grants. The call for proposals emphasizes the desire to fund proposals likely to have high impact, whether at an early or later stage of a project.

To promote research among both members who have a Ph.D. and graduate student members while also retaining some degree of flexibility, the committee has dedicated pools of funds for research proposals from the two categories of members (40% of the total for each pool) and a shared pool (the remaining 20%) for years in which there are a large number of compelling proposals from one of the two pools.

The evaluation procedures include both absolute and relative standards of merit to judge proposals. Each member of the committee scored each proposal on three criteria: sociological merit, quality of research plan, and budget justification. The chair compiled individual members' ratings and provided the committee lists sorted both by sociological merit and by quality of research plan.

The committee used these scores as the starting point to compare proposals to one another and used budget justification ratings and comments to ensure that MSS funds are being used efficiently.

MSS members submitted applications requesting, in the aggregate, about two times the funds available for distribution. The committee seeks to be good stewards of MSS funds by maximizing the impact of its funding decisions. By doing so, the committee selected four projects to support. The aggregate level of support was \$9,900.

The committee selected the following proposals for funding:

- Jennifer Cossyleon, Loyola University, "Community Organizing 'In Some of the Toughest Neighborhoods Anywhere:?' Grassroots Collective Action and Family Lives." \$2,500 (Graduate Student)
- Kristin Kelley, Indiana University, "Does Marital Name Choice Cause Women and Men to be Evaluated Differently and, if so, How?" \$2,500 (Graduate Student)
- Andrea Nichols, Washington University in St. Louis/Forest Park College, "Benefits and Challenges of Juvenile Justice System Involvement in Responding to Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking." \$2,400 (Ph.D.)

- Melissa Osborne, University of Chicago, “Pathways to Social Mobility: Examining the Mechanisms that Facilitate Success for Economic Minority Students in Higher Education.” \$2,500 (Graduate Student)

All award recipients must sign a Grant Recipient Agreement sign to funds being disbursed. Under this agreement, grant recipients commit to presenting at the next annual meeting of the MSS and to submitting a report of activities prior to the next annual meeting.

The committee reviewed reports from the prior year grant recipients and noted the substantial progress projects had made on their initial goals.

### **Other Committee Activity**

#### *Promoting the Visibility of MSS Research Grant Recipients’ Work*

The committee seeks to highlight the accomplishments of those whose research has been funded by an MSS Research Grant. To this end, the committee hosted a table at the Welcome Reception and displayed information about the 2016 grant recipients who were presenting work at the 2017 annual meeting.

Given the positive response, the committee thinks it might be beneficial to do more to highlight this work in the program book, potentially having a display somewhere in the annual meeting program or having some kind of notification on the conference app. The committee has made initial contact with the Program Committee to discuss such possibilities.

The committee noted that the previous practice of having all recipients present their research in a single session was less likely to draw attention to this work, as the topics often are disparate.

#### *Committee’s Work in Relation to MSS Strategic Plan*

The Strategic Plan designates the committee’s work as primarily contributing to expanding opportunity for professional development (Strategic Direction 5). In funding research opportunities for graduate student members and members with a Ph.D., the committee assists in the members’ professional development. The committee briefly discussed ways that its work could further contribute to professional development of scholarship during annual meetings, including the following ideas:

- Sponsoring sessions at annual meetings about how members of committees review grant applications to assist members in writing more effective grant applications. Such sessions could also draw on other members of MSS who have experience reviewing large grant applications and previous members of the Scholarship Development Committee.
- Sponsoring sessions at annual meetings in which previous grant recipients report on how they have used grant-funded research to lead to publications or further research funding. As above, some participants could be previous recipients of MSS Research Grants, but there may be other MSS members who could discuss their experience with other sources of funding.
- The committee also discussed a variety of ways that these types of sessions could be organized—while a traditional panel or roundtable is a possibility, there could also be

more interactive sessions, such as offering a series of short one-on-one consultations or conversations that focus on the research life-cycle in particular subfields.

In addition, by requiring grant recipients to present at the subsequent meetings of the MSS, the committee makes indirect contributions to ensuring the utility and vitality of the annual meetings (Strategic Direction 2).

The committee also believes that the previous practice of having short profiles of previous research grant recipients in *The Midwest Sociologist* might provide the foundation to promote one or more objectives related to Strategic Direction 6 (building public engagement and social media presence). Featuring MSS funded research in publicly accessible ways and on social media can help to communicate the mission of MSS. Doing so might also enhance the visibility of the Research Grant program.

#### *Discussion about 2018 MSS Program*

The committee met briefly with President-Elect and 2018 Program Chair Marlynn May about opportunities for sessions that combine programmatic goals of the Scholarship Development Committee (as discussed above) with thematic issues. One possibility would be to sponsor a session related to how to develop and conduct scholarship with migrant/immigrant communities.

#### *Follow-up to 2016 Report Proposal on Research on Professional Issues*

The committee endorsed the idea that the outgoing and incoming chairs share the committee's proposal from its 2016 report that the MSS might wish to fund research related to the status of the discipline and profession in the region. Subsequent to the committee's meeting, the outgoing chair met with the MSS Board to present the proposal, which will be forwarded to the Long-Range Planning Committee given that the proposal has potential to address elements of the Strategic Plan.

### **Funding Request and Recommendation of Committee Chair and Members**

#### *Research Grants Funding Request*

1. MSS Research Grants should continue to be open both to graduate student members and members with a Ph.D.
2. The committee found the dedicated pools and shared pool approach effective and proposes to continue the practice in the current allocation (40% each for graduate student members and members with a Ph.D. with the remaining 20% to the shared pool). The committee emphasizes that this approach resulted in highly rated proposals being first compared to each other within category-of-membership pools and then highly rated but not initially selected proposals being compared across pools. These multiple comparisons facilitated productive, focused conversation about the absolute and relative merits of the research proposals.
3. The committee recommends funding the Research Grant program continue at a maximum of \$14,000 per year. Funding at this level would enable \$5,600 to be allocated for each exclusive category-of-membership pool and \$2,800 to the shared pool. The committee will continue to operate with a philosophy of being wise stewards of MSS funds, meaning that it will not simply award funds for the sake of allocating all funds (either

within category or in the total budget). Rather, it will do so only if it has concluded that these funds will make a meaningful difference for a meritorious research project.

4. The committee notes that the number of faculty applications in 2017 had decreased from previous years. It will monitor the status of these applications in future years to determine whether this decrease may reflect only a temporary change or if there may be a need to evaluate amending the structure of the grant program for members with a Ph.D.

#### ***Committee Recommendations to the Board for Committee Chair and New Members***

The committee welcomed one new member and one reappointed member this year. The committee notes that these two members replace two members who completed their term at the end of the 2017 meeting (Fetene Gebrewold and Erik Larson). The committee now has six continuing members, a number that the committee feels is sufficient for its work. That said, the committee would welcome the appointment of an additional member if there are interested members. The committee would particularly welcome members who have previously received a Research Grant.

The committee has one member whose term expires at the end of the 2018 annual meeting (Jynette Larchus). She expressed interest in being re-appointed for another term, which the committee unanimously endorsed.

The committee also unanimously endorsed appointing Lisa Kort-Butler to a second year as chair, meaning that she would chair the committee for 2017-18 and 2018-19 if approved.