

NATIONAL ACADEMY *of* EDUCATION

*Advancing the Highest Quality Education Research and
Its Use in Policy Formation and Practice*

Dear Applicant:

Thank you for your interest in the National Academy of Education/Spencer Dissertation Fellowship Program. The dissertation fellowship aims to strengthen research on education and learning 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 participate in two professional development retreats. While these meetings offer dissertation writing support, they also provide opportunities designed to expand fellows' networks, build research and career skills, and support their transition into professional roles. Through this program, NAEd and Spencer seek to encourage a new generation of outstanding scholars committed to the improvement of education, and productive engagement within the education research community.

NAEd/Spencer dissertation fellows are selected through a highly competitive process. As such, please review carefully the eligibility and procedural requirements before beginning an application. This year we anticipate receiving over 500 applications and awarding about 20 Fellowships.

A Selection Committee of NAEd members and other senior scholars from diverse fields is responsible for selecting 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 dissertation 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 ensure the best presentation of your candidacy to those who will review your application. Completed applications must be submitted electronically no later than 5pm Eastern Time on **Monday, October 3, 2011**.

500 Fifth Street NW, Washington, DC 20001 • T: 202-334-2341 • F: 202-334-2350 • Email: info@naeducation.org

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Answers to commonly asked questions about the dissertation fellowship can be found on our website at www.naeducation.org. If you have any other questions, please contact us by e-mail at pperrin@naeducation.org. On behalf of the National Academy of Education, I wish you well as you move toward completion of your doctoral work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gregory White". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping "G" and "W".

Gregory White
National Academy of Education

Dissertation Fellowship General Information

Purpose of the NAEd/Spencer Dissertation Fellowship

Through the Dissertation Fellowship, the NAEd and Spencer seek to encourage a new generation of scholars from a variety of fields to undertake research relevant to the improvement of education. NAEd and Spencer believe 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 NAEd/Spencer Dissertation Fellowship supports 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 a doctoral degree at a graduate institution 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 confirm via the online application that they will have completed all pre-dissertation requirements by June 1, 2012, 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 centrally concern education, graduate study may be in any academic discipline or professional field. Fellowships have been awarded to candidates in anthropology, architecture, art history, communications, economics, education, history, linguistics, literature, philosophy, political science, psychology, public health, religion, and sociology. Eligibility is not restricted to these academic areas. Candidates should be interested in pursuing research on education once the doctorate is attained.

Awards and Conditions

Approximately 20 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. It is expected that fellows will not accept employment other than as described (if any) in the application nor will they accept other awards without the written permission of NAEd/Spencer. Applications must be submitted electronically by 5pm Eastern Time (ET) on October 3, 2011. Both letters of recommendation must be received by NAEd on or before October 3, 2011. Notification of awards will occur in early May 2012. Fellowships may begin no earlier than June 2012.

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:

Dissertation Fellowship General Information

- To what extent does the narrative discussion of the dissertation show knowledge of relevant research in the field? To what extent is it grounded in pertinent theory?
- 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 are the methodology and analysis plans described in sufficient detail to evaluate their appropriateness for this specific study?
- To what extent does the narrative discussion display strong authorship skills, with 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?
- What is the likelihood that the applicant will continue to conduct research and scholarly activities in the field of education?

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 may be different from yours. Make sure the narrative discussion of your research is written in a way that 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.

Mission of the National Academy of Education

The National Academy of Education (NAEd) advances the highest quality education research and its use in policy formation and practice. Founded in 1965, the NAEd consists of U.S. members and foreign associates who are elected on the basis of outstanding scholarship related to education. Since its establishment, NAEd has undertaken research studies that address pressing issues in education and which typically include both NAEd members and other scholars with an expertise in a particular area of inquiry. In addition, members are deeply engaged in NAEd's professional development fellowship programs focused on the rigorous preparation of the next generation of scholars.

Mission of the Spencer Foundation

The Spencer Foundation was established in 1962 by Lyle M. Spencer. The Foundation received its major endowment upon Spencer's death in 1968 and began formal grant making in 1971. Since that time, the Foundation has made grants totaling approximately \$250 million. The Foundation is intended, by Spencer's direction, to investigate ways in which education, broadly conceived, can be improved around the world. From the first, the Foundation has been dedicated to the belief that research is necessary to the improvement in education. The Foundation is thus committed to supporting high-quality investigation of education through its research programs and to strengthening and renewing the educational research community through its fellowship and training programs and related activities.

Dissertation Fellowship 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.

NAEd/Spencer will not accept any materials other than those requested. We will only accept two letters of recommendation.

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

Completed applications must be submitted electronically by 5pm Eastern Time (ET) on **October 3, 2011**. Hard copies of application materials will not be accepted.

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, and information about your two letter writers.
2. **Dissertation Abstract.** In a single-spaced paragraph of no more than 1000 characters, summarize the substantive focus and research design of your dissertation and its contribution to education. A text box is provided within the online application. Please include the purpose, methods, and scope of your dissertation.
3. **Narrative Discussion of Dissertation.** In no more than ten double-spaced pages, 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 senior 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 ten double-spaced typed pages. An additional single-spaced bibliography (no more than two pages) of the sources most important to your research should be appended (works cited in the narrative discussion should be included).

This narrative discussion (ten pages) and bibliography (two pages) should be

Dissertation Fellowship Application Instructions

uploaded as one document (12 pages total) within the online system. Headers, footers, and appendices (charts, graphs, tables, questionnaires, etc.) can be included and do not count towards the limit. However, you should be judicious in the quantity you send. This document should have page numbers and should also have your full name and registered e-mail address as a running header. We ask that you please employ one-inch margins, and at least 11-point Times New Roman font.

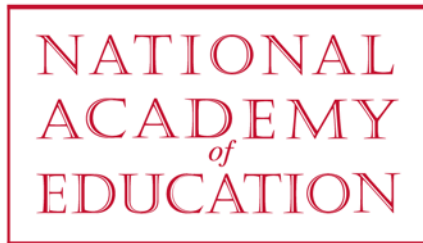
4. **Work Plan.** The NAEEd/Spencer Dissertation Fellowship is intended to support the writing of the dissertation rather than data collection or course work. It is the expectation of NAEEd and Spencer that you will have a completed dissertation at the end of the fellowship period or soon thereafter. 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 dissertation 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, 2012 and end as late at May 31, 2014. You will be asked to provide a start and end date as well as dates when you expect to complete each phase of your dissertation (e.g. completion of data analysis, completion of individual chapters, and dissertation to committee) within the online application.
5. **Personal Statement.** In no more than 2500 characters, describe: 1) how your educational work and 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. Please also include the extent of your plans to remain focused on education research in the future. The bulk of your personal statement should be dedicated to describing your previous experiences. A text box is provided within the online application.
6. **Two Letters of Recommendation.** Two letters of recommendation, one from your dissertation director/chair and one from another faculty member are required. Your recommenders submit their letters online. Only two letters will be accepted. *We strongly encourage applicants to discuss with their recommenders the principal issues the letter should address as outlined in the attached Dear Colleague letter.* Please request your letters early as you will need to allow sufficient time to ensure that your letters are submitted prior to the application deadline. 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 NAEEd as early as possible to discuss alternatives. 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.** Please upload your graduate transcript in the online application. Finalists will be asked to submit an official transcript for review.

Dissertation Fellowship Application Instructions

The application must be complete and submitted on or before **5pm Eastern Time (ET) on Monday, October 3, 2011**. Late materials will not be accepted. Please note that all application materials are to be submitted online only.

Once your application is submitted, please do not contact NAEd or Spencer to inquire about receipt of your materials. You will receive a confirmation e-mail when your application has been submitted. If, by the deadline, your two letters of recommendation have not been submitted, you will receive an e-mail notification. Please note that it is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that these letters are submitted.

Answers to commonly asked questions about the dissertation fellowship can be found on our website at www.naeducation.org. If you have any other questions, please contact us by e-mail at pperrin@naeducation.org.



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Dear Colleague,

Thank you for agreeing to write a letter of recommendation for an applicant for the National Academy of Education/Spencer Dissertation Fellowship program. Each applicant is required to submit two letters of recommendation: one from the dissertation director/chair and one from another faculty member who knows the candidate's work well. The application deadline for this program is October 3rd, 2011. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that all materials, including references, are submitted prior to this deadline.

The Dissertation Fellowship Program seeks to encourage a new generation of scholars from a wide range of disciplines and professional fields to undertake research relevant to the improvement of education. These \$25,000 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.

We would appreciate your evaluation of the individual as a candidate for the National Academy of Education/Spencer Dissertation Fellowship. In a letter of no more than two pages, we ask that you please provide us with your full name, title, department, institutional affiliation, telephone number, and e-mail address. Include the applicant's full name in your letter. We would also like you to comment directly on the following six issues:

1. Your relationship to the student;
2. Your evaluation of the student relative to other students you have worked with (especially other students who have received a Spencer Dissertation Fellowship);
3. The strength of the proposed dissertation research and its relevance to educational improvement;
4. The project's connection to existing research on the topic, and the potential contribution of that dissertation to that literature;
5. The student's future potential as a scholar and likelihood that their research will continue to address education;
6. The student's apparent long-term contributions to research in education.

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Our website, www.naeducation.org, provides a complete list of application guidelines and eligibility requirements. Again, the application deadline is **October 3rd, 2011**.

Thank you for your time and contribution to this process. If you have any questions, please e-mail Philip Perrin at pperrin@naeducation.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gregory White". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Gregory White
National Academy of Education