Submitting Successful National Dissertation Fellowship Applications

Texas Fordies and Supporting Partners

Dr. Yolanda J. McDonald
Assistant Professor, Department of Human and Organizational Development
Vanderbilt University
Ford Foundation Dissertation Fellow, 2016-2017
Connect the application pieces so that you can illustrate your academic identity!
Pivot

- Save time, use this resource
- Your parameters will evolve as you do
Obtaining Strong Letters of Recommendation

• Poll Question # 1:
  – Are your letter writers able to demonstrate a collegial relationship has emerged?
    • Response options: Yes or No

• Poll Question # 2:
  – How many letter writers can you count on to write you a strong letter of recommendation?
    • Response options: Up to three, up to five, or up to seven
Obtaining Strong Letters of Recommendation

• Poll Question # 3:
  – Do you have letter writers outside your degree program at TAMU?
    • Response options: Yes or No

• Poll Question # 4:
  – Do you have letter writers outside of TAMU?
    • Response options: Yes or No
Powerful Personal Statements

• Poll Question # 5:
  – Can the reviewer see you as an independent researcher?
    • Response options: Yes or No

Before you respond, reflect on these questions:
• Have you grown and contributed to the lab?
• Have you demonstrated leadership and mentorship in the lab?
• Are you timid about your research?
Compelling Research Statements

• Poll Question # 6:
  – Have you developed your own academic identity?
  • Response options: Yes or No

Before you respond, reflect on this question:
• What is your research agenda, not your lab's? Can you answer this with ease?
Breakout Group

1. One minute, write down your academic identity.
2. Each group member has one minute to share their academic identity \(\text{(note, use a timer)}\).
3. One minute, write down your research agenda.
4. Each group member has one minute to share their research agenda \(\text{(note, use a timer)}\).
Dissertation Fellowship

• How is a dissertation fellowship similar to NSF, NIH, or the Fulbright? *(Please put your response in the chat window)*

• How is a dissertation fellowship different than the aforementioned funding calls? *(Please put your response in the chat window)*
Why Apply to a Dissertation Fellowship?

• Time
• Flexibility
• Self-reflection
  – What have I accomplished?
  – What have I not accomplished?
Why Apply to the Ford Foundation Dissertation Fellowship?

• Aligned with my values:
  – “Through its program of fellowships, the Ford Foundation seeks to increase the diversity of the nation’s college and university faculties by increasing their ethnic and racial diversity, maximize the educational benefits of diversity, and increase the number of professors who can and will use diversity as a resource for enriching the education of all students.”

Source: https://sites.nationalacademies.org/pga/fordfellowships/index.htm
Why Apply to the Ford Foundation Dissertation Fellowship?

• An academic family
• Lifetime of mentoring
  – As a mentee and a mentor
• Networking
• Postdoctoral fellowship
Be Genuine: Personal Statement

• Understand the funding agency mission and values
• Ford is investing in a person
• Ford is investing in what you have done and your potential
  – Academic identity
  – Community identity

Why does your research matter? What is the significance and broader impacts?
Breakout Group

1. One minute, write down why your research matters.

2. Each group member has one minute to share why their research matters *(note, use a timer)*.

Imagine talking to a stranger on the street; jargon free!
Research: Previous to Proposed Plan

• Show academic and personal growth
• If possible, connect research to a publication, conference paper, guest lecture
• If possible, can you provide an example of how your work aligns with Ford’s mission
  – Research
  – Teaching
  – The broader community
sociodemographic data from the American Community Survey, 5-year estimates (2007-2011). **Winter 2015/2016,** I will receive and geocode de-identified data for invasive cervical cancer cases (≈ 600), utilize the 2000 and 2010 Decennial Census data to determine population-based denominators of screen eligible women by race/ethnicity to enable calculation of cervical cancer incidence rates for case/control analyses, and operationalize sociodemographics variables. **Spring 2016** I will complete analysis for RQ1, select controls for case/control study design, and receive and geocode cases of de-identified failures (≈500 failures to follow-up after a high-grade abnormal Pap test and ≈500 failures to follow-up (or treat) after a biopsy diagnosis of precancer lesions). **Summer 2016,** I will conduct analyses for RQ2 and RQ3, and transform my dissertation proposal as a draft for Chapter 1, “Introductory chapter” (complete early Fall 2016). I will complete Chapter 2 “Health service accessibility and risk in cervical cancer prevention: Comparing rural versus non-rural residence and sociodemographics in New Mexico” during **Fall 2016 and submit this work for peer-reviewed publication.** I will complete Chapter 3, “Intersections of geography, race/ethnicity, and poverty on the diagnosis of invasive cervical cancer in New Mexico, 2006-2011: A case-control study” during Winter 2016/2017. Finally, I will complete Chapter 4 “The landscape of failures across the cervical cancer continuum of care: A case-control study of geographic and sociodemographic inequalities in New Mexico” and Chapter 5 “Wrap up/final conclusion/future research direction” by mid Spring 2017. **In Spring 2017,** I will submit and defend my dissertation to my committee, revise the dissertation as needed, and submit my final dissertation to the graduate studies office while preparing manuscripts for peer-reviewed based upon the above remaining Chapters.
The Entire Application Needs Attention

• Abstract

• Annotated Bibliographies

2022 Competition Dates:

2022 Application opens:
September 7, 2021

2022 Dissertation and Postdoctoral application deadlines:
December 9, 2021
5:00 PM Eastern Standard Time (EST)
STATUS: CLOSED

2022 Predoctoral application deadline:
December 16, 2021
5:00 PM Eastern Standard Time (EST)
STATUS: CLOSED

Supplementary Materials deadline for submitted applications:
January 6, 2022
5:00 PM Eastern Standard Time (EST)
STATUS: CLOSED

Notification of 2022 awards:
Mid- to late March 2022
TIPS: Submitting Successful National Dissertation Fellowship

1. **Start early:** At least three months out, six is better

2. **Review best practices:** Engage materials and review past awarded applications

3. **Highlight the progress you have already made:** Demonstrate your proposal is rigorous and feasible

4. **Identify a group of reviewers for different stages and purposes of your writing:** Revise, revise, and revise again

5. **Make it easy for letter of recommendation writers:** Plenty of time and polished drafts of all documents
Enjoy the process; it will only sharpen your research!
I was awarded the Ford on my third try.
Thank you for listening!

My contact information:

yolanda.j.mcdonald@Vanderbilt.edu