

spencer foundation  
625 north michigan avenue  
suite 1600  
chicago, illinois 60611  
t 312 337 7000 f 312 337 0282  
spencer.org



Dear Applicant:

Thank you for your interest in the Spencer Dissertation Fellowship for Research Related to Education. The Dissertation Fellowship Program is one of the primary ways the Spencer Foundation 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 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 education 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 600 applications and awarding about 20 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 ensure the best presentation of your candidacy to those who will review your application. Completed applications must be submitted electronically no later than 5pm Central Time (CT) on **Wednesday, October 27, 2010**.

Answers to commonly asked questions about the Dissertation Fellowship Program can be found on our website at [www.spencer.org](http://www.spencer.org). If you have any other questions, please contact us by email at [fellows@spencer.org](mailto: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 black ink, appearing to read "Susan Dauber", written in a cursive style.

Susan Dauber  
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.

**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 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 confirm via the online application that they will have completed all pre-dissertation requirements by June 1, 2011, 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, 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 further 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 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 Spencer Foundation. Applications must be submitted electronically by 5pm Central Time (CT) on **October 27, 2010**. Both the letters of recommendation as well as the graduate transcript must be *received* by the Spencer Foundation on or before October 27, 2010. [Letters of recommendation may not be submitted electronically.] Notification of awards will occur in late April 2011. Fellowships may begin no earlier than June 2011.

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 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?

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](http://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. 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 Central Time (CT) on **October 27, 2010**. Hard copies of the application and narrative will not be accepted.

Both the two letters of recommendation as well as the graduate transcript must be received by the Spencer Foundation on or before 5pm Central Time (CT) on **October 27, 2010**. 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.

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. A text box is provided within the online application.
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 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 (10 pages) and bibliography (two pages) should be 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 email 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 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, 2011 and end as late as May 31, 2013. 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 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. 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 must provide you with a hard copy of the letter in a signed and sealed envelope. 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 Dear Colleague letter that is page six of this document.* Please request your letters early as you will need to allow sufficient time to ensure that your letters reach us in time to meet our 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 the Foundation as early as possible to discuss the submission of a potentially 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.** Please send an official or unofficial transcript copy of your graduate transcript with your two letters of recommendation.

The two letters of recommendation as well as the graduate transcript must be received by The Spencer Foundation on or before **5pm Central Time (CT) on Wednesday, October 27, 2010**. Late materials will not be accepted. Applicants are asked to collect the three items and mail them together with a brief 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

Once your application is submitted, please do not contact the Foundation to inquire about receipt of your materials. We ask that that you use a traceable delivery service such as Federal Express, US Certified Mail, etc. if you would like delivery confirmation. If, by the deadline, your two letters of recommendation and transcript have **NOT** been received by the Foundation, you will receive an email notification.

Answers to commonly asked questions about the Dissertation Fellowship Program can be found on our website at [www.spencer.org](http://www.spencer.org). If you have any other questions, please contact us by telephone at (312) 274-6517 or by email at [fellows@spencer.org](mailto:fellows@spencer.org).

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Dear Colleague:

Thank you for agreeing to write a letter of recommendation for an applicant for the Spencer Foundation Dissertation Fellowship for Research Related to Education. 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.

Through the Dissertation Fellowship Program, the 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 \$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.

In a letter of no more than two pages, we would appreciate your evaluation of the individual as a candidate for a Spencer Dissertation Fellowship. Include the applicant's full name in your letter. We ask that you please provide us with your full name, title, department, institutional affiliation, telephone number and email address. We also would like for you to comment directly on five 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 the dissertation to that literature;
5. the student's future potential as a scholar and likelihood that their research will continue to address education, broadly conceived.

Please print your recommendation on university letterhead. Address the letter to me and please do not staple or double side your letter. Return the letter to the applicant in an envelope that is signed across the seal to ensure confidentiality. Letters of recommendation must be received by the Spencer Foundation on or before **Wednesday, October 27, 2010** to be considered. 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.

If you have any questions, please contact Nicole Barksdale at (312) 274-6517 or via email at [nbarksdale@spencer.org](mailto:nbarksdale@spencer.org). Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Susan Dauber", written in a cursive style.

Susan Dauber  
Spencer Foundation