50 YEARS OF PH.D. DISTINCTION

Graduate School

2016-17 UWM GRADUATE STUDENT FELLOWSHIP CELEBRATION

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 28TH
GOLDA MEIR LIBRARY CONFERENCE CENTER
FOURTH FLOOR
Fellowship Celebration

Wednesday, September 28th, 2016
Golda Meir Library Conference Center, Fourth Floor

Program

4:30 Opening Remarks
   1. Marija Gajdardziska-Josifovska, Dean of the Graduate School
   2. Johannes Britz, Provost
   3. Mark Mone, Chancellor

Featured Speaker: Carrie Tirel
2002-2009 UW-Milwaukee Chancellor’s Fellow
2003-2006 UW-Milwaukee Graduate Assistance in Areas of National Need (GAANN) Fellow

Recognition of 2016-17 Fellowship Recipients
   1. Distinguished Dissertation Fellows (DDF)
   2. Distinguished Graduate Student Fellows (DGSF)
   3. New Advanced Opportunity Program (AOP) Fellows
   4. Levine Science Fellows
   5. Graduate Student Excellence Fellows (GSEF)

5:30 Social Networking
Featured Speaker and Former UWM Graduate Fellow

Carrie Tirel
BS (2001), Applied Mathematics: UW-Milwaukee

UWM Awards:

- Graduate Assistance in Areas of National Need (GAANN) Fellow—awarded by Mathematics Department (funded by U.S. Department of Education), four years (2003-06 and 2009-10).
- Ernst Schwandt Graduate Teaching Award—awarded by Mathematics Department, 2003.
- Chancellor’s Graduate Student Award, 2002-2009.

When Carrie began teaching at UW-Fox Valley in 2010, it was her fourth UW institution. She attended college at UW-Manitowoc and UW-Platteville before earning all three of her university degrees from UWM.

A lifelong Wisconsinite, Carrie was born in Manitowoc and lived in nearby Reifs Mills, an unincorporated community within the town of Franklin. She graduated from Reedsville High School and now lives in Menasha.

Carrie’s academic interest is geometric topology, an area of mathematics concerned with the assignment of geometric structures to topological spaces. In February 2016, she returned to UWM to present a topology seminar on Z-structures.

As a woman in one of the STEM field (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics), Carrie is concerned about the shortage of women that she sees in these areas at UW Fox Valley. Along with fellow Fox Valley faculty member Jamie Douglas, Carrie co-founded Empower and Lead: Women in STEM. In addition to working to improve students’ confidence and provide hands-on research experience, the campus group’s goals include eliminating structural barriers women face in STEM fields by improving their access to peer networks, role models, and sponsors or mentors. The group received a $10,000 grant from the Women’s Fund for the Fox Valley Region in 2015, and $5,000 in support from AT&T earlier this year.

Carrie’s husband and UWM master’s graduate, Bertrand, also teaches math at UW-Fox Valley.

In June 2016 Carrie was awarded tenure by the UW System Board of Regents.
Distinguished Dissertation Fellows (DDF)

The DDF recognizes exceptional scholarly achievements and recognition relative to expectations in the field of study and exceptional potential contribution of new knowledge.

Who is eligible? UWM PhD students who have either dissertator status or will achieve dissertator status during the award year.

Annual stipend is currently $16,500 for current dissertators; $15,000 rate for students yet to achieve dissertator status.

Ebrahim Aboualizadeh, Physics PhD Program
MS: Razi University, '09 • BS: Shahid Chamran University, '07

“This award gives me the confidence and credibility to accomplish my goals and projects, and to be successful in my career.”

While studying gravity and cosmology, Ebrahim learned of UWM through the work of UWM Professor Emeritus Leonard Parker. But exposure to a broad array of disciplines at UWM led him into a multidisciplinary field with potential impact in the health sciences.

“A combination of physics, chemistry and biology steered me in the direction of optical diagnosis, with a focus on the pathology of diabetes,” he says.

Thomas Gus Almonroeder, Kinesiology PhD Program
DPT, '13 & BS, '09: UW-La Crosse

“In addition to the financial support, this award really validates the sacrifices my wife and I have made in the last few years.”

A lifelong sports enthusiast, Thomas considered sports medicine physical therapy a logical career path. His experience in UW-La Crosse’s professional doctorate program sparked an interest in biomechanics research, and he enrolled in UWM’s Physical Therapy PhD program. He says he is eager to share his work with experts in his field. “I look forward to making the most of the opportunities this award presents.”

Farid Atry, Engineering PhD Program (Electrical)
MS: University of Tehran, '05 • BS: Amirkabir University of Technology, '02

“It greatly helps me to move my research forward to develop new technologies for neurovascular studies.”

As a master’s student, Farid focused his research on analysis of electroencephalogram (EEG) and developing EEG-based techniques for brain-machine interface systems.

“Since the start of my PhD research at UWM, I have been working on new techniques for brain functional imaging that can help to better understand the underlying mechanisms of hemodynamic modulations—blood flow variations—in the brain.

Benjamin Michael Alex Baker, Communication PhD Program
MA: UW-Milwaukee, ‘13 • BA: UW-Whitewater, ‘06

“The fellowship award ensures I will be able to dedicate the necessary time and resources to this project I am so very passionate about.”

Benjamin’s dissertation “will examine meaning making in gay and lesbian parents’ talk about the construction of family identity with their children, other family members, and non-family members.”

“I hope my completed dissertation study results will offer guidance to other families in similar situations and continue to broaden the definition of what it means to be a family in the public sphere.”
Michael Edward Bednarczuk, Political Science PhD Program
MA: Stony Brook University, ’11 • BA: Miami University, ’09
“The travel stipend will allow me to participate in numerous conferences, which gives me the opportunity to discuss and disseminate my research to broad audiences.”
Studying political science as an undergraduate, Michael recalls, “I saw for the first time that the tools used in this field not only described the world, but actually could be used to explain why the world existed as it did.” This, along with his involvement in a research project and his professor’s mentorship, led him to pursue a graduate degree. Michael was also a 2013-14 Distinguished Graduate Student Fellow.

Yingbin Deng, Geography PhD Program
MS, ’13 & BS, ’10: South China Normal University
“The scholarship will release my financial burden and I can fully be focused on my research … I don’t need to spend additional time on teaching or working.”
Yingbin’s research interests include remote sensing and the urban environment. Land use and land cover information, he says, is fundamental for understanding the living environment. He is hoping to improve remote sensing through basic research to fully understand promising new methods of classifying remotely sensed images. He looks forward to presenting his discoveries to colleagues at a major conference.

Danielle DeVasto, English PhD Program (Rhetoric and Composition)
MA, ’12 & BS, ’08: UW-Milwaukee
“[This award] will help me to balance being a new parent with being a successful academic.”
Calling herself “multi-interested when it comes to my academic interests,” Danielle considers her specialization a perfect fit. “Rhetoric—persuasion, communication—is a part of just about everything.” She is especially interested in its role in science. “Doing work in the rhetoric of science allows me to combine my two long-standing, seemingly opposite interests in letters and science in a very satisfying way.”

Richard Wynn Edwards IV, Anthropology PhD Program
MS: UW-Milwaukee, ’10 • BA: UW-Parkside, ’07
“In conjunction with my NSF Dissertation Improvement Grant, these awards allow me to collect data at multiple institutions across Wisconsin.”
The seed of Richard’s interest in anthropology was planted during childhood, when archaeologists excavated two mammoths just miles from his home. The seed grew into an anthropology focus in college and an MS in anthropology at UWM, and is blossoming in the PhD program. “I entered college as an undergraduate [and] I began to realize anthropology offered me a way to explore many of my interests simultaneously.”

Stacy Gnacinski, Health Sciences PhD Program
MS: UW-Milwaukee, ’13 • BS: UW-La Crosse, ’09
“This award makes it possible for me to begin establishing a strong, viable research line that I can continue into the early years of my career as a faculty member.”
It started with two kinesiology courses when she began her master’s program. “From that semester forward, I viewed health and human performance through an integrated lens, and made it my mission to study the interrelated aspects of performance to the fullest extent possible.” In addition, it has been incredibly beneficial to have an advisor (Barbara Meyer) who works both in academics and professional practice.”
Hye Jung Han, Information Studies PhD Program
MLIS: UW-Milwaukee, ’12 • BA: Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, ’02

“This award is recognition that I am on the right path for my study. This award also helps me conduct my dissertation confidently.”

Hye is interested in children’s information literacy and how children seek and retrieve information. She also studies human-computer interaction and digital libraries.

At the 2016 SOIS Student Research Conference, Hye co-presented research on the universal accessibility of digital libraries. She presented The Usability Study on the Multicultural Children’s Book Project at a 2012 event in Seoul, South Korea.

Alexis M. Jordan, Anthropology PhD Program
MS: UW-Milwaukee, ’09 • BS: Loyola University Chicago, ’06

“This award will allow me to graduate with well-honed skills in a variety of archaeological museum and skeletal research methods.”

“Museums are the reason I fell in love with archaeology as a child,” Alexis says. “Now as an anthropology graduate student, collections research, skeletal analyses, and prehistoric European burial practices have become my passions.”

The fellowship travel funds will take her to Great Britain, where she will collect a large portion of data and work with archaeological archives and skeletal museum collections.

Jaekyoon Kim, Psychology PhD Program (Experimental)
MS: Seoul National University, ’11 • MS: UW-Milwaukee, ’14 • BS: Yonsei University, ’08

“It helps me be able to write and progress toward earning my degree. The award encourages me to focus on my experiments for my degree completion.”

“I have always believed that neuroscience is one of the most valuable areas of science,” Jae says. His master’s focus was inflammation-mediated neurodegenerative diseases. “It drove me to focus on the development of new therapies that would provide cognitive benefits.”

His study on the role of G-protein-coupled estrogen receptors in female mice hippocampal memory appeared in the journal Neuroscience in March 2016.

Natalie S. McAndrew, Nursing PhD Program
MS, ’09 & BSN, ’04: Alverno College

“This award means that others have confidence in my abilities to become a nurse scientist.”

“Nursing science is a human science,” Natalie says. “Nurses study concepts such as health, well-being, environments of care and the influence of nursing on various outcomes. The goal of nursing is to improve the lives of individuals, families, and communities. I think this is why nursing science makes sense to me.”

“It is exciting to see practice, theory and research intermingle to transform health care.”

Michiaki Ogura, English PhD Program (Literary Studies)
MA: Rikkyo University, ’08 • BA: Kanazawa University, ’05

“This award represents the Graduate School’s recognition of my work and contribution to the field, and it motivates me to continue working as hard as I can.”

A Fulbright fellow in 2013, Michiaki is conducting research on nineteenth-century American literature and queer theory.

With a particular focus on American Renaissance writers, he studies the cultural significance and representation of male friendship in antebellum America. Michiaki hopes to build a career as a professional scholar and teacher and as an individual seeking social change through literature.
Joseph Simon, Physics PhD Program
BA: Franklin and Marshall College, ’07

“[This award] affirms how committed this university is to being a top tier research institution.”

“As a child,” Joseph recalls, “I wanted to be a part of the team that put a human on Mars. Since then I have realized that my passion is really for studying large, complex systems as a part of a collaborative team.” He says he learned this through undergraduate research opportunities and working with the UWM group in the NANOGrav collaboration, whose efforts led to the detection of gravitational waves.

Jun Tan, Engineering PhD Program (Electrical)
MS: ’09 & BS: ’12, Huazhong University of Science & Technology

“Knowing that others have noticed my academic success will enable me to keep working hard to achieve more during my graduate study.”

The growing popularity of electric vehicles (EVs) worldwide and their potential environmental benefits and energy savings attracted Jun to the field of power grid integration of massive EVs.

“Based on my past experiences of studying EVs’ impacts on the power grid, I found that EVs can help evolve the current power grid into a more reliable and efficient system,” says Jun, a UWM research assistant since 2014.

Natasha Wright, Psychology PhD Program (Clinical)
MS: UW-Milwaukee, ’14 • BA: Point Loma Nazarene University, ’12

“Without this award, I would be unable to take full advantage of all the psychology department at UWM has to offer.”

Natasha’s interest in the influence of the environment on brain functioning started in high school. “From then on, I began to seek out experiences and training in psychology broadly and in neuropsychology specifically.” Her current program of study and research focuses on the influence of substances on brain function. She will also be trained in clinical neuropsychology at the Medical College of Wisconsin.

Guihua Zhou, Engineering PhD Program (Mechanical)
BS: Xiangtan University, ’12

“[This fellowship] affirms the importance of my research work in my field and of my academic performance in these four years.”

Motivated by the water pollution in her hometown as the result of urbanization, Guihua is working to detect water contaminants through development of a nano-material-based water sensor.

An awardee at the 2014 CEAS Research Poster Competition and a Chancellor’s Graduate Student Award recipient, Guihua hopes the fellowship funding will allow her to communicate with other researchers at academic conferences.
The DGSF recognizes strong academic achievement or exceptional potential, demonstrated leadership potential, and research goals.

Who is eligible? New or continuing master’s and doctoral (non-dissertator) students.
Annual stipend is currently $15,000.

Samantha C. Bergmann, Psychology PhD Program (Experimental)
MA: Western Michigan University, ’13 • BA: University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, ’11

“The DGSF is an honor to receive. The award will allow me to focus on finishing up my academic program requirements this school year.”

While working with adults with autism at a part-time job in college, Samantha became interested in improving the lives of such individuals by reaching them earlier—as children. So she took an applied behavior analysis course.

“Above all, I am passionate about my field of study because the work that my colleagues and I do can make socially significant changes in the lives of children and their families.”

Ann-Marie Blanchard, English PhD Program (Creative Writing)
MFA: University of North Carolina at Greensboro, ’14 • BA: University of Notre Dame Australia, ’10

“I find it all but impossible to dedicate long lengths of time to my projects, due to other demands. With the DGSF, I am so excited to see what this year holds.”

Growing up in Australia, Ann-Marie says, “I was playing with words before I could spell, just sounded out bits and pieces.”

“In 2010 I moved from Australia to the US and found so many people excited about poetry and prose. After doing a Master of Fine Arts in the South, I moved to Milwaukee to begin my PhD where I have discovered a fiery and enthusiastic artistic community.”

Jordan Edward Davis, Sustainable Peacebuilding MSP Program
BA: Calvin College, ’15

“As a forthcoming Distinguished Graduate Student Fellow, I am truly excited for the opportunity to interact and learn from my peers and to contribute to the scholarship of the UW-Milwaukee community.”

Jordan’s interest in peacebuilding began as an undergraduate researcher with the Undocumented Migration Project along the Mexican border.
In the MSP program, he explores “the hidden and unacknowledged violence experienced by marginalized and vulnerable peoples in Africa and across its Diaspora.” He seeks “holistic and transdisciplinary ways to contribute to peace in my community and on a global scale.”

Ellen Defenderfer, Psychology PhD Program (Clinical)
MS: UW-Milwaukee, ’15 • BA: Ohio Wesleyan University, ’13

“I’m a psychology graduate student in a clinical science training program, and this award allows me to generate the kind of clinically-oriented research that is at the core of my field.”

Ellen’s interest in improving the quality of life of children with chronic illnesses and their families stems from her own family’s experience during her younger sister’s struggles with a number of illnesses as a child and young adult.

“Watching what she went through and understanding what families like mine experience have motivated me to improve the lives of others in similar situations,” she says.
Heli Fan, Chemistry PhD Program
MS: Nankai University, ’10  •  BS: Ohio Wesleyan University, ’13

“This fellowship means a lot to me. It encouraged me to work harder and trust myself more.”

Heli is a member of the Peng Group in the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry. She has been a named author in at least eight articles submitted or published in journals such as the Journal of Organic Chemistry and the Journal of Molecular Catalysis (China). She has been lead or co-lead author in four of them.
She was a Chancellor’s Graduate Student Award recipient in 2014-2015.

Nicholas Fedorchuk, Geosciences PhD Program
MS: UW-Milwaukee, ’14  •  BA: College of Wooster, ’12

“This fellowship will afford me the chance to work on my research project overseas and collaborate with international colleagues.”

A part-time summer job at the Kentucky Geologic Survey during high school helped turn Nicholas’s interest in the natural world into a career path. “I became particularly interested in how sedimentary rocks are used to reconstruct past climate and environments,” says Nicholas, whose research areas include sedimentology and stratigraphy.
His previous UWM awards include four Chancellor’s Graduate Student Awards.

Joshua Adam Henry, Music/Library and Information Science Coordinated MM/MLIS Program
MM, ’14 & BM, ’12: Oklahoma City University

“I will be able to better focus on completing my degree requirements to my highest potential … and develop and sharpen the skills that I need for a successful career.”

When Joshua decided a career in music performance wasn’t the best fit for him, he realized his job at the music library—where he’d worked since beginning college at Oklahoma City University—gave him joy and a sense of fulfillment.
“My boss at the time helped me to discover the wonderful [MM/MLIS] program at UWM that has helped to develop the strong skill set needed for a career in music librarianship.”

Matthew Hoag, Chemistry PhD Program
BS: UW-Milwaukee, ’13

Ashley Huggins, Psychology PhD Program (Clinical)
BA: UC-Los Angeles, ’13

“This fellowship will allow me to focus more intensively on research efforts, which will help me pursue my goal of becoming an independent researcher.”

Ashley initially had a broader interest in psychology and understanding human behavior, but working in a number of different labs helped narrow her focus to understanding the neural underpinnings of psychopathology and potentially using this knowledge to prevent and treat mental illness.
She graduated magna cum laude with departmental honors from USC and earned a UWM Chancellor’s Graduate Student Award.
Aruna Kallon, Sustainable Peacebuilding MSP Program
Bachelor of Laws, ’14 & BA, ’09: University of Sierra Leone

“[This] award makes a reality what has always been, and could otherwise have remained, a dream – to study at a major institution of higher learning in the United States “

The aftermath of the 11-year civil war in his homeland of Sierra Leone—which he says plunged much of its society “into vulnerability and the abyss of social inequity”—inspired Aruna to pursue the Master of Sustainable Peacebuilding.

He hopes to become a development expert. “I would be able to serve in communities of less privileged and marginalized social groups both locally and internationally,” he says.

Madelynn Lillie, Psychology MS Program (Experimental)
BA: UW-Milwaukee, ’15

“Having this award will allow me to make my education my one priority, which allows to me to focus on my passions and become the best I can be within my field.”

Madelynn says she always envisioned a psychology career in counseling. Then she worked as a line therapist for children on the Autism Spectrum. “I immediately fell in love with the kids I worked with and knew that I wanted to continue within this field.”

A year later she met UWM Associate Professor Jeffrey Tiger. “He was able to give me enough information to know what I was supposed to do with my life.”

Joshua Miller, Communication PhD Program
MA: University of Nevada, Las Vegas, ’14 • BS: Michigan State University, ’12

“This fellowship also enables me to travel to share my research with others, learn from their feedback, and develop a stronger research agenda as a result.”

It wasn’t just seven years on high school and college debate teams that led Joshua to study rhetoric, argumentation, and persuasion. There was also the controversy in his hometown early this decade about a proposed anti-discrimination ordinance.

“Since then,” the Holland, Michigan native says, “I have been interested in how people use rhetoric to create, sustain, or disrupt community.”

Nicholas Joseph Niemuth, Freshwater Sciences PhD Program
MS: University of Michigan, ’11 • BS: Madison, ’09

“This award will be an important source of support for my PhD research, making available funds for experiments and material that would otherwise be out of reach.”

“Understanding the mechanisms of how life works has always been a drive for me,” Nicholas says. His interest in molecular mechanisms of toxicity began while he was research specialist in UVM Associate Professor Rebecca Klaper’s lab, where he investigated the impact on fish of pharmaceuticals in wastewater.

His dissertation will focus on nanomaterial toxicity and how such materials affect aquatic organisms.

Lauren J. Simmons, Biological Sciences PhD Program
MS, ’12 & BA, ’06: UW-Milwaukee

“By receiving this award, I will be able to spend the year focusing on my research, completing my preliminary exams and preparing manuscripts for publication.”

“In a way, I have been preparing for a career in freshwater sciences my whole life,” Lauren says. Family fishing trips on Lake Michigan, seeing the transformation of the lake ecosystem, a high school project studying Milwaukee River water quality and biota, and a BS in Conservation and Environmental Science have all led her to study how interactions in aquatic systems influence phytoplankton cell mortality.
Linda Wesp, Nursing PhD Program
MS: University of Illinois Chicago, ’06 • BS: Loyola University Chicago, ’00
“[The DGSF] supports my goal of becoming a PhD-prepared nurse who will create change and improve lives of LGBTQ youth through research, scholarship, education, and practice.”
Early in her career, Linda became a community health nurse at an LGBTQ health center in Chicago. After almost 10 years of providing direct clinical care, she saw continued disparities in health outcomes among these populations, as well as a need for research. She is pursuing a PhD in nursing to become an educator, scholar, and leader in creating health equity for these and other marginalized populations.

Jennifer M.P. Woo, MPH, Public Health PhD Program
MS: Loma Linda University, ’12 • BS: UC-Los Angeles, ’08
“This award will allow me the opportunity to continue publishing manuscripts and writing grants in order to better prepare myself for a future in research and academia.”
After seeing many friends and family struggle with autoimmune disease and cancer, Jennifer has been interested in these diseases throughout her academic and professional career. Her dissertation will explore the influence of early life socioeconomic conditions and associated factors on biomarkers associated with autoimmunity and breast cancer among African American and non-Hispanic white women under age 50.

Yingmeng Xiang, Engineering PhD Program (Electrical)
MA: Huazhong University of Science, ’13 • BA: Chongqing University, ’10
“This fellowship inspires me to aim higher and dig deeper …and makes me more confident that I will be able to realize my dream of becoming a researcher or faculty member.”
Growing up in China, Yingmeng learned firsthand the suffering an unreliable power supply can cause, especially on hot summer days. “Thus I had the dream of making the power systems more reliable, to improve social welfare,” he recalls. Now he is dedicated to improving “smart grids,” a class of technology for modernizing electricity delivery using computer-based remote control and automation.

Louise Zamparutti, English PhD Program (Professional and Technical Writing)
MA: Hampshire College, ’11 • BA: UW-Milwaukee, ’88
“The award is, first of all, an encouraging recognition of my progress thus far in my academic program. Financially, the award will allow me to focus on my academic work.”
Louise credits all her life experiences—a BA in linguistics; her performing arts career as a dancer, choreographer, and playwright; her years of experience within communication systems operating in various dance and theater companies as well as other organizations in which she was employed, and her MA in liberal studies—for fostering her academic interest in professional and technical writing and rhetoric.
This need-based, renewable award recognizes strong academic achievement and potential.

Who is eligible? New or continuing UWM graduate degree students who are U.S. citizens/permanent residents and meet at least one of the following criteria:

- Individuals from racial or ethnic populations under-represented among students of higher education.
- First-generation college students and individuals from financially disadvantaged backgrounds or circumstances.
- Individuals with disabilities.
- Recent immigrants (must be U.S. citizens or permanent residents of the United States).
- Participants in TRIO pre-college or undergraduate programs (e.g., McNair, Student Support Services, Talent Search, Upward Bound, Upward Bound Math-Science, Veterans Upward Bound) or other approved program (Project 1000, etc.).

This award is also based on merit, where the student’s studies and contributions indicate high potential for achievement in their chosen disciplines.

Annual stipend is currently $15,000.

New Advanced Opportunity Program (AOP) Fellows

Delany Mckenzie Allen, English PhD Program (Creative Writing)
MA: University of Michigan, ‘14 • BA: Washington University in St. Louis, ‘10

“[With the AOP] I can continue working with local indigenous communities, pursue conferences and academic excellence, and become part of the Milwaukee creative community.”

A member of the Oneida tribe, Delany has a background in anthropology, art, music, and performance.

“The mapping of memory, the visual art of form on the page, the music of line and cadence, the influence of past and present literature, the insider/outsider language of culture: These are the tools, and the result is an assertion of one’s continued existence—a resistance to erasure.”

Steven Anthony, History PhD Program
MBA: Cardinal Stritch University, ‘05 • BA: University of Arkansas at Little Rock, ‘90

“I can focus on a personal research agenda and the publication of what I expect to be the first of many articles that will be incorporated into my dissertation.”

Steven is studying the causes of the 1919 Elaine Race Riot in the Arkansas Delta. He developed his broader interest—the contributions of the people who emerged from the African Diaspora—while growing up as a child in the same region.

Steven says professional conferences “will serve as critical venues for disseminating my research results and building a collaborative network of scholars in the field.”

Kenneth Bennett, Psychology PhD Program (Clinical)
BS: Michigan State University, ‘12

“This award will provide valuable time and resources to help me develop skills necessary for my growth as a researcher, academic, and clinician.”

Kenneth began research as an undergraduate, when he learned that psychology research involves combining disparate aspects of science to understand simple and complex phenomena in humans.

After conducting and learning more about psychology research, he developed an interest in understanding the interplay of worry, uncertainty, and avoidance in the development and maintenance of anxiety and anxiety-related disorders.
Andrea Buhler, History MA / MLIS Program  
**BA: UW-Milwaukee, ’14**  
“It means my mom can be proud of me, which was not always easy considering how much of a hard time the rest of my family had given her about having a child.”

Andrea studies the human-insect connection throughout history, outside the context of disease and other negative associations. Her interest began as an only child growing up. “Often I would watch insect life out of boredom and eventually, a kind of kinship.”

She hopes her research will challenge negative stereotypes and connotations associated with many living things, and carve out a new place in history for insects.

Shaheen M. Christie, Anthropology PhD Program  
**MA: University of Chicago, ’10  •  BS: UW-La Crosse, ’09**  
“[It’s] a financial lifeline that will help me travel to the United Kingdom to collect data and complete laboratory analysis and the writing phase of my dissertation.”

Shaheen is developing a novel approach to understanding differential and marginalized social groups in ancient Rome by applying multi-disciplinary methods to burials that show evidence of decapitation—considered a mark of deviance in the Romano-British archaeological canon.

She plans to continue research as an anthropology professor and help make the scholarly world accessible to students of all backgrounds.

Valerie Cronin-Fisher, Communication PhD Program  
**MA: UW-Milwaukee, ’14  •  BA: Elmhurst College, ’12**  
“This fellowship has given me time to focus on projects that were put on hold while carrying a full course load, teaching night classes, and caring for my one-year-old baby.”

In Valerie’s first college course—a 100-level interpersonal communication class that she now teaches—“I learned to think critically and navigate the difficult and uncomfortable aspects of my personal relationships.”

“Since (then), my hunger for knowledge has only grown. I turn to my discipline often for personal understanding, and love to empower others through communication research whenever possible.”

Justin Dominic, Dance MFA Program  
**BFA: University of North Carolina, ’10**  
“Receiving [the fellowship] is a blessing and an exhale. With the weight lifted, I can place more effort and attention to my top investment—dance.”

“Finding the individual in the midst of dance is when we begin to transform into beauty. I have been fortunate to share some with others through choreography, teaching, residencies, and performing. I must be prepared for dance to bend me in different directions. Being open to this has produced dreams I never imagined. I continue to practice and work in ways that push myself upward to then give back.”

Ken Ildefonso, Jr., Kinesiology PhD Program  
**MS: Minnesota State University Mankato, ’15  •  BS: Southern Connecticut State, ’11**  
“I have been provided an opportunity to focus my attention toward academics despite enduring hardship, and for that I am very grateful.”

As an athlete and a trainer, Kenneth considers effort the most important factor in sport. “One’s effort can play a huge role in sustaining, playing through, and rehabilitating from injury.”

Kenneth believes in a bio-psychosocial approach to injury management. “This type of approach underpins my athletic training practice and has provided an avenue to educate others of holistic athlete care.”
New Advanced Opportunity Program (AOP) Fellows

Jessica E. Johnston, English PhD Program (Media, Cinema, and Digital Studies)
MS: UW-Milwaukee, ’15 • BA: University of Montana, ’12
“This fellowship will help me as a first-generation college student who has found academia difficult to navigate without reliable support and guidance.”
Jessica’s path to the Media, Cinema, and Digital Studies specialization within the English program started as an undergraduate, when she discovered film studies and an interest in film production and editing. She saw film studies as a way to apply critical theory to filmmaking. Her focus on girls’ media studies has allowed her to also pursue a Graduate Certificate in Women’s and Gender Studies.

Emily Kay Joynt, Geosciences MS Program
BS: UW-Milwaukee, ’14

Derrick Walten Lashua, Sociology PhD Program
MA: UW-Milwaukee, ’14 • BS: UW-Oshkosh, ’12

Kristin M. Lee, Psychology PhD Program (Clinical)
MS: University of Hawaii at Manoa, ’15 • BS: Vassar College, ’11
“This fellowship will help me to achieve my professional goals. There are many opportunities that are available to me… that I would like to have more time to pursue.”
Kristin’s interest in neuropsychology began as an undergraduate, and working at a preschool drew her to child development.
Her master’s focus was brain activity of children with a family history of substance use. Her current interest is the underlying cognitive abilities that may influence academic performance in children with neurodevelopmental disorders.
Kristin hopes to become a pediatric neuropsychologist.

Shanae Aurora Martinez, English PhD Program (Literary Studies)
MA: UW-Milwaukee, ’12 • BS (Dual degree): University of California, Davis, ’08
“[This fellowship] means time for uninterrupted study so that I may accomplish my goals and enter the job market with a competitive scholarly record.”
“As a Chicana from California, studying indigenous literatures allows me to interrogate the colonial systems responsible for displacing my indigenous ancestors,” says Shanae, the 2016 Dr. Tomás Garrett-Rosas Research Award winner.
“My academic interests allow me to intervene on institutions that have historically excluded people like me.” Shanae is planning research trips to museums in Mexico and the United States.

Giselle Louise Mejia, Dance MFA Program
BFA: SUNY Purchase College, ’06
“The award will help me achieve my goal of becoming a full-time professor of dance and also continuing to build a dance school that I founded with my family last year.”
Giselle says she has loved dance since birth. “When I decided to continue studying dance as a performer, I learned that there was an entire world that I could build a career around.”
To inform her “academic research,” she has drawn upon her past experiences: “learning about dance in a well-rounded atmosphere—including social settings, theaters, universities and the professional world of dance.”
New Advanced Opportunity Program (AOP) Fellows

Florine Ndakuya, Nursing PhD Program
BS: UW-Milwaukee, ’13

“Getting the AOP fellowship… will help me to achieve the goal of community engagement and academic excellence both here at UWM and abroad.”

Florine is passionate about helping “vulnerable populations such as young women, who continue to be at disproportionately affected by diseases such as HIV/AIDS.” She is pursuing a PhD “so that I can be well equipped to not only care for patients medically, but also engage with communities whose voices need to be heard. UWM has been a great fit.” She envisions a future as a researcher and faculty member.

Lien B. Nguyen, Health Sciences PhD Program
MPH, ’12 & BS, ’09: San Jose State University

“[With the AOP] I’m able to utilize my time more efficiently by focusing on achieving my long-term professional goals through rigorous doctoral studies and training.”

A first-generation college student, Lien has spent years working and volunteering in diverse settings to improve people’s health.

Her interest is a combination of public health informatics, cancer and disease prevention, and improving access to health care services for underrepresented populations. “In particular, I am currently focused on supporting women Veterans within the U.S. health care system.”

Mireille Obert, Dance MFA Program
BA: Empire State College, ’15

Veronica Ocampo de Rocha, Urban Education PhD Program
(Mathematics)
MS: Framingham State College, ’04 • BA: Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico, ’93

“The AOP award will allow me to focus my attention and energy to my college courses, grounding them in the experience I have accumulated in my years of teaching.”

Veronica’s AOP Fellowship is the latest of the UWM experiences she credits for helping her find and achieve her life’s mission: providing high-quality math education to bilingual middle schoolers. She first enrolled at UWM—in an MPS partnership program—soon after moving from Mexico to teach at MPS. “I don’t think [my students’] success stories would have happened without UWM pointing me the way to teach them.”

Elen Parker, Women’s & Gender Studies MA Program
BA (Dual Degree): UW-Milwaukee, ’15

“The ability to focus on my research and studies, and to travel and present that research, will be absolutely integral to my goal of teaching at a university level.”

Initially a history major focusing on women in the middle ages, Elen found herself questioning how ideas of gender have changed throughout time and space.

“Looking at the ways in which historical events have shaped our concepts of gender and identity is an incredibly useful tool for understanding the world as it is today, and for shaping that world to be more equitable and inclusive in the future,” she says.
Laura E. Ridenour, Information Studies PhD Program
MIS: Indiana University, ‘13 • BM (Music): Portland State University, ’09

“The fellowship will allow me more time to meet my independent research goals as I work to maintain my overall wellness as I finish my Ph.D.”

“I have always been interested in technology, but it was when I was working in IT that I was first drawn to information science,” Laura says. “During the course of my master’s in information science at Indiana University, I had questions that went deeper than my coursework. I was interested in the intersection of natural language and metadata, and how they can be used to express and identify concepts.”

Joseph V. Roman, Chemistry PhD Program
BS: UW-Milwaukee, ’15

Wendolyn T. Romo, Social Work MSW Program
BA: Marquette University, ’15

“Besides the financial security, this award has also connected me to various individuals that can serve as additional support systems during my time at UWM.”

“I have always enjoyed working with others,” Wendolyn says, “but I also knew that I wanted to start working against many of the injustices we have in my own community and the world.”

“The most powerful thing we can do as social workers is to empower the individuals, families, and communities we work with.”

Andrew Ruzkowski, English PhD Program (Creative Writing)
MFA: Columbia College Chicago, ’15 • BA: University of Colorado-Boulder, ’10

Andrew’s poems have appeared or are forthcoming in Columbia Poetry Review, The Bakery, [PANK], Midwestern Gothic, The Seattle Review, Willows Wept Review, The Camel Saloon, Emerge Literary Journal, and Parable Press, among others. He has been nominated for two Pushcart Prizes, a Best of the Net award, and was a finalist for the 2012 Atlantis Award and the 2012 Kay Murphy Prize for Poetry. His debut chapbook, A Shape & Sound, is available from ELJ Publications. His first full-length collection, Do You Know this Type of Tree, is available from Main Street Rag.

Michelle Soderling, Freshwater Sciences MS Program
BS: UW-Milwaukee, ’16

“The travel funds that AOP provides will help me to attend conferences throughout my master’s studies that will prove crucial in networking with fellow scientists.”

Michelle began her UWM research career as a biochemistry undergraduate student in the McNair Program. Guided by researchers in the School of Freshwater Sciences, she conducted original research on the physiology and metabolism of Lake Michigan phytoplankton.

A first-generation college student, Michelle credits support from UWM mentors for success on her road to becoming an aquatic scientist and educator.
New Advanced Opportunity Program (AOP) Fellows

Marcel Uttech, Architecture M.Arch. Program
BSAS: UW-Milwaukee, ’15

“Opportunities such as the AOP Fellowship are a tremendous help in allowing (returning) students such as myself to really concentrate on their chosen field of study.”

After 15 years in the building industry, Marcel wanted a change. “I felt compelled to become more closely aligned to things that I was passionate about, such as sustainable design and responsible architecture.”

“Returning to school enables me to build on my past experience while learning new ways to solve problems in our everyday built environment. To be able to engage our society in this way is a real gift.”

Arthur Ray Vannoy, Art MFA Program
BS: UW-Milwaukee, ’14

 “[The AOP Fellowship] gives me the resources to focus completely on my studio practice and research interests.”

I have always been compelled to be a maker/artist. The academic aspect is helping me find out why.

Leviathan Whitfield, Urban Education PhD Program (Social Foundations of Education)
MS: UW-Milwaukee, ’14 • BS: UW Oshkosh, ’10

“This award will help secure my finances so that I can concentrate my energies on my research.”

“A keen interest in areas of social justice and educational equality drew me to this field of study,” Leviathan says. “As a person of color and a connoisseur of education, I naturally gravitated toward the field of study.”

Meredith Williams, Public Health PhD Program
MPH: Medical College of Wisconsin, ’16 • BA: UW-Milwaukee, ’13

“This award will enable me to … pursue my academic and career goals in this uniquely inclusive and empowering environment, and contribute my skills and lived experiences.”

Meredith’s interest in public health grew out of the many challenges she faces as a person with chronic illness and disability. She contends that most barriers she encounters—within the medical, insurance, educational, social service, and other systems—are preventable, and she sees public health as an excellent framework through which to address and understand complex issues facing the disability community.

Tanekeya Word, Urban Education PhD Program (Art)
MA: American University, ’11 • BA: Howard University, ’06

“[This fellowship] will assist me in the research and development of a model to use in building third spaces that integrates acts of belonging.”

Tanekeya envisions a critical pedagogy framework that dismantles systems of oppression in urban education research, art education, museum studies, and urban planning. Her focus is curriculum and pedagogy in the “third space”—which has been defined as “the edge of translation and negotiation, where people interpret, negotiate, and mediate affinities and differences within a dynamic of exchange and inclusion.”
Nicole Zellner, Social Work MSW Program
BA: St. Norbert College, ’16

“This award has allowed me to pursue my education at a higher level and ultimately enable me to obtain positions within the social work field that match my interests.”

Nicole says she’s always had a passion for working with people and helping the underserved. Being a first-generation college student and from a low-income family gave her the “privilege of understanding the plight that many people endure.”

Through her educational pursuits and professional practice, she hopes to provide opportunities for people from backgrounds similar to her own.

Levine Science Fellows

Dr. Leonard Levine, Professor Emeritus from the College of Engineering and Applied Science, is the generous donor for this fellowship award intended to support graduate students from engineering and the natural sciences. Two awards, valued at $3,500 each, are given annually to those students who have demonstrated a high level of academic accomplishment in their field.

David R. Cordie, Geosciences PhD Program
MS: University of Iowa, ’15 • BA: Lawrence University, ’13

“With the support of this award I hope to devote more resources to my research, which can eventually help set me apart in my future job searches.”

Earlier in his academic career, David studied coral reef ecosystems in the Cayman Islands. His graduate studies have allowed him to combine this research with large-scale evolution as a paleontologist studying reef paleoecology.

“I have always had an interest in the sciences,” he says. “With the support of my university, I look forward to pursuing my goals of becoming a science educator myself.”

Jennifer P. Garantiva Poveda, Engineering MS Program (Industrial)
BS: UW-Milwaukee, ’15

“The Levine Science Fellowship will lighten my financial burden, which allows me to focus more on the most important aspect of school—learning.”

Working on a 2015 research project on logistics and closed-loop recycling systems motivated Jennifer to pursue an industrial engineering degree.

She decided to focus on management. Citing a figure that just 18 percent of annual entrants to the engineering workforce are women, she says, “I am eager to increase this percentage and promote engineering education, especially for women in the community.”
Graduate Student Excellence Fellows (GSEF)

The Graduate Student Excellence Fund was established in 2015 by the Dean of the Graduate School, Marija Gajdardziska-Josifovska, as a philanthropic effort to provide advanced degree students the support they need to pursue their research endeavors, complete their studies and share discoveries with others in their fields. Enthusiastic supporters of this fund represent a myriad of interests such as business, industry, law, medicine, and public service. Gifts received from individuals, foundations, businesses, and the Graduate Education Campaign Cabinet have allowed us to provide more students, across all disciplines, with fellowship awards.

Martha Kimpton Badger, Nursing PhD Program
MS: Walden University, ‘13 • BS: University of Massachusetts Boston, ‘01
“This award not only provides me with the financial means to complete my degree, but also an extra sense of pride and achievement as I head toward the finish line.”

An RN for 25 years, Martha has worked in Canadian Indian reserves, emergency rooms, child/adolescent psychiatry, and HIV/AIDS case management. She defines her field—nursing informatics—as “where healthcare, computer science, and predictive analytics meet.” After starting her UVWM degree online from Boston, she moved to Milwaukee, thanks in part to her 2014-2015 Distinguished Graduate Student Fellowship.

Danielle Cloutier, Freshwater Sciences PhD Program
BS: UW-La Crosse, ‘12
“As I begin my 5th year at SFS, this award empowers me to work hard on my research and set a positive example for the new class of graduate students.”

“Growing up in Southeastern Wisconsin, Lake Michigan was a part of many of my fondest memories. As I came to appreciate the beauty of the Great Lakes, the more I felt it was something to protect.” Danielle, founder of the UWM student chapter of the American Society for Microbiology, says pursuing a PhD and working in the McLellan Lab have helped her appreciate even more the need to care for our water resources.

Reihaneh Etemadi, Engineering PhD Program (Mechanical)
MS: UW-Milwaukee, ‘14 • BSc: Sharif University of Technology, ‘02
“[This award] gives me motivation for more efforts in my education.”

A native of Iran, Reihaneh has about 10 years of experience in the oil and gas industries as a pipeline engineer. Her research is focused on Computational Fluid Dynamics and transport phenomena at micro- and nano-scale.

Lanlan Han, Chemistry PhD Program
Master of Engineering: Shandong University, ‘12 • BS: Soochow University, ‘09
“This award gives recognition to me for my previous work and encourages me to step further in the biochemistry world.”

“Exploring the chemical basis of life drew me to this field,” Lanlan says. “I love science because it enables us to explore and comprehend the incredible beauty of the universe.” Her honors include a 2015 Chair’s Prize for her poster at the 35th Midwest Enzyme Chemistry Conference, a 2013 Student Accessibility Center Excellence Award, and multiple People’s Comprehensive Scholarships at Soochow University.
Sherri H. Hoffman, English PhD Program (Creative Writing)
MFA: Pacific University, '13 • BS: Weber State University, '91

“This award validates and supports my dissertation work and the ongoing writing that will launch my second career as a teacher and a writer.”

“I was halfway through the coursework for an MFA in writing when I realized a PhD would differentiate me more clearly in the competitive job market,” Sherri says. “After nearly twenty years in marketing, I understand the importance of being able to stand out against the competition.”

Sherri presented at the NEXUS 2016 Interdisciplinary Graduate Conference and was a 2015 Poetry Moves Poetry Contest winner.

Lawrence Hudy, Physics PhD Program
MS: Texas Tech University, '12 • BS: Marquette University, '10

“[This fellowship] motivates me to work harder and achieve more. I plan to work in industry, and receiving this award will help to separate me from other candidates.”

“I was initially drawn to physics because of all the knowledge that can be gained from studying any system, solving problems ranging from stars in space to the subatomic level,” Lawrence says.

His research on superconductors is motivated by his desire to develop new technologies. “It excites me to work on research that could change the electronics of the future and alter our idea of what can be achieved.”

Siwar Masannat, English PhD Program (Creative Writing)
MFA: George Mason University, '12 • BS: University of Jordan, '09

“I am honored to have received this award, which will enable me to focus more closely on my research and creative writing.”

“The Creative Writing program at UWM affords me the opportunity to read, discuss, and write in response to a variety of literary, theoretical, and critical works within a wonderful community of writers,” Siwar says.


Tamiah N. McCoy, Nursing Practice DNP Program
BS: Marquette University, '14

“This GSEF award makes it easier for me to worry less about covering my tuition and focus more on my studies.”

Tamiah’s interest in nursing began in a summer program while in high school. As an undergraduate in the Marquette Educational Opportunity Program, she completed two McNair program research projects.

Now a registered nurse on an internal medicine/GI unit at Froedtert Hospital, Tamiah decided to pursue the UWM Doctor of Nursing Practice so she could utilize research and implement evidence-based practice.

Justin Mooney, Philosophy MA Program
MA: Trinity International University, '15 • BFA: Grand Valley State University, '13

“A lot of challenges and further education lie ahead of me, and this award is both an encouragement and an aid.”

“I came to philosophy by a circuitous route,” Justin says. “My first degree was in art and design, and I followed that with a master’s degree from a theological school.

“My studies eventually led me to literature in the analytic tradition of philosophy, and it was there that I found what I truly love. I now plan to be a philosophy professor.”

He also took graduate coursework at Loyola University Chicago.
Joseph O’Halloran, Physics PhD Program
BA: Lawrence University, ’10

“I feel honored simply to have been considered for this award and grateful to the university for believing my work thus far is worthy of recognition.”

Joseph found his first high school physics course to be “entertaining, engaging, and enlightening,” and his love and respect for the field have only deepened with every course since then.

“I found quantum and statistical mechanics particularly engaging,” he says, “and have found myself drawn to the physics of emergent behaviors—many interacting constituents behaving markedly differently from any one alone.”

Saul Oceguera, Spanish MA Program
BA: UW-Milwaukee, ’15

“As I start my journey as a graduate student, [with this award] I’ll be more confident and determined to give the best of me to achieve the goals I have in mind.”

“Being born and raised in Mexico, and coming to the US at age 17 helped me to see the world from two different perspectives,” Saul says.

These unique perspectives, his strong connection to his roots and culture, and “my willingness to keep learning” led him to pursue a degree in Spanish, “so that I can create bridges between people from different backgrounds and help them to understand each other.”

Kathryn Pauls, Geosciences PhD Program
MS: UW-Milwaukee, ’14 • BA: Augustana College, ’11

“This fellowship will allow me to focus wholly on my research and pursue my goal of becoming an educator when I finish my degree.”

“I was fascinated by the fact that geology can be found everywhere and that it impacts our everyday lives,” Kathryn says. “I was fortunate enough to travel to Brazil through a research program during my undergraduate career, and that trip has inspired me to go on to educate future generations about this amazing subject.”

She earned a UWM Department of Geosciences Summer Field Work Scholarship in 2015.

Linh Pham, Economics PhD Program
BS: UW-La Crosse, ’11

“The award allows me to concentrate on continuing my intellectual enrichment and brings me one step closer to my dream of becoming an economics professor.”

“I enjoy the interdisciplinary nature of economics,” Linh says. “It allows me to look at a problem from multiple points of view.”

Linh believes her UWM experience will enable her to follow the career path of economists who are both well known in their fields and active contributors to society. “It is my strong hope that my knowledge and insights will contribute to better the lives of others.”

Cindy Sanders, Biomedical Sciences MS
BS: UW-Milwaukee, ’13

“This award will allow me to spend more time on my studies, research, and professional development and still have some time at the end of the day to spend with my family.”

Cindy has long been interested in health sciences, having worked in patient care since 2005. She is currently working as an EMT.

“I’ve really enjoyed learning the etiology and therapeutic aspects of health while pursuing my Master’s in Biomedical Science,” she says.

Her career goals include obtaining a university faculty position to teach and to continue her research.
Gurnoor Kaur Sekhon, English MA Program (Literary Studies)
BA: UW-Milwaukee, ’16

“It comforts me to know that my work is meaningful and that I will have the ability to pursue my goals so long as I continue to move forward.”

“I have been a story-teller and a writer since the youngest days of my girlhood,” Gurnoor says. “To me, the most important part of stories was the power to understand the people in them and to make listeners understand those people.”

“I want to study issues of perspective and history in the context of literature, specifically with regards to narrative structure in postcolonial literature.”

Michelle Trujillo, Performing Arts—Film MFA Program
BA (Dual degree): Florida Atlantic University, ’14

“This award will help give me more time to focus on my graduate studies and is very encouraging towards my academic future at UWM.”

“Watching documentaries with my mom initiated my interest in cinema as a tool for social change,” Michelle says. Learning from various filmmakers at the Telluride Film Festival exposed her to alternative and more personal filmmaking styles.

She credits her experience with international marketing campaigns as an HBO Latino independent film contractor for guiding her toward non-commercial content production.

Kimberly E. Whitmore, Nursing PhD Program
MS, ’07 & BS, ’03: Marquette University

“This award serves as a recognition that no matter how difficult life is, you can still be successful if you stay positive and focused on your goals.”

Kimberly had planned to be a physical therapist. Then she met a woman with Spinal Muscular Atrophy who was a fierce advocate for people with disabilities. This experience inspired Kimberly to pursue a career helping people with disabilities through nursing.

Through research, she also hopes to discover ways to improve the healthcare system and communities for families of children with special healthcare needs.

Erica Woods, Information Science and Technology MS Program
BS: UW-Milwaukee, ’13

“It’s scholarships such as this that help to close the achievement gap and pitfalls that many first-generation students like myself experience.”

Erica took a rather unusual path to IT. “My love for linguistics led me to learning a programming language out of sheer curiosity!” the former ESL teacher recalls. “I fell in love with network architecture, encryption and k-anonymity methodologies to protect personal data and records within healthcare and government industry.”

After graduation, she says, “I would love to pursue a PhD in Computer Science.”
Learn About UWM Graduate School Fellowships for Full-Time Study

Fellows are nominated by their programs in a competitive process. In addition to their stipends, all fellows are eligible to receive:

- Tuition remission
- Health insurance
- $1,000 travel award