GRADUATE SCHOOL

2017 GRADUATE STUDENT FELLOWSHIP CELEBRATION

Honoring Our 2017-18 Fellowship Recipients

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 4th, 2017
4:30-6:30 p.m.
GOLDA MEIR LIBRARY, 4TH FLOOR CONFERENCE CENTER
Program

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

Featured Speaker: Michael Tyburski
2012-2013 Distinguished Dissertation Fellow

Recognition of 2017-18 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)
6. Dr. Tomás Garrett-Rosas Research Awardee

5:30 Social Gathering

2017 GRADUATE STUDENT FELLOWSHIP CELEBRATION
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 4th, 2017
GOLDA MEIR LIBRARY, 4TH FLOOR CONFERENCE CENTER

Featured Speaker and Former UWM Graduate Fellow

Michael Tyburski
PhD (2014) & MA (2009), Political Science: UW-Milwaukee
BA (2007), Political Science, History: Illinois College

UWM Awards:
• Distinguished Dissertation Fellow – 2012-2013
• Chancellor’s Award – 2007

Michael D. Tyburski is an Assistant Professor of Political Science at Kansas State University. He conducts research in the areas of political economy in developing states and transnational security issues, focusing on international migration and migrant remittances. His work appears in journals including the Journal of Politics, International Studies Quarterly, and Post-Soviet Affairs. Michael earned his BA from Illinois College before completing an MA and PhD ('14) from UWM.
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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? UW-M PhD students who have either dissertation status or will achieve dissertation status during the award year.

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

**Distinguished Dissertation Fellows (DDF)**

**Ryan P. Bartelme, Freshwater Sciences PhD Program**
BS: UW-Madison, 2009

"The DDF means a lot to me; it will allow me to finish my dissertation and publish more chapters in peer-reviewed journals."

Ryan is characterizing microorganisms within the recirculating aquaculture system (RAS) at the School of Freshwater Sciences. The success of RAS—critical for mass cultivation of fish—is largely dependent on beneficial microorganisms within the fish and water inhibiting growth of opportunistic pathogens. Ryan is hoping to help fill the knowledge gap he has discovered between process engineering and microbiology.

**Samantha Bergmann, Psychology PhD Program**
MA: Western Michigan University, 2013 • BA: University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, 2011

"It will allow me to carve out more time for activities that will help me stand out from other applicants and develop as a professional."

A board-certified and licensed behavior analyst, Samantha provides applied behavior analytic intervention services to children diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders and other developmental disabilities. She helps design and evaluate early interventions that teach academic and social skills. She first worked with adults with disabilities as an undergraduate but was drawn to the life-changing potential of childhood interventions.

**David Cordio, Geosciences PhD Program**
MS: University of Iowa, 2015 • BS: Lawrence University, 2013

"With this award, I focus on giving back to the scientific community by publishing my findings and pursuing new research."

Studying ancient reef ecosystems in Nevada and Mongolia that underwent major extinction events around 510 million years ago, David is working to understand how such ecosystems change during such events, with the goal of developing better predictive models for modern reef ecosystems. David first studied reefs in the Cayman Islands as part of an undergraduate experience in marine biology at Lawrence University.

**Ellen Defenderfer, Psychology PhD Program**
Clinical Psychology, MS: UW-Milwaukee, 2015 • BA: Ohio Wesleyan University, 2013

"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 has motivated me to improve the lives of others in similar situations,” she says.

**Heli Fan, Chemistry PhD Program**
MS: NanKai University, 2010 • BA: Liaocheng University, 2007

"This award gives me more motivation for working hard in my research."

Heli’s research focuses mainly on DNA cross-linking agents, which has the potential for developing new drugs for cancer treatment. Heli is a past recipient of the Graduate School Distinguished Graduate Student Fellowship and a Chancellor’s Graduate Student Award. She was a contributing author to the 2016 textbook Advances in Molecular Toxicology and has been a named author in numerous articles in prominent journals.

**Omid Jahanian, Health Sciences PhD Program**
MS: Islamic Azad University of Mashhad, 2010 • BS: Islamic Azad University of Mashhad, 2006

"It provides an opportunity to think beyond my current experiments, explore new scientific questions, and develop novel hypotheses."

Omid’s enthusiasm for applying new technologies in health sciences began with robotics research and application of robotics in orthotics and prosthetics. Now he’s evaluating the biomechanical and physiological effects of using geared manual wheelchairs in veterans with spinal cord injuries.

"I hope I can utilize my engineering expertise and research experiences in health sciences to help people live healthier lives."

**Joseph Theodore Kilmer, Biological Sciences PhD Program**
BA: Kalamazoo College, 2010

"Receiving the Distinguished Dissertation Fellowship is a big honor for me. I’m thrilled to have this support as I write my dissertation."

Joseph studies animal cognition. He runs behavioral experiments on spiders to answer research questions about the nature of memory and the evolutionary pressures that shape cognition. A large part of his dissertation focuses on how cognitive abilities in spiders change as spiders grow and mature. Joseph also enjoys developing research tools to help with data collection and analysis.

**Kristin Maple, Psychology PhD Program**
Clinical Psychology, MS: UW-Milwaukee, 2016 • BS: Gonzaga University, 2011

"It will allow me additional time to publish scientific findings and work with patients on a clinical practicum at the VA hospital."

Kristin’s previous research lab experience in high school and college reinforced her interest in the neuropsychology of substance use.

**Michael William Larson, English PhD Program**
Creative Writing, MFA, Ohio State University, 2013 • BA: Dartmouth College, 2008

"It has already been important to my research in that it has given me a longer timeline in which to complete my project."

Michael is researching and writing a novel that follows a young Japanese couple as they endure a disaster much like the 2011 Great Tohoku Earthquake and Tsunami. His narrative explores themes of connection and disconnection and juxtaposes a young couple’s personal trials with the drama of a national disaster. Michael is grateful for UWM’s support as he pursues a vocation where professional success is anything but guaranteed.

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Samantha Bergmann, Psychology PhD Program
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A board-certified and licensed behavior analyst, Samantha provides applied behavior analytic intervention services to children diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders and other developmental disabilities. She helps design and evaluate early interventions that teach academic and social skills. She first worked with adults with disabilities as an undergraduate but was drawn to the life-changing potential of childhood interventions.

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MFA, Ohio State University, 2013 • BA: Dartmouth College, 2008
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Kristin Maple, Psychology PhD Program (Clinical Psychology)
MS: UW-Milwaukee, 2016 • BS: Gonzaga University, 2011
“It will allow me additional time to publish scientific findings and work with patients on a clinical practicum at the VA hospital.”
Substance abuse and relapse may be connected to dysfunction in users’ self-control and emotion processing. Using functional magnetic resonance imaging, Kristin will examine a brain structure involved in these functions—ACC—and compare how functions in cannabis users and non-users. Kristin’s previous research lab experience in high school and college reinforced her interest in the neuropsychology of substance use.
Distinguished Dissertation Fellows (DDF)

Yuko Nakamura, Architecture PhD Program
(Buildings-Landscapes-Cultures)
Bachelor of General Studies: Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, 2010 • BS: UW-Oshkosh, 2010

"This award will help me focus on dissertation writing and finish the program on time."
Yuko studies women’s uses of non-domestic spaces in Tokyo, Japan between 1868 and 1937—an era when women were expected to stay in the home. She explores the “spatial cultures” women gradually developed on their own in spaces that were not designed for them—schools, shopping and entertainment venues, eating and drinking establishments, streets, trains, and buses. Yuko previously worked as an architectural designer.

Maxon Ngocnera, Freshwater Sciences and Technology PhD Program
MS: UW-Milwaukee, 2006 • BS: Chancellor College, Malawi, 1997

“The award means everything to me. First of all, it’s a prestigious award that every recipient must feel proud of.”
Maxon studies effects of changes in carbon dynamics in Lake Malawi, one of five African Great Lakes, and home to more fish species than any other lake in the world. Internationally, scientists know the value of its ecosystem, but local expertise is lacking. Maxon, a Malawi native with a chemistry degree, wants to help. After meeting accomplished lake researcher and UWM professor Harvey Bootsma, he continued his studies at UWM.

Soham Patel, English PhD Program (Poetry)

Soham is poetry editor of the Cream City Review. Her interests include social justice, race studies, gender studies, and Asian-American literature.

Ren Ren, Engineering PhD Program
ME: Beijing University of Technology, 2010 • BE: Beijing University of Technology, 2007

"This study may help mental health professionals gain knowledge about how to best serve and support the unique, often overlooked needs of this community,” she says.

Silvia P. Salas-Pizaña, Educational Psychology PhD Program
(Counseling Psychology)
MA: Chicago School of Professional Psychology, 2012 • Bachelor of General Studies: Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, 2010

“Life will have time to focus on presenting research at conferences in order to increase my network of professionals for future job searches.”
Silvia’s research explores how membership in multiple oppressed groups may influence stress and coping among transgender Latinx (a gender-neutral term for people of Latin American descent) immigrants who reside in the United States.

“Lixia is a really strong advocate for people who struggle with autism in daily life—using information resources on social media inspired her to explore how online communities could provide an efficient platform for autism patients and their caregivers to ask for help and advice from other users.

Lynthia Zhao, Information Studies PhD Program
MS: University of Illinois-Chicago, 2006 • BS: Loyola University-Chicago, 2000

"I will allow me to focus on my research and writing full time, and hopefully complete my program by December 2018."
Linda is working to improve health care access and support for transgender youth, for whom stigma and discrimination create significant health disparities. A family nurse practitioner providing primary and gender-affirming care for transgender people for the past 15 years, Linda wants to improve support from caregivers and families and increase knowledge and expertise on specific health needs of transgender people.

Lixia Zhang, Social Work PhD Program
MSW, UW-Milwaukee, 2014 • MA: East China Normal University, 2010 • BA: Huaibei Normal University, 2006

"This is awesome! I think this fellowship will strengthen my resume and make me more competitive in the job market."
Lixia is examining how adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) impact individuals’ psychosocial functioning across the lifespan.
Lixia, who previously worked at a Shanghai nonprofit agency to help poor children get educational resources, hopes to generate new knowledge about the prevalence and long-term effects of ACEs and help promote evidence-based and culturally appropriate prevention and intervention services.

Yuehua Zhao, Information Studies PhD Program
MS: China, Peoples Republic, 2013 • BS: China, Peoples Republic, 2011

"This award allows me to focus on my dissertation research and encourages me to achieve my professional goal as a faculty member in the future."
Yuehua’s research interests include consumer health informatics, social media network analysis, and informatics.
Seeing one of her best friends—who struggles with autism in daily life—use information resources on social media inspired her to explore how online communities could provide an efficient platform for autism patients and their caregivers to ask for help and advice from other users.

Linda Wesp, Nursing Ph.D. Program
MS: University of Illinois-Chicago, 2006 • BS: Loyola University-Chicago, 2000

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Maxon studies effects of changes in carbon dynamics in Lake Malawi, one of five African Great Lakes, and home to more fish species than any other lake in the world. Internationally, scientists know the value of its ecosystem, but local expertise is lacking. Maxon, a Malawi native with a chemistry degree, wants to help. After meeting accomplished lake researcher and UWM professor Harvey Bootsma, he continued his studies at UWM.

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*This award will help me focus on dissertation writing and finish the program on time.*

Yuko Nakamura, Architecture PhD Program
(Buildings-Landscapes-Cultures)
Bachelor of Architecture: University of Tokyo, 2004

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Master of Science: University of Malawi, 2013

"I will have time to focus on presenting research at conferences in order to increase my network of professionals for future job searches."

Soham Patel, English PhD Program (Poetry)
Master of Fine Arts: University of Pittsburgh, 2012

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Lixia Zhang, Social Work PhD Program

Linda Wesp, Nursing Ph.D. Program
Master of Science in Nursing: Loyola University-Chicago, 2000

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Yuehua Zhao, Information Studies PhD Program
Master of Science in Information Studies: China, Peoples Republic, 2011

"It will allow me to focus on my research and writing full time, and hopefully complete my program by December 2018."

Ann Stanton, Nursing PhD Program
Bachelor of Science in Nursing: University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh, 2010

"Being awarded the fellowship has reminded me of the value of this work to society, so it was very motivating in itself."

Silvia P. Salas-Pizaña, Educational Psychology PhD Program
(Counseling Psychology)
Master of Arts: University of Illinois-Chicago, 2006

"This study may help mental health professionals gain knowledge about how to best serve and support the unique, often overlooked needs of this community," she says.

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Annual stipend is currently $15,000.

Anna Benton, Educational Psychology PhD Program
(School Psychology)

"It means I can focus the majority of my time implementing an intervention with elementary and middle-school youth placed in foster care."

Anna’s experience as a mental health counselor in a psychiatric hospital inspired her to pursue a career as a school psychologist in the high school setting.

One of her specific goals is to improve academic and social-emotional well-being for students within multiple care systems (e.g., child protective services, inpatient care, residential treatment, juvenile corrections) by encouraging collaboration among systems.

David J. Cornell, Doctor of Physical Therapy Program
PhD: UW-Milwaukee, 2016 • MS: UW-Milwaukee, 2012 • BS: Carroll University, 2010

"Being awarded the DGSF is monumental to helping me achieve my professional goal of becoming a tenure-track faculty member."

David had already earned his MS and PhD in Kinesiology at UWM, but he decided the DPT program would provide the additional training he needed to support his increasingly clinical research interests. Initially drawn to the field by his interest in human performance, David envisions his work helping diverse populations, ranging from elite athletes to recreational and tactical athletes to occupational laborers.

Christiana Eltiste, Philosophy MA Program
BA: St. Louis University, 2014

"Receiving the DGSF validates my place in UWM’s prestigious Philosophy MA program and the work I’ve done thus far."

Christiana’s current project is investigating the differences between expectations and demands, and what role they play in blame.

"My interest in philosophy started when I realized philosophy was asking and providing thoughtful answers to the ‘big questions’ that I previously thought nobody else was engaging with critically," she says.

Her interests also include exploring what time is and feminist theories of knowledge.

Amanda Haag, English PhD Program
MFA, University of Texas at Austin, 2012 • BA: UW-Milwaukee, 2004

"The fellowship gives me a great boost of confidence for my final year and will help me stand out as I apply for PhD programs."

Bennett’s research is determining the genetic makeup of declining populations of Cascades frogs in the Pacific Northwest, which have been disappearing from their mountain meadow and lake habitats due to non-native fish, droughts, and the amphibian fungal disease Chytridiomycosis. He is using a new sequencing technology that allows for the sampling of thousands of small portions of DNA across an entire genome.

Tae Joon Kwak, Engineering PhD Program
(Mechanical Engineering)
BS: Khulna University of Engineering & Technology, 2012

"It means a lot. I have been really honored to be awarded such a prestigious fellowship."

In the Biobiorobots Lab of Assistant Professor Mohammad Rahman, Md is working to develop a wearable exoskeleton designed to help stroke patients with upper-extremity rehabilitation. Citing the shortage of physical therapists to serve the growing number of stroke patients, he believes such products are essential. Md envisions his prototype becoming a successful product that will allow patients to live more independent lives.

Hui Lin, Freshwater Sciences and Technology PhD Program
(Mechanical Engineering)
BS: Xiamen University, 2016 • BS: Xiamen University, 2013

"It will boost my self-confidence. I not only completed a very important task, but also created a foundation to get me closer to my career goal."

Hui is helping to improve our understanding of the ecology of the Great Lakes by analyzing the organic matter in the water, which influences its quality and clarity, and the health of the community of phytoplankton and zooplankton. Hui says “the marvelous scene of the Arctic” during a research cruise there inspired him to pursue aquatic research, and to find “the secrets hidden in water.”

Michelle Kassel, Psychology PhD Program
MS: UW-Milwaukee, 2017 • BS: University of Michigan-Ann Arbor, 2010

Michelle's 2017 master's thesis was titled Structural Integrity of Attention Networks in Cross-Modal Selective Attention Performance in Healthy Aging.

Matt Kuhlman, Art MFA Program
(Studio Art)
MS: University of Kansas, 2011 • BFA: University of Kansas, 2008

"This support will guarantee that I will have freedom to focus solely on my work without the obligations that come with being a teaching assistant."

Matt’s artistic practice offers the viewer an “experiential encounter” rather than just visual imagery. His installation pieces can occupy an entire room. Other works step outside conventional bounds of creating drawings and making imagery.

"The work I make tends to have a lot of meticulous and repetitive mark-making," he says, "and the abstract shapes and forms I make reference aspects of the built environment."

Matt had already earned his MS and PhD in Kinesiology at UWM, but he decided the DPT program would provide the additional training he needed to support his increasingly clinical research interests. Initially drawn to the field by his interest in human performance, David envisions his work helping diverse populations, ranging from elite athletes to recreational and tactical athletes to occupational laborers.

Michelle’s 2017 master’s thesis was titled Structural Integrity of Attention Networks in Cross-Modal Selective Attention Performance in Healthy Aging.

Md Rasedul Islam, Engineering PhD Program
(Mechanical Engineering)
BS: Khulna University of Engineering & Technology, 2012

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"Ever since I learned that many modern, cutting-edge technologies come from devices smaller even than a hair," he says, "I was interested in a small, invisible world."
**Distinguished Graduate Student Fellows (DGSF)**

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.

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BS: Humboldt State University, 2013  
“The fellowship gives me a great boost of confidence for my final year and will help me stand out as I apply for PhD programs.”

Bennett’s research is determining the genetic makeup of declining populations of Cascades frogs in the Pacific Northwest, which have been disappearing from their mountain meadow and lake habitats due to non-native fish, droughts, and the amphibian fungal disease Chytridiomycosis. He is using a new sequencing technology that allows for the sampling of thousands of small portions of DNA across an entire genome.

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**Tae Joon Kwak, Engineering PhD Program**  
(Mechanical Engineering)  
BS: Khulna University of Engineering & Technology, 2012  
“Receiving this award confirmed to me that I am on the right path. It is also great motivation for me to continue my research and study.”

Tae Joon studies and analyzes the phenomena that occur in the nano world, developing “lab-on-a-chip” devices that can separate and manipulate small particles such as micro/nano-sized cells, DNA, and viruses according to their characteristics. “Ever since I learned that many modern, cutting-edge technologies come from devices even smaller than hair,” he says, “I was interested in a small, invisible world.”

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**Matt Kuhlman, Art MFA Program**  
(Studio Art)  
MS: University of Kansas, 2011 • BFA, University of Kansas, 2008  
“This support will guarantee that I will have freedom to focus solely on my work without the obligations that come with being a teaching assistant.”

Matt’s artistic practice offers the viewer an “experiential encounter” rather than just visual imagery. His installation pieces can occupy an entire room. Other works step outside conventional bounds of creating drawings and making imagery. “The work I make tends to have a lot of meticulous and repetitive mark-making,” he says, “and the abstract shapes and forms I make reference aspects of the built environment.”

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**Hui Lin, Freshwater Sciences and Technology PhD Program**  
(Mechanical Engineering)  
MS / ME: Yonsei University, 2014 • BE: Sangji University, 2011  
“Receiving this award confirmed to me that I am on the right path. It is also great motivation for me to continue my research and study.”

Hui says “the marvelous scene of the Arctic” during a research cruise there inspired him to pursue aquatic studies. Hui is helping to improve our understanding of the ecology of the Great Lakes by analyzing the organic matter in the water, which influences its quality and clarity, and the health of the community of phytoplankton and zooplankton. Hui says “the marvelous scene of the Arctic” during a research cruise there inspired him to pursue aquatic research, and to find “the secrets hidden in water.”

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**Md Rasedul Islam, Engineering PhD Program**  
(Mechanical Engineering)  
BS: Khulna University of Engineering & Technology, 2012  
“It means a lot. I have been really honored to be awarded such a prestigious fellowship.”

In the Biobiorobatics Lab of Assistant Professor Mohammad Rahman, Md is working to develop a wearable exoskeleton designed to help stroke patients with upper-extremity rehabilitation. Citing the shortage of physical therapists to serve the growing number of stroke patients, he believes such products are essential. Md envisions his prototype becoming a successful product that will allow patients to live more independent lives.

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**Michelle Kassel, Psychology PhD Program**  
MS: UW-Milwaukee, 2017 • BS: University of Michigan-Ann Arbor, 2010  
Michelle’s 2017 master’s thesis was titled Structural Integrity of Attention Networks in Cross-Modal Selective Attention Performance in Healthy Aging.

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**David J. Cornell, Doctor of Physical Therapy Program**  
PhD: UW-Milwaukee, 2016 • MS: UW-Milwaukee, 2012 • BS: Carroll University, 2010  
“Being awarded the DGSF is monumental to helping me achieve my professional goal of becoming a tenure-track faculty member.”

David had already earned his MS and PhD in Kinesiology at UWM, but he decided the DPT program would provide the additional training he needed to support his increasingly clinical research interests. Initially drawn to the field by his interest in human performance, David envisions his work helping diverse populations, ranging from elite athletes to recreational and tactical athletes to occupational laborers.

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**Anna Benton, Educational Psychology PhD Program**  
(School Psychology)  
“It means I can focus the majority of my time implementing an intervention with elementary and middle-school youth placed in foster care.”

Anna’s experience as a mental health counselor in a psychiatric hospital inspired her to pursue a career as a school psychologist in the high school setting. One of her specific goals is to improve academic and social-emotional wellbeing for students within multiple care systems (e.g., child protective services, inpatient care, residential treatment, juvenile corrections) by encouraging collaboration among systems.

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**Christiana Eltiste, Philosophy MA Program**  
BA: St. Louis University, 2014  
“Receiving the DGSF validates my place in UWM’s prestigious Philosophy MA program and the work I’ve done thus far.”

Christiana’s current project is investigating the differences between expectations and demands, and what role they play in blame. “My interest in philosophy started when I realized philosophy was asking and providing thoughtful answers to the ‘big questions’ that I previously thought nobody else was engaging with critically,” she says. Her interests also include exploring what time is and feminist theories of knowledge.

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**Amanda Haag, English PhD Program**  
MFA, University of Texas at Austin, 2012 • BA: UW-Milwaukee, 2004  
“The fellowship gives me a great boost of confidence for my final year and will help me stand out as I apply for PhD programs.”

Amanda’s research is determining the genetic makeup of declining populations of Cascades frogs in the Pacific Northwest, which have been disappearing from their mountain meadow and lake habitats due to non-native fish, droughts, and the amphibian fungal disease Chytridiomycosis. He is using a new sequencing technology that allows for the sampling of thousands of small portions of DNA across an entire genome.

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**Bennett Hardy, Biological Sciences MS Program**  
BS: Humboldt State University, 2013  
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**Tae Joon Kwak, Engineering PhD Program**  
(Mechanical Engineering)  
BS: Khulna University of Engineering & Technology, 2012 • BA: Illinois Wesleyan University, 2011  
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Distinguished Graduate Student Fellows (DGSF)

Siwar Masannat, English PhD Program (Creative Writing: Poetry)
MFA, George Mason University, 2012 • BA: University of Jordan, 2009

“This fellowship will enable me to focus more deeply on writing my creative manuscript and bring me closer to realizing my professional goals.”

Siwar studies “literatures crossing national and language borders.” She says, “I am particularly interested in the ways that writers question and dismantle power, and how they decolonize spaces.”

Siwar—who is also pursuing a Graduate Certificate in Women’s and Gender Studies—says studying at UWM is “continuously opening up new questions and paths in both my creative and scholarly work.”

Charles Perkins, Philosophy MA Program
BA: University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2015

“It means that I will be able to dedicate myself to my research more wholeheartedly than I ever expected.”

Charles’s main areas of interest are metaphysics—which he defines as “investigating the topics that rest on the tension between experience and reality”—feminist philosophy, and logic. For his thesis, he is exploring issues surrounding theories of existence. “In other words,” he says, “I am exploring how philosophers try to determine what there is.”

Charles plans to pursue a PhD in philosophy after earning his master’s.

Alyssa Pfeiffer, Social Welfare PhD Program
MS: UW-Milwaukee, 2015 • BS: UW-Milwaukee, 2012

“I will be able to attend an academic conference to showcase some of the projects and evaluations that I have been researching.”

Alyssa is involved in a project evaluating the Milwaukee County Adult Drug Treatment Court and the Veterans Treatment Initiative.

“The field of Criminal Justice has always played an interest in my life,” she says. “I enjoy the research aspect of the field because it allows me the opportunity to investigate causes and consequences of crime, as well as how criminalological theory can be used to explain those causes.”

Khosro Pichka, Management Science PhD Program
MS: University of Tafresh, 2012 • BS: Isfahan University of Technology, 2009

“It’s an honor to receive this award. Having this scholarship gives me more time to focus on my research and present my work in high-ranked journals in my field.”

Khosro works on supply chain optimization and transportation planning using mathematical programing and statistical approaches. After earning his MS in industrial engineering in 2012 and a few years of industrial experience, Khosro became interested in research topics that are studied in business schools, so he decided to pursue a PhD at UWM to study supply chain management.

Jessica L. Skinner, Anthropology PhD Program
MS: UW-Milwaukee, 2015 • BA: UW-Milwaukee, 2012

“It is a chance for me to share my work and learn from others at professional conferences—and a vote of confidence in my work.”

Jessica works to elucidate the lives of past people as individuals, using skeletal analysis and new methods to better understand their lived experience.

Her PhD program has helped show her the importance of such knowledge.

“I have learned even more just how important the past is to our present and future,” she says. “With a deeper understanding of problems faced in the past, we can work toward a more just future.”

Morgan Stevenson, Psychology PhD Program (Neuroscience)

“I am grateful for the support of the DGSF award as I continue work on a new mass spectrometry technique.”

“The combination of being fascinated by behavior, but also wanting to understand its basis in the brain, led me to pursue graduate study in neuroscience,” Morgan says.

“I have been involved with the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry in piloting a new mass spectrometry technique that gives us the ability to create heat maps of the distribution of numerous lipids and proteins in the brain.”

Yunfan Zhang, Engineering PhD Program (Electrical Engineering)
ME: Oregon State University, 2014 • BS: Changsha University of Science and Technology, 2011

“It affirmed my previous research work. I will keep working hard on my research to make more progress in the future.”

Yunfan is interested in applying smartgrid technology—which has improved the efficiency of large electric power systems—to drinking water and wastewater treatment systems.

Working in the lab of Associate Professor Lingfang Wang, he is working to improve the water systems’ reliability and energy efficiency.

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.

Kate Gigstad, Geosciences MS Program
BS: UW-Milwaukee, 2016 • BS: UW-Milwaukee, 2004

“It shows me that all my hard work over the years has been noticed and appreciated.”

After a degree in kinesiology and 12 years as a personal trainer, Kate went back to school to pursue her childhood dream of being a paleontologist.

Studying glacial deposits in western Patagonia, Kate is exploring the effects of glaciation on marine ecosystems during the Late Paleozoic Ice Age—which ended about 280 million years ago—and comparing this to research on marine ecosystems closer to the equator during this time.

Rasoul Hosseini, Engineering PhD Program (Electrical Engineering)
MS: UW-Milwaukee, 2014 • MS: University of Kurdistan, 2010 • BS: K N Toosi University of Technology, Iran, 2007

“This award will help me focus on the research I am doing. Hopefully one day I can give such awards to the next generation.”

To support the next generation of Navy warships featuring weapons such as electromagnetic railguns and high-power lasers, Rasoul is researching how to overcome the challenges of designing electrical systems with enough energy to power these vessels.

“Understanding how the world works, mastering the laws of nature, and trying to use them to make our life more enjoyable is enchanting for me,” he says.
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New Advanced Opportunity Program (AOP) Fellows

Jose Basaldua, Freshwater Sciences and Technology MS Program

B.S: University of California-Santa Barbara, 2013

"The award will provide greater opportunity to attend conferences and events that will help me expand my knowledge."

Jose seeks to develop and implement urban sustainable practices and green infrastructure. His work with local organizations, in addition to his academics, is helping to broaden his learning and research opportunities.

He is also interested in conducting water policy research that could benefit urban areas throughout the country, as well as providing environmental educational outreach for students and local communities.

Clayton Cloutier, Engineering PhD Program (Civil Engineering)

M.S: UW-Milwaukee, 2016 • B.S: UW-Milwaukee, 2014

"Getting a PhD takes a long time. Without the financial support, I do not think that I would be able to continue."

Clayton attributes his interest in structural engineering to his fascination with architecture, buildings, and bridges—along with his brother’s passion for the field, who also studied at UWM. "I knew that I was drawn to this field because the classes seemed more challenging and even more exciting."

Clayton is working with Professor Konstantin Sobolev to evaluate and improve a new type of pavement called cemphalt.

Dyana Costello, Psychology PhD Program (Behavior Analysis)

B.A: UW-Wisconsin, 2014

"This award will aid in acquiring the necessary skills to further my career in the field."

A job at an early intervention clinic for children with autism spectrum disorders sparked Dyana’s initial interest in working with children with disabilities and her desire to find the most effective ways to teach them. Her interest deepened when she began reading evidence-based treatment literature, in which she learned of previous accomplishments in the field—and became inspired by those still waiting to be made.

Jessamine DeLancey, Dance MFA Program

Bachelor of Music: University of California-Santa Cruz, 2008

Jessamine was a choreographer for the 2017 Dancemakers program.

Tiffany Heindl, Master of Music Program


"This award will give me the freedom to immerse myself in music and in my studies . . . so that I can become a better musician."

Tiffany’s experience in ensembles such as the Milwaukee Youth Symphony Orchestra—learning from professional musicians and traveling to Canada and Europe—inspired her pursuit of a career in music. But she also credits her success to the experience and maturity that came with building a career in web design and development.

"My career outside of music has helped me develop an interest in the intersection of technology and the arts."

Andréa Howells, Biological Sciences PhD Program

B.S: Louisiana State University/A&M, 2016

"This award . . . shows reaching grad school despite my hard times during undergrad was worth it. It will allow me to teach less and focus on my research."

Andréa is using molecular data to try to fill in missing information in pedigree records of zoo animals. This will allow zoos to breed previously excluded animals and maintain healthy captive populations.

"I have always loved animals and dreamed of working in a zoo one day,” she says. "My project fulfills all of my childhood dreams and allows me to help animals in a novel way."

Sara Hutchins, Doctor of Physical Therapy Program

B.S: UW-Milwaukee, 2014

"I hope that I can serve as an inspiration for other struggling single parents who are dreaming of an education that can elevate their lives."

Sara’s interest in human movement began at age 16, when she coached kids in stunting, tumbling, and cheerleading. In her 20’s, she advanced her interest with a license in massage therapy and experience as an educator, but she wanted more.

As a single parent, the seven-year journey of earning her B.S in kinesiology at UWM and continuing to the DPT program has been a huge challenge. But with the help of her fellowship, she says, “I am exactly where I need to be!”

Murtatha Jamel, Engineering PhD Program (Materials Engineering)

M.S: UW-Milwaukee, 2015 • B.S: Babylon University, 2009

Murtatha’s 2015 master’s thesis was titled, The Effect of E-Glass Fibers and Phlogopite Mica on the Mechanical Properties and Dimensional Stability of Rigid PVC Foams

Toni Johns, Urban Studies PhD Program

M.S: UW-Milwaukee, 2017 • B.A: UW-Madison, 2004

"I’m very grateful for the opportunity to research contemporary social problems as a graduate student at UW-Milwaukee."

"I’m pursuing a doctorate to understand the systems that limit the potential of low-income youth and youth of color,” says Toni, a former coordinator of the YWCA Skills for Success program, designed to help Milwaukee high school students prepare for careers and post-secondary education.

"I plan to . . . influence policy by engaging people through my teaching and publications."

Kayla Johnson, Psychology PhD Program (Health Psychology)

B.A: Concordia College-Moorhead, 2014

"This fellowship allows me to put 100% of my energy towards studies for the first time."

As a health psychologist, Kayla focuses on behavioral factors that influence one’s health. Her first experience was at age 19, with her own health. After years of chronic daily migraines and failed medications, she exchanged them for behavioral changes, including improvements in exercise, diet, and sleep. During this time she found a passion for health (and cycling) that started her on the path to her UWM graduate program.
New Advanced Opportunity Program (AOP) Fellows

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
- New or continuing UWM graduate degree students who are U.S. citizens/permanent residents and
- New Advanced Opportunity Program (AOP) Fellows

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.

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New Advanced Opportunity Program (AOP) Fellows

Emma Jones, Doctor of Nursing Practice Program
BS: Alverno College, 2013

Megan Kangiser, Psychology PhD Program (Clinical Psychology)
BA: Creighton University, 2015
“This award allows more time for research and more time for self-care while experiencing a chronic medical condition.”
Megan examines the effects of drug use, particularly nicotine, on cognition and brain structure, and how effects differ between males and females. Initially a chemistry major in college, she became fascinated by the intersection of chemistry and psychology. She began work in a behavioral pharmacology lab as an undergraduate, which has led to her current work in a neuropsychology lab examining the effects of chronic drug use.

Sabrina Kent, Computer Science MS Program
BS: UW-Madison, 2003
“It’s a dream come true when I thought it was too late for me to keep dreaming.”
Sabrina studies computational theory, which involves “finding ways to not just ‘solve the problem’,” she explains, “but to solve it in a way that makes the computer get the answer as fast as possible.” As she earned her B.S. in molecular biology, Sabrina discovered a love for mathematics. Years later, she realized she needed to pursue it further. “I decided that if this is my one life, this is what I want to do with it.”

Amy C. Lang, Psychology PhD Program (Clinical Psychology)
BS: UW-Madison, 2016
“This fellowship will allow me time to achieve my academic and research goals, and possibly time to go above and beyond my current goals.”
Growing up with a pediatric chronic condition helped Amy become a strong and determined young woman. But she learned that many children in similar situations are left feeling helpless and alone. This disparity led her to pursue psychology as an undergraduate and to her current focus on the effects of pediatric chronic conditions on health-related quality of life during emerging adulthood.

Shavaughn M. Lawson, Urban Studies PhD Program
BS: UW-Whitewater, 2015 • AA: UW-Whitewater, 2013
“The fellowship has helped me achieve my goals by increasing my self-confidence in the foreign culture of graduate studies.”
Shavaughn will explore the social context in which members of a community garden build social capital among one another. Her goal is to learn if it can be a means to achieving social and environmental justice in racially marginalized and low-income urban areas. Being a first-generation college student has led her to a social service career path, where she hopes to motivate and encourage young scholars.

Frank Lewis, Master of Social Work Program
BS: UW-Milwaukee, 2017
“This fellowship opportunity has shown me that the sky is the limit, and that if I keep pushing, more doors will open up for me along this journey.”
Frank was drawn to medical social work by his desire for a career in the medical field and his belief in giving back to the community. He also sees a need for more black professionals in medical professions. He is working with Associate Professor David Pate on a community needs assessment; interviewing youth stakeholders in Milwaukee County about their expertise with youth and the issues they see impacting the lives of Milwaukee youth.

New Advanced Opportunity Program (AOP) Fellows

Abby Lopez, Educational Psychology PhD Program (School Psychology)
BA: University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, 2010
“I can focus on my research goals and engaging with local community organizations, schools, and health systems.”
Abby hopes to improve MPS’s ability to provide effective academic and mental health services to multicultural children, with a particular interest in trauma-informed and restorative justice-based behavioral classroom support for at-risk students.
At UWM, she has worked on research to improve early literacy outcomes and has taught courses on academic success for freshman and the Upward Bound program.

Jeneile Luebke, Nursing PhD Program
MS: UW-Madison, 2009 • BS: UW-Madison, 2002
“I will be able to spend more hours in independent study, taking additional elective credits, and participating in campus committees.”
Jeneile’s interest is intimate partner violence against Native American women, who suffer such violence at a higher rate than any other racial group. As a Native American, she seeks to develop a culturally appropriate screening tool that can reach more women in need of assistance. A longtime nurse interested in nurse education, Jeneile hopes for an academic position that blends her love of teaching and research.

Madeline Martin, Art MFA Program
BA: UW-Milwaukee, 2007
“This award will allow me to honor other mothers and women who are parenting with limited financial means.”
“I have drawn people since I was able to hold a pencil,” says Madeline, a mother of three who grew up in a rural, working-class family. “Art is, and has always been, my response to the world around me.”
“Both of my parents worked in prisons, so much of my work focuses on the prison industrial complex. After parenting for 10 years, my focus on mothers is a natural extension of my personal life.”

Lauren Hsiao-Ling Mascari, Educational Psychology PhD Program (Counseling Psychology)
MS: UW-Milwaukee, 2016 • BS: UW-Madison, 2008
“I will have time and energy to expand upon research that is culturally congruent for youth with marginalized identities.”
Through collaboration with the Juvenile Education Treatment Initiative (JETI) Program at Southwest Key and a capoeira (Afro-Brazilian martial art) instructor, Lauren has provided group therapy through a multicultural and social-justice lens for at-risk adolescents. Capoeira was incorporated to augment participants’ Aggression Replacement Training and strengthen their ability to negotiate conflict through non-verbal communication.

Abel Mathew, Psychology PhD Program (Clinical Psychology)
BS: Texas A&M University, 2016
“Long-term funding will allow me to design and engage in more ambitious research projects like longitudinal study designs over anxiety.”
Abel is working to understand neurobehavioral mechanisms behind anxiety disorders, specifically Obsessive Compulsive and Related Disorders and posttraumatic stress. “I have the unique opportunity to further my education, but also pursue research and clinical work to better treat mental health issues,” he says.
At Texas A&M University, Abel’s clinical experiences included working on a helpline and as a hospital mental health technician.
New Advanced Opportunity Program (AOP) Fellows

Emma Jones, Doctor of Nursing Practice Program
BS: Alverno College, 2013

Megan Kangiser, Psychology PhD Program (Clinical Psychology)
BA: Creighton University, 2015

“This fellowship allows more time for research and more time for self-care while experiencing a chronic medical condition.”

Megan examines the effects of drug use, particularly nicotine, on cognition and brain structure, and how effects differ between males and females.

Initially a chemistry major in college, she became fascinated by the intersection of chemistry and psychology. She began work in a behavioral pharmacology lab as an undergraduate, which has led to her current work in a neuropsychology lab examining the effects of chronic drug use.

Sabrina Kent, Computer Science MS Program
BS: UW-Madison, 2003

“It’s a dream come true when I thought it was too late for me to keep dreaming.”

Sabrina studies computational theory, which involves “finding ways to not just ‘solve the problem,’” she explains, “but to solve it in a way that makes the computer get the answer as fast as possible.”

As she earned her B.S. in molecular biology, Sabrina discovered a love for mathematics. Years later, she realized she needed to pursue it further. “I decided that if this is my one life, this is what I want to do with it.”

Amy C. Lang, Psychology PhD Program (Clinical Psychology)
BA: UW-Madison, 2016

“This fellowship will allow me time to achieve my academic and research goals, and possibly time to go above and beyond my current goals.”

Growing up with a pediatric chronic condition helped Amy become a strong and determined young woman. But she learned that many children in similar situations are left feeling helpless and alone. This disparity led her to pursue psychology as an undergraduate and to her current focus on the effects of pediatric chronic conditions on health-related quality of life during emerging adulthood.

Shavaughn M. Lawson, Urban Studies PhD Program
BS: UW-Whitewater, 2015 • AA: UW-Whitewater, 2013

“The fellowship has helped me achieve my goals by increasing my self-confidence in the foreign culture of graduate studies.”

Shavaughn will explore the social context in which members of a community garden build social capital among one another. Her goal is to learn if it can be a means to achieving social and environmental justice disparity led her to pursue psychology as an undergraduate and to her current focus on the effects of pediatric chronic conditions on health-related quality of life during emerging adulthood.

Frank Lewis, Master of Social Work Program
BS: UW-Milwaukee, 2017

“This fellowship opportunity has shown me that the sky is the limit, and that if I keep pushing, more doors will open up for me along this journey.”

Frank was drawn to medical social work by his desire for a career in the medical field and his belief in giving back to the community. He also sees a need for more black professionals in medical professions. He is working with Associate Professor David Pate on a community needs assessment, interviewing youth stakeholders in Milwaukee County about their expertise with youth and the issues they see impacting the lives of Milwaukee youth.

New Advanced Opportunity Program (AOP) Fellows

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New Advanced Opportunity Program (AOP) Fellows

Natalie Beatrice McNall, Geosciences, MS Program
BS: UW-Milwaukee, 2017
Natalie was awarded an undergraduate research travel award to present at the Geology Society of America Joint Section Meeting in Pittsburgh last March. She investigates the characterization of magnetic and micromorphological signatures in seismically disturbed sediment and sedimentary rocks.

Michael A. Miner, Sociology PhD Program
MA: University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, 2017 • BA: St Joseph’s College, 2015
“It affords me the opportunity to conduct and contribute to social research that has the possibility to shape state and federal policies.”
Michael’s research focuses on differential access to education as well as how educational attainment precipitates additional stratification processes. As a first-generation college student, Michael says he can “contribute a perspective often absent in graduate seminars, academic journals, and university committees,” and “explore ideas that may fly under the radar of my middle- and upper-class peers.”

Milan Mrkalj, Doctor of Physical Therapy Program
BS: UW-LaCrosse, 2013
“It enables me to thrive academically and dedicate my full energy into learning as much as possible during my graduate school journey.”
Milan’s physical therapy at age 16 after a soccer injury helped him realize it was the field he wanted to pursue.
“We all need to find our true calling and dedicate all our energy in hopes of bringing positive change to our society,” says Milan, who considers physical activity and proper nutrition the key to a long and healthy life.
“I am beyond excited to learn as much as I can to be the best physical therapist possible.”

Saul Oceguera Hernandez, Spanish MA Program
“It will give me the time needed to fully concentrate on each assignment of every course I am taking to complete my program.”
Saul analyzes literary and linguistic texts focused on Spanish writers and speakers and the impact they have in Hispanic culture and other cultures around the world. He is interested in the social and political issues from Latin American countries and the way those issues are reflected in their literature.
“I have always been intrigued by the way different groups of people behave and express themselves,” he says.

Storm Christine Pilloff, English PhD Program (Rhetoric and Composition)
MA: University of North Carolina Wilmington, 2015 • BA: University of North Carolina Wilmington, 2012
“It provides the financial support I lack, and also represents the kind of moral support I’ve always been without.”
“Issues of social justice and accessibility not only initially drew me to this field of study, it’s because of my background that those issues keep me consistently invested in my research and teaching.”
“This fellowship eases the burden of my teaching load and diminishes my need for a second job, freeing up more than 20 hours a week for my research and writing.”

Kristin M Ravel, English PhD Program
Kristin’s interests include digital and multimodal composition, feminist theory, design studies, ethics, and composition pedagogy. Her UWM activities include serving as an English 101 Coordinator and New Instructor Mentor.

Jennifer Reinke, MFA Dance Program
BA: Beloit College, 2005
“[I]t allows me to continue gaining skills and practical experience in my chosen field while establishing myself as a professional.”
Jennifer credits her UWM experience for her success as a Milwaukee dance and theatre professional. In her first year, her research culminated in Animalecules, Quasimondo Physical Theatre’s original production inspired by microbiology.
Her credits in more than 15 Quasimondo productions since 2012 have included co-director, choreographer, and performer. She has also served on the board and in marketing/public relations.

Kazandra Rodriguez, Kinesiology MS Program (Neuromechanics)
BA: University of Iowa, 2016
“It will provide full immersion in my thesis and other research projects to ultimately facilitate high-caliber publications.”
As a dancer, Kazandra marvelled at the capabilities of the human body. But as an undergraduate researcher in biomechanics, she learned of its susceptibility to dysfunction; and she decided to learn how to use research to correct and prevent biomechanical dysfunction and disability.
In addition to providing the basis for future research, Kazandra hopes her work will increase the visibility of latinas in academia.

Alessandra Simmons Rolffs, English MA Program (Creative Writing)
MFA, Indiana University Bloomington, 2012 • BA: University Of California-Santa, 2005
“This award will help me focus on completing my degree and publishing new creative work.”
Much of Alessandra’s poetry and creative nonfiction reflects her interest in “writing that helps us imagine the unforeseeable consequences of our actions.”
“I was drawn to the study and teaching of literature and creative writing,” she says, “because it helps me understand what it means to be human and live in relationship with others and the environment.”

Kelsey S. Rozema, Art History MA Program
BA: University of Illinois-Urbana, 2015
“It provides invaluable professional workshops and opportunities to strengthen my writing and prepare for a future in academia.”
Kelsey traces her interest in art history to childhood visits to the Art Institute of Chicago with her mother, an artist. She is researching majos Coronado’s (crowned nun) portraits. Popular in 18th and 19th century colonial Mexico, they were commissioned by families to honor daughters who were nuns. She is also interested in how the historical depiction of the disabled human body in art has helped shape social views today.

Alexandria Sedar, Master of Sustainable Peacebuilding Program
BA: UW-Milwaukee, 2015
“As an AOP fellow, I will be able to seize more opportunities to serve my community and network in my field.”
Alexandria is interested in “the relationship between the reconciliation process and health equity.”
“The seemingly unrelated issues that come up in the reconciliation process, from distrust of government to lack of intercultural exchange, have a big effect on health,” she says.
She was drawn to the MSP program’s emphasis on “systems thinking” and international and domestic hands-on experience.
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Michelle Trujillo, Film, Video, Animation and New Genres MFA Program
Dual BA: Florida Atlantic University, 2014
“It means a lot to me... in terms of its validation of students who cannot traditionally afford to delve into post-graduate studies.”
Exploring cultural and gender-based representation and identity creation, Michelle’s work engages with isolation, connectivity and disoriented states, especially in relation to a concept of “Otherness.” Stemming from an intersectional feminist perspective, her work does not always offer solutions to the problems it explores. Michelle is also pursuing the UWM Graduate Certificate in Women’s and Gender Studies.

Kao Zoua Yang, Engineering PhD Program (Materials Science)
BS: UW-Eau Claire, 2014 • MS: Florida International University, 2016
“Fellowships like these are truly amazing and impactful. It allows you to fully focus on your education and research at a higher quality.”
In his corrosion engineering research, Kao is comparing the corrosion resistance of next-generation steels to current steels used in the petrochemical industry.
“We always strive to make our world a better place by making materials environmentally friendly, greener, stronger, and cheaper in production,” Kao says. “I chose this field of study because I noticed that the world is changing in many ways, and this field can help it.”

Graduate Student Excellence Fellows (GSEF)

The Graduate Student Excellence Fund was established in 2015 by the Dean of the Graduate School, Marija Gajdarziska-Jaslovska, 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.

Briana Arice, Architecture MArch Program
BS: University of Central Florida, 2014
“This award will allow me to dedicate more of my time to my research and studies. It would help me to buy materials needed for my thesis project.”
Briana has always been interested in real estate and spatial planning, so she plans to research how interior spaces can enhance the lives of mixed-income housing residents from a psychological perspective.

Paul Henry Ballesteros, Library and Information Science MLIS Program
BA: California State University-Los Angeles, 2015
“It has bolstered my studies—emotionally and financially—and affirmed my confidence in the School of Information Studies.”
Paul studies the effects of information, data, and multimedia on the future—and on the institution of the library—and how these concepts relate on a community basis.
He sees reluctance by public libraries to accept certain technologies but also potential over-reliance on technology for information in general. “A healthy balance—whatever that is—is the only safeguard from these entities caving in on each other.”

Ashley L. Brennanaman, Anthropology Ph.D. Program, Graduate Certificate in Geographic Information Systems
MS: Boston University, 2014 • BA: University of Georgia, 2011
*By recognizing the merit of my work and academic success, this award gives me continued confidence to pursue my goals.*
Ashley studies bioarchaeology, which fuses biological anthropology and archaeology to reveal past human experiences through analysis of human remains from archaeological contexts.
Studying the Milwaukee County Poor Farm Cemetery skeletal collection—curated at UWM—she will investigate institutionalized patterns of health in 19th and 20th century Milwaukee and at contemporaneous U.S. poorhouse locations.

Mary Clinkenbeard, English PhD Program (Professional and Technical Writing)
PhD: UW-Milwaukee, 2014 • MA: Oklahoma State University, 2011 • BFA, University of Kansas, 2005
*These generous awards make possible richer research experiences, the benefits of which extend beyond the lives of individual students.*
Mary examines how families whose children have complex communication needs learn to facilitate communication through the use of augmentative and alternative communication technologies.
“My research findings suggest that technical documentation and simple conceptions of usability are often not enough to support the differing contexts and ability-based needs of technology users with disabilities,” she says.

Sara Doan, English PhD Program (Professional and Technical Writing)
MA: Iowa State University, 2015 • BA: UW-Platteville, 2012
*Thanks to the generosity of this award, I have the opportunity to share my dissertation research internationally.*
Sara is fascinated by communication breakdowns, specifically “when people’s perceptions of communication don’t match what they’ve written.”
She is analyzing the style, tone, and content of instructors’ written feedback on students’ assignments, and comparing it to subsequent interviews with the instructors on the same feedback. She has found that what they wrote is often misaligned with their perceptions of what they wrote.

Jacqueline E Engel, Health Sciences PhD Program
MS: UW-Milwaukee, 2016 • BS: UW-Milwaukee, 2013
Jacqueline was a winner at the 2016 CHS Research Symposium.

Jessica Ford, Kinesiology PhD Program
MS: Kennesaw College, 2015 • BA: Catholic University Of America, 2013
*These generous gifts are important. They allow graduate students to fully focus on their respective career goals.*
Growing up as a three-sport athlete and musician (voice and guitar), Jessica says she was always drawn to the similarities and nuanced differences of each performance domain.
Her research is primarily performance psychology—the use of mental skills training to facilitate optimal performance—with particular interests in music performance and translation of sport-oriented performance interventions to a music domain.
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Graduate Student Excellence Fellows (GSEF)

Benjamin Formanek, Philosophy MA Program
BA: UW-Milwaukee, 2015

"With this award, the quality of my work and my prospects for admission into a great PhD program will improve."

Benjamin is studying the relationship between the roles human beings, or “finite spirits,” and God play in humans’ capacity to move their bodies amidst an immaterial world as discussed in George Berkeley’s Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge and The Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous.

He says his “profound curiosity and inclination towards anything philosophical” first drew him to philosophy.

Hoda Barzegar Ganji, Architecture PhD Program
MArch: University Of Tehran, 2013 • BArch: University Of Tehran, 2010

"Being kindly granted this award, I feel even more committed to do the best I can to improve my academic affairs."

Hoda is working on earth-to-air heat exchangers (EAHE). These passive ventilation and pre-cooling systems in buildings reduce energy consumption and costs by using the Earth’s near constant subterranean temperature to warm or cool air or other fluids.

"Part of my work is to apply modern technologies in my research, which might fill the gap between conventional and novel methods," she says.

Yui Hashimoto, Geography PhD Program
MA: McMaster University, 2012 • BA: Macalester College, 2009

Yui was awarded the 2015-2016 Society of Woman Geographers Pruitt Dissertation Fellowship and was selected to attend the 2016 Summer Institute in Economic Geography in Lexington, Kentucky.

Her research interests include: geographies of gender and race, political economy, geographies of poverty/inequality; labor geographies, work, and social reproduction; and qualitative and participatory methods.

Jade Tahlija Herrschler, Master of Sustainable Peacebuilding Program
BS: UW-Green Bay, 2015

After earning her bachelor’s, Jade worked as a Mental Health Professional in a psychiatric hospital. She wants to learn about complex issues within communities locally and globally, with an emphasis on human/environment interaction.

She is motivated by the idea of working in collaboration with others who possess the same dedication to moving toward positive change in the world.

Molly McCourt, English PhD Program (Media, Cinema, and Digital Studies)
MA: John Carroll University, 2011 • Dual BA, University of Dayton, 2009

"I will be able to earn a degree that will help me communicate how important it is to think critically about the media we consume."

Molly studies representations of masculinity in 21st century film and television—specifically the power of nostalgia and cultural myths of the American Dream.

Her college and graduate school experiences revealed “the crucial nature of gender equity,” she says. “I see researching and teaching media as a way to share these important ideas.”

Molly is a Graduate Student Fellow at the Center for 21st Century Studies.

Graduate Student Excellence Fellows (GSEF)

Dian Mitrayani, Urban Education PhD Program (Social Foundations of Education)
MS: Northern Illinois University, 2012 • MUP: University of Hawai’i at Manoa, 2008 • BA: Indonesia, 2003

"It provides me with both financial and moral support to reach my dream career in youth education research."

Dian studies youth leadership and civic participation, especially for young women. She explores how young women learn, build, and practice leadership, and use those skills in civic life.

She believes the global increase of urban youth requires an exploration of their opportunities and challenges, and her urban education background allows her to explore youth education through the critical lens of the urban setting.

Alannia Mosley, Psychology PhD Program (Counseling Psychology)
MA: Western Michigan University, 2015 • BA: Dillard University, 2013

"I am honored to have been chosen and hope to continue bringing awareness to the mental health community."

Alannia’s undergraduate training included counseling survivors of domestic violence—which “reaches all types of people, regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, or age,” she says—and working withdrink, four to five-year-old children in the area of literacy.

One of her goals is to provide families in need with the same kind of counseling and support that helped her family in the aftermath of a life-altering event.

Blanca G Munoz, Spanish MA Program
BA / BS: UW-Parkside, 2017

"This award makes me want to keep going, knowing that there are people who see the effort that I make to achieve my goals."

Spanish is Blanca’s first language, and she wants to teach it to others. Her first teaching experience is this semester, as a teaching assistant in the Spanish Department.

She also wants to build on her undergraduate volunteer experience at the Racine Healthcare Network, where she was a translator for Spanish-speaking patients who could not understand their healthcare providers.

Gooan Nam, Economics PhD Program
MS: Texas A&M University, 2015 • BA: Seoul National University, 2011

"This award is a great encouragement and support that will continue to motivate me in my future academic pursuits."

Gooan’s primary focus is overcoming irrational choices, caused by biases underlying decision-making and coordination failure. He hopes to develop effective manipulations that could be converted into policy and managerial strategy.

"I hope my research contributes to facilitating a better choice by developing an information-revealing device that forms trust or modifies incentive structure," he says.

Nicholas Joseph Niemuth, Freshwater Sciences PhD Program
MS: University of Michigan-Ann Arbor, 2012 • BS: UW-Madison, 2009

"This award will help me toward my goal of one day achieving a professorship with my own university research lab."

"The cutting edge of nanomaterial research is to expose realistic biological systems to industrially relevant nanomaterials," Nicholas says.

The goal of his work at the Center for Sustainable Nanotechnology is to understand these complex interactions and develop environmentally benign nanomaterials.

Nicholas has presented his work at a number of national, international, and regional meetings.
Graduate Student Excellence Fellows (GSEF)

Kathryn Pauls, Geosciences PhD Program
MS: UW-Milwaukee, 2014 • BA: Augustana College, 2011

“I am grateful to have the support of others to continue my work. I hope that in return, in some small way, I can help change the world.”

Kathryn works on identifying and studying glacial deposits of South American Gondwana during the Late Paleozoic ice age—over 300 million years ago. She is currently studying the climate trends of sedimentary basins in Argentina in order to better define the timing of the disappearance of glacial ice during this time period and connect it to other locations, such as southeastern Brazil, studied by her colleagues.

Shane Pullins, Psychology PhD Program (Experimental Psychology)
BA / BS: Miami University, 2014

“The recognition this award offers will accentuate my resume/CV as I move forward with my scientific career.”

Shane studies how memories and their associated contexts are formed within a brain area called the retrosplenial cortex. He is interested in how the brain encodes each aspect of a traumatic event into a unitary representation. Using a form of fear conditioning in rodents, he can isolate which portions of the cortex contribute to learning about traumatic events and which contribute to contextual learning.

Reihaneh Rostami, Engineering PhD Program (Computer Science)
BS: University of Birjand, 2005 • MS: Amirkabir University of Technology, 2010

“This fellowship award encourages me to work harder to attain my academic goals.”

Reihaneh is using state-of-the-art intelligent algorithms to improve the performance of 3D shape analysis. She is constructing compressed data descriptors of 3D shapes. These compact representations can be analyzed in place of the actual objects, reducing the resources and time required for analyses. Reihaneh says her past IT experience in image processing and machine learning led her to combine the two areas.

Cindy Sanders, Health Sciences PhD Program
MS: UW-Milwaukee, 2016 • BS: UW-Milwaukee, 2013

“This award will help me to be more successful in achieving my professional goals by opening up more time to pursue them.”

Using an obese mouse model, Cindy is exploring whether various treatments with smaller molecules of a protein called pigment epithelium-derived factor could protect and inhibit prostate tumor progression. With her lifelong interest in health sciences, Cindy says she knew early on that she would work in the field. Previous health-related lab experiences and occupations have also influenced her academics interests.

William Tchakirides, History PhD Program
MA: American University, 2011 • BS: Suffolk University, 2006

William is exploring intersections of race, policing, and power in Milwaukee from the vantage point of African American officers and the communities they serve.

Louise Zamparutti, English PhD Program (Professional and Technical Writing)

“The opportunity to conduct hands-on research helps me work towards my goal of obtaining a university teaching position.”

Louise investigates the construction, inauguration, and marketing of a new national monument in Italy. Synthesizing perspectives from the fields of technical communication, rhetoric, and sociocultural linguistics, she examines the use of history and identity as persuasive strategies by institutions. Her interest in discourse surrounding the monument began when she was in Italy leading dance and choreography workshops.

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 DGSF, DDF, and AOP fellows are eligible to receive:

• Tuition remission
• Health insurance
• $1,000 travel award
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Dr. Tomás Garrett-Rosas Research Awardee

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Danielle Washington, Master of Public Health Program
BS: UW-Milwaukee, 2012

Danielle is the recipient of the 2017 Dr. Tomás Garrett-Rosas Research Award, granted to an alumnus of the Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program and new AOP Fellow whose research interests demonstrate a focus on social justice and potential for community outreach—objectives that were important to Dr. Garrett-Rosas. Washington will receive an additional stipend of $1,500 each year of her fellowship and be asked to present their research publicly in the final year.

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