2018 GRADUATE STUDENT FELLOWSHIP CELEBRATION

HONORING OUR 2018-19 FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENTS

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2018

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. Johannes Britz, Provost
  3. Mark Mone, Chancellor

Featured Speaker: Edward Hashek

Recognition of 2018-19 Fellowship Recipients
  1. Distinguished Dissertation Fellows (DDF)
  2. R1 Distinguished Dissertation Fellows (DDF R1)
  3. Distinguished Graduate Student Fellows (DGSF)
  4. New Advanced Opportunity Program (AOP) Fellows
  5. R1 Advanced Opportunity Program (R1 AOP) Fellows
  6. Dr. Tomás Garrett-Rosas Research Awardee
  7. Levine Science Fellows
  9. Graduate Student Excellence Fellows (GSEF)

5:30  Social Hour
Featured Speaker and UWM MBA Graduate
Edward Hashek
MBA: UW-Milwaukee, 1982
BA, Computer Science: UW-Madison, 1970

For more than 40 years, Ed Hashek has worked in the IT industry with a focus on financial technology services. He has worked for the companies associated with Marine Bank and M&I Bank in Milwaukee, in areas including network management; product management; and risk and fraud vendor management. Industry acquisitions resulted in his working with FIS, a Jacksonville, Florida-based company and the world’s leader in technology for the financial industry.

Ed has a passion for community service and has been an active member of the boards of the Milwaukee Art Museum, Milwaukee Repertory Theater and the AIDS Resource Center of Wisconsin. Currently, he is a board member of the Community Foundation of Broward County as well as the Island City Stage.

Ed lives with his spouse, John, in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.
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.

Daniel J. Bartholomay, Sociology PhD Program
MS: North Dakota State University, 2014 • BS: Minnesota State University-Moorhead, 2011
“I will miss teaching, but I am grateful for the opportunity to focus on completing my dissertation before I enter the job market next fall.”

As a sociologist, Daniel studies patterns of human behavior that perpetuate and disrupt social inequalities in gender, sexuality, family and health. His dissertation explores the attitudes and behaviors of married people in contemporary society, from the perspective that the institution of marriage has historically served to privilege men, masculinity and heterosexuality, producing structural inequalities that disadvantage women, femininity and sexual minorities.

Xin Cai, Information Studies PhD Program
MA: Central China Normal University, 2014 • BA: Shenyang Normal University, 2011
“This award is a big honor for me. It allows me to finish my dissertation without worrying about my financial situation.”

Xin is working to build a health portal navigation guidance system. He has analyzed the online subject directory portal HealthLink, used by the Medical College of Wisconsin, which arranges content within a three-level hierarchy. Xin will use a Markov chain—a model describing a sequence of possible events based on the previous event—to better predict a user’s next move. Always curious about how sites like Google customize ads for users, Xin began studying mechanisms behind the recommendation systems when he joined the School of Information Studies in 2014.

Franklin K.R. Cline, English PhD Program (Creative Writing)
MFA: Western Michigan University, 2014 • Truman State University: MA, 2011 • BA, 2009
“This award allows me more time to slowly consider my poems instead of puffing them off in a great rush.”

Franklin is writing a series of poems that explore the ramifications of the railroad of tears—a series of forced relocations by the US government of Native American peoples from their ancestral homelands in the southeastern United States to western areas from the 1830s to the 1850s. “Growing up in a low-income home,” Franklin says, “the idea of attending college—much less obtaining a PhD—is foreign not just to my parents but to both sides of my extended family, so I am hella proud of my accomplishments.”

Mary Clinkenbeard, English PhD Program (Professional and Technical Writing)
MA: Oklahoma State University, 2011 • BFA: University of Kansas, 2005
“Receiving a DDF is a great honor and is certainly one of the highlights of my graduate career.”

Mary’s dissertation explores how families whose children experience severe speech limitations integrate augmentative and alternative communication technologies into their daily interactions. She is using interviews with families and video observations of their AAC technology usage to identify challenges these devices present in the home. Among parents’ greatest challenges, her research suggests, are programming AAC devices and facilitating their children’s AAC communication. She has also found a general lack of school and community support.

Sara Doan, English PhD Program (Professional Writing)
MA: Iowa State University, 2015 • BA: UW-Platteville, 2012
“With the DDF, I have the opportunity to concentrate on my dissertation and lay groundwork for other research.”

Sara’s dissertation examines how experienced professional communication instructors give feedback comments on their students’ resumes and cover letters. “Writing instructors give much feedback on students’ writing,” she says, “but lack data-driven information about how to give students feedback that matches the overarching goals of helping students to become better writers and problem solvers.” The field of professional and technical writing “allows me to apply my humanistic writing and design skills to solve problems civically and professionally.”
Joshua Driscoll, Anthropology PhD Program
MA: Wake Forest University, 2012 • BA: University of South Carolina, 2010
“This award will help me complete my dissertation faster and further my ultimate goal of becoming a professor.”
By brewing beer, Joshua is investigating the entanglement of alcohol production and consumption with social organization and political practice in Iron Age west-central Europe. He’s testing terminal shelf life of his prehistoric-style brew (in a variety of vessels) and comparing the results to ethnographic and historic models relating beverage shelf life to politically motivated feasting events and social structure. Then he generates hypotheses about Iron Age beer and society and compares them to published archaeological data.

Hamid Erfanian, Engineering PhD Program (Materials Science and Engineering)
Ferdowsi University of Mashhad: MS, 2013 • BS, 2010
“Earning such a prestigious scholarship will boost my confidence and make me a more attractive job candidate.”
Hamid researches how the processing of a material affects its performance. “My studies on microstructure, phase transformation, corrosion and mechanical properties of cobalt-based alloys will help to find the relationship between processing of parts and their performance,” he says, “and, ultimately, optimize the manufacturing process to achieve better performance. Materials science is my passion, and I enjoy studying and understanding new discoveries and achievements in this area of research.”

Nicholas Fedorchuk, Geosciences PhD Program
MS: UW-Milwaukee, 2014 • BA: College of Wooster, 2012
“This award will help me complete my PhD, travel to conferences to present my research, and pursue a career in academia.”
Nicholas examines how Earth’s climate has evolved naturally in deep time to better understand current, shorter-scale, human-driven climate change. Specifically, he is studying glacialiation during the late Paleozoic ice age (about 300 million years ago) in present-day Brazil. “We are trying to interpret how large the glaciers were and where they were flowing,” he explains. “This information will help determine how glaciers are impacted by changing climate and tectonic conditions.”

Uma Garg, Physics PhD Program
University of Delhi-Miranda House: MS, 2011 • BS, 2009
Since starting at UWM in 2013, Uma has received numerous David Lichtman Research Fellowships in recognition of outstanding achievements in experimental physics, as well as many Chancellor’s Graduate Student Awards.

Rachael M. Giglio, Biological Sciences PhD Program
MS: UW-Milwaukee, 2014 • BS: University of Idaho, 2009
“This award grants me the time to travel between Milwaukee and Madison to finish lab work and complete my PhD.”
“My research uses molecular tools to better understand the mechanisms of transmission and maintenance of plague, which is caused by the bacteria Yersinia pestis,” Rachael says. “Plague is typically detected during an outbreak in prairie dog colonies, where it moves among family groups of prairie dogs until nearly the entire colony has been killed.” The goal of her PhD project is to test hypotheses that explain how interactions among Y. pestis, small rodents, prairie dogs, and their fleas move plague among prairie dog colonies.

Lauren Stephanie Hopkins, Psychology PhD Program
MS: Chicago School of Professional Psychology, 2010 • BS: North Central College, 2007
Lauren was a 2014-16 AOP fellow. Since coming to UWM, she has published seven papers, given nine conference presentations, and made numerous speaking appearances.
**Eva Igler, Psychology PhD Program (Clinical Psychology)**
**MA: Minnesota State University-Mankato, 2012 • BA: UW-Stevens Point, 2010**

“This award will allow me to work on my dissertation without the additional responsibility of a teaching assistantship.”

Eva’s primary research interest is the phenomenon of pain dismissal—someone ignoring or minimizing an individual’s pain—in child and adolescent populations, and how demographic factors such as gender and ethnicity play a role. Pain dismissal often results in under-treatment of pain, which can result in significant psychological and physical consequences. She is also exploring ways that clinicians can help children and adolescents recently diagnosed with a chronic condition facilitate positive communication with friends.

**Md Rasedul Islam, Engineering PhD Program**
**BS: Khulna University of Engineering and Technology Bangladesh, 2012**

“Hard work paid off.”

In UWM’s Bio-Robotics Lab of Professor Mohammad Rahman, Rasedul is developing a wearable exoskeleton designed to help stroke patients with upper-extremity rehabilitation. His modular and universal solution to existing design problem, he believes, will take upper-extremity rehabilitation to the next level in terms of patient-specific therapy. Citing the shortage of physical therapists to serve the growing number of stroke patients, he says such products are essential. Rasedul envisions his prototype becoming a successful product that will allow patients to live more independent lives.

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

“The DDF Award will allow me to concentrate on expanding my neuroimaging repertoire while learning techniques necessary to become an innovator in the field of neuropsychology.”

Michelle is studying how the brain deals with the cognitive demands of multitasking. Using a non-invasive methodology, she is investigating study participants’ neural firing patterns as they try to focus attention simultaneously on distinct auditory and visual tasks. Results will broaden current understanding of how we control our cognition in information-intensive situations in which we have to both focus attention and ignore distractions.

**Tae Joon Kwak, Engineering PhD Program (Mechanical Engineering)**
**MS: Yonsei University, 2014 • BE: Sangji University, 2011**

“This award confirmed to me that I am on the right path. As a UWM student, I am filled with pride and ambition for my studies and future life.”

Tae Joon studies “the phenomena that occur within the micro/nano world.” He is developing “lab-on-a-chip” devices that can separate and manipulate small particles such as cells, DNA, and viruses based on their characteristics. The devices will be very small, but also easy to use and affordable. “Ever since I learned that many modern, cutting-edge technologies come from devices smaller even than hair,” he says, “I was interested in a small, invisible world.”

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

“This award presents an opportunity to finish writing my dissertation by the end of the spring 2019 semester.”

Will seeks a better understanding of the roots and evolution of racial injustice in America. His dissertation explores intersections of race, policing and power in post-World War II Milwaukee from the vantage point of African-American law enforcers and the communities they serve. Will’s academic interests have been guided by his past experience as a public historian of African-American life and culture in the Washington area, as well as his local activism in Milwaukee around matters of race and policing.

**Wei Xu, Geography PhD Program**
**MS: UW-Milwaukee, 2014 • BE: Wuhan University, 2007**

“This award means that my work is deemed relevant and is supported by UWM. It will also help me achieve my goal of becoming a researcher and educator at a university setting.”

Wei is a health geographer investigating the socio-spatial disparities in dementia mortality in the U.S. His statistical models combine death registry databases with various physical and social environment data. His research could generate etiological hypotheses of dementia, evaluate disparities in dementia mortality risk between populations and their sources, and lead to better dementia care for patients, especially those at the end stage.
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**Allain Daigle, English PhD Program (Media, Cinema and Digital Studies)**

**MA:** University of St. Andrews, 2014  •  **BA:** SUNY-Oswego, 2012

“The support will enable me to expand my project to include more research from international sources and trade journals.”

“My dissertation describes how motion picture lens production shifted from an artisanal practice to a commercial industry between the 1880s and the 1920s,” Allain says. “Lenses were central to anxieties and imaginations about technology’s capacity to illuminate a world beyond direct human perception. In historicizing how lenses became cinema lenses, I consider how lenses have a complex history of development, how culture influences technology, and how imagination is fundamental to our understandings of technological perception.”

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**Krista Grensavitch, History PhD Program**

**MA:** UW-Milwaukee, 2013  •  **BA:** North Park University, 2012  •  **BA:** Carthage College, 2007

“With support from the fellowship, I can now devote the requisite time and energy towards completing my dissertation.”

Krista explores the intersection of feminist pedagogy, material culture theory, and the scholarship of teaching and learning. Responding to the so-called “Material Turn,” her dissertation argues that continuing bell hooks’ engaged pedagogy, which places an emphasis on developing and maintaining well-being, is best done by incorporating objects in teaching and learning practices.

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**Susan E. Hill, Anthropology PhD Program**

**MA:** Central European University, 2012  •  **BA:** St. Olaf College, 2009

“This award makes it possible for me to finish my PhD. I would not be able to afford to finish without it.”

Susan’s research explores the changing meanings of U.S. middle-class adulthood among underemployed college graduates in the service industry. She has studied how the “downwardly mobile children of the middle classes” become adults without the “pay and prestige that has defined middle-stratum adulthood for a generation.” She has found that for many white-collar hopefuls, the beginnings of their careers are “defined by a period of precarious employment—‘waiting room,’ as some called it—for wealth, self-actualization, and adulthood itself.”

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**Mukta Joshi, Health Sciences PhD Program**

**Cert:** UW-Milwaukee, 2016  •  **MS:** Marquette University, 2006  •  **BE:** University of Pune, 2002

“This award will see me through graduation and back me as I prepare myself for a career in academia.”

Mukta studies neuromuscular changes that diminish dexterity as people age, focusing particularly on motor neurons. Her research will identify mechanisms that impair dexterity and will lead to improved rehabilitation for older adults to retain and restore hand function.

Mukta’s master’s research used electromyography (muscle signals) to assess impairments in stroke victims. “My interest in physiological signals—which can tell healthy, normal behavior from impairments or illness—attracted me to my current line of research,” she says.
Kateryna Malaia, Architecture PhD Program
National Academy of Fine Art and Architecture-Ukraine: MArch, 2011 • BArch, 2009
“This award is a fantastic opportunity to invest all my effort into finishing my dissertation at the highest quality level possible.”
Kateryna explores the transformation of urban dwellings after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. She investigates the role of the home in the creation of the post-Soviet condition and how socioeconomic and political change altered ideas about the home. Combing through engineering and architectural archives, popular media, and oral histories in the post-Soviet megacity Kyiv, Kateryna is tracking the “transformation of layouts, choreography and daily rhythms” inside an urban home at times of change.

Joseph O’Halloran, Physics PhD Program
BA: Lawrence University, 2010
“I am honored by this award. I anticipate that having it on my vitae will help me secure a post-doctoral position.”
Joseph is conducting basic research to learn more about superconductors, which offer the promise of a fundamental shift in computing but which currently operate only at very low temperatures. One superconductor—an iron-selenide compound—has many unusual characteristics, and Joseph is part of a team working on a mathematical model to describe these unusual properties. “In doing so,” he says, “we are attempting to determine the most important physical mechanisms at play.”

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 some small way, I can help change the world.”
Kathryn works on identifying and studying glacial deposits of Gondwana, in present-day South America, 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.

Jennifer M.P. Woo, Epidemiology PhD Program
“This award will help to relieve my financial burden and provide the protected time needed to focus on completing my dissertation.”
Stress experienced during childhood and adolescence has been associated with development of breast cancer in adulthood, but the mechanisms through which this may occur are unknown. Jennifer’s dissertation research explores how adverse events and socioeconomic position during childhood ultimately affect the type of breast cancer a woman may develop. She is exploring how stress can be internalized and may result in modification of genes related to inflammation and immune response found along the stress management pathway.

Hongyan Yang, Architecture PhD Program
(Buildings-Landscapes-Cultures)
MS: Beijing Normal University, 2013 • BS: East China Normal University, 2010
“This award would enhance my research by enabling me to reside in California to conduct my field research.”
Hongyan’s interdisciplinary doctoral studies focus on how culinary practices translate into space. In particular, she is exploring how Asian immigrants’ cooking traditions and cultural sensibilities invest new meanings to the built environments and cultural landscapes in the U.S. She credits her undergraduate research and overseas studying and living experiences for inspiring her to look beyond the fundamental role of food to its significance in studying architectural history, ethnic culture, immigration history and racial dynamics.
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.

Maryam Ayazi, Psychology PhD Program (Health Psychology)
MA: University of Tehran, 2013 • BA: Shahid Beheshti University, 2009

“As a first-year PhD student, this fellowship is really encouraging! It allows me to dedicate my time to research and publishing papers.”

“Life today is the art of balancing your everyday stressors with the coping activities you use,” Maryam says. “Being part of the international community has inspired me to help people in diverse populations.” Maryam’s particular interests include self-selected leisure activities, mindfulness/meditation and activities to reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease. She is also interested in the moderating role of social support on stress.

Farhad Balali, Engineering PhD Program
MS: UW-Milwaukee, 2015 • BSE: K.N. Toosi, 2012

“I expect to graduate from my PhD program by May 2019, and this award offers me more time to focus on my research.”

Farhad’s dissertation explores the reliability and asset management analysis of the electrical power system. His main research focuses are optimization, data analysis, machine learning and Internet of Things, which involves advanced predictive algorithms for smart energy systems and other applications. Farhad has taught some 150 students as an industrial engineering teaching assistant and has worked as a research assistant at the Center for Sustainable Electrical Energy Systems since August 2015.

Esmé Boyce, Dance MFA Program
BFA: Juilliard School, 2009

“In the nuts and bolts practicality of life, this award means that I can have greater artistic mobility and a healthy personal life. “

“My studies at UWM have led me to investigate the context and function of contemporary dance performance, teaching, and dance-making,” Esmé says. “In my final semeste, I will be considering the nature of how dance knowledge and artistic contributions are shared and passed from one generation to another through intellectual, kinetic, and embodied methodologies. My focus is on contextualizing, questioning, and reinforcing dance as a malleable and powerful medium for communication.”

Zhen Chao, Mathematics PhD Program (Applied Mathematics)
MS: Wenzhou University, 2013 • BS: Hunan University, 2009

“It allows me to focus on academic work and publish high-quality papers. It is an encouraging recognition of my progress.”

Zhen studies molecular dynamics, which use computer simulation to study physical movements of atoms and molecules. Most molecular systems are too complex to study analytically, so he’s working to improve the quality of simulations through better design of math modules and effective algorithms. Zhen was first encouraged to pursue math in elementa y school. With mathematics, he says, “I believe that I can get some useful results and effective tools to address some problems in our lives. Then people can use them to change their lives.”

Dalila Fernandes de Negreiros, African and African Diaspora Studies PhD Program
MPH: Fundação Oswaldo Cruz, 2013 • BA: University of Brasilia, 2009

“The fellowship represents to me the recognition of my family’s efforts to support my academic career and the importance of the field of black studies itself.”

Dalila seeks to understand the dynamics and structures that preserve racism in Brazil and the United States and to develop alternatives in response to racial discrimination, specifically in state actions through public policies. Dalila is longtime anti-discrimination activist in Brazil and a former public servant in government, focusing on black-related issues. Her next goal is a research project comparing black studies programs in Brazilian and American universities.
Wei Fan, Geography PhD Program
MA: South China Normal University, 2014 • BS: Jilin Normal University, 2010
Wei was awarded a 2017-18 UWM Mary Jo Read Scholarship, earned a 2017 first prize National Science an Technology Award in Guangdong Province, China, and has several journal publications.

Ashleigh M. Harvey, Psychology PhD Program (Clinical Psychology)
MA: UW-Milwaukee, 2018 • BA: College of William and Mary, 2013
“This fellowship will allow me to devote more time to clinical and research pursuits as I work to become a clinician utilizing empirically supported interventions.”
Ashleigh is interested in the etiology and treatment of obsessive-compulsive and related disorders, particularly “potential cognitive vulnerabilities underlying these conditions and how bolstering those deficits may lead to better treatment outcomes.” She says, “OCD is often misportrayed in popular culture as being a silly personality quirk. I want to be able to help those who are struggling with this debilitating condition, as well as better inform the public about what OCD is and is not.”

Elizabeth Hoover, English PhD Program (Creative Writing)
MFA: Indiana University-Bloomington, 2010 • BA: Brown University, 2002
“Because it comes with a release from teaching, this award will free up both the time and emotional energy that I need to continue.”
Elizabeth writes poetry and creative nonfiction about gendered violence and how feminist and queer artists respond to it. She is interested in how the creative responses from public cultures can perform, as well as therapeutic or political solutions. “As someone who has experienced gendered violence, I am drawn to artistic practices that enable me to think about trauma as part of a collective experience that then can lead to collective resistance. I write to help people—including myself—feel less bad and be freer.”

Libby R.W. Ives, Geosciences PhD Program
MS: Iowa State University, 2016 • BS: Northern Michigan University, 2013
“This award will allow me flexibility to attend intensive field courses in Norway and Argentina, present at conferences, and perform lab work at other universities.”
Libby studies sedimentary rocks that were deposited in glacial environments more than 250 million years ago in Australia, Antarctica, and South America. “By using our knowledge of modern glacial environments to interpret such rocks,” she says, “we are able to infer the characteristics of these ancient glaciers and thereby ancient climates. Deciphering the story of our planet requires that we use physical, chemical, biological, and geographical methods to observe our world.”

Mashid Jalalianhosseini, Architecture PhD Program
Cert: UW-Milwaukee, 2017 • MA: Tarbiat Modares University, 2014 • BS: Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, 2013
“It is a lifelong honor, and encouragement!”
Mashid studies the relationship between people and the built environment. Her research explores how the quantitative measures of building layouts relate to people’s wayfinding behavior and experiences inside buildings. “I’ve always been interested in how the planning and design of built environment can provide people with better environments to live, work and connect to each other and to the buildings,” she says. “Understanding the qualities and factors that make a place successful has always been my main area of interest.”

Kenneth James, Dance MFA Program
BA: Oberlin College, 1986
“Being recognized for my work will help open doors and funding to help further the research.”
“Technology, site, and dance have become increasingly intertwined,” Kenneth says, “with much dance being presented virtually. My research is in finding ways to humanize and physicalize the interfaces between the technology of screen and virtual dance and the viewer to reconnect with a sense of play, bringing the embodied nature of dance back into virtual and screen dance works.” In over 30 years of creating and performing dance, Kenneth says, he’s worked on many projects that explore “the disconnection of audience from direct empathetic responses.”
Kevin McColley, English PhD Program (Creative Writing)

Bemidji State University: MA, 2016 • BA, 2013

“Anyone who has written a novel realizes how much time it takes to do the research, to do the contemplation, to do the writing. This fellowship will give me much more time than I otherwise would have had for those things.”

“I was in the military in some very bad places,” Kevin says, “and the only way I could get out of those places was to go to other places, imaginatively, in my mind. Eventually I started writing about what went on in those imaginative places. Three years after I left the military, I sold my first novel. I’ve sold five others since.” Kevin’s current research is for a historical novel having to do with the 1862 Sioux uprising in southern Minnesota.

John F. Muller, Philosophy MA Program

JD: Yale University, 2010 • AB: Sioux College, 2007

“I am grateful for this award and honored by it. It will allow me to focus on my studies without teaching obligations.”

John is interested in philosophical conceptions of the human psyche—particularly conceptions of the unconscious mind—and their relation to the construction of social meaning. “I ask how we maintain contradictory beliefs, how we obscure from ourselves the contradiction underlying such beliefs, and how this dynamic shapes our sense of self, our social institutions, and the law,” he says. John’s interest in philosophy began in law school, where he became fascinated by the contradictions and inconsistencies in the law.

Kelly Marie O’Brien, Urban Studies MS Program

BA: Fordham University, 2013

“The travel allowance permits me to think more broadly in the scope of my research and take a globalized approach to urban problems.”

A former U.S. Fulbright Scholar in Montréal, Kelly explores how legal and illegal public art invigorates the community by transforming the street into a place of action rather than a transitory space. She conducts her research through the lens of urban gentrification.

“I was initially drawn to urban studies as a means of making sense of my surroundings,” she says. “I have lived in major cities for my entire adult life and continually reckon with the problems and privileges that come along with that.”

Xiaoyu Sui, Engineering PhD Program (Mechanical Engineering)

Tongji University: ME, 2013 • BE, 2010

“This award is a great honor and encouragement for my study and research.”

Xiaoyu primarily studies nano-materials and nano-manufacturing technology, especially for sensor applications. “In my studies, I learned that materials will exhibit amazing properties when the size approaches nano scale—like ultrahigh surface area and boosted chemical and electrical activity,” he says. “This attracts me to the nanomaterials research field.

Carly Wahl, Health Sciences PhD Program

MS: Georgia Southern University, 2017 • BS: UW-Oshkosh, 2015

“The award lets me prioritize research, coursework and community engagement, rather than work outside the university.”

In the Laboratory for Sport Psychology and Performance Excellence, Carly is involved in analyzing ways that athletes can improve their recovery in order to reduce injuries. Also considering the various types of stress athletes can encounter, such as physical training, mental exhaustion, academic load, and media attention, she seeks ways to prevent burnout and improve overall quality of life as well. An undergraduate course in sports psychology led Carly to pursue graduate study in kinesiology.

Jacqueline E. Westerdahl, Health Sciences PhD Program

UW-Milwaukee: MS, 2016 • BS, 2013

2017-18 distinctions for Jacqueline include a Graduate Student Excellence Fellowship and being a graduate assistant on a nearly $25,000 UWM Research and Creative Activities Support Award (with Associate Professor Victoria Moerchen). She was awarded Best Research Abstract 2015 Section on Pediatrics Annual Conference, American Physical Therapy Association. Her podium presentation at the 2016 College of Health Sciences Spring Graduate Student Research Symposium won third place.
Distinguished Graduate Student Fellows (DGSF)

Yihan Xu, Engineering PhD Program (Material Science Engineering)

MS: Shandong University, 2014 • BS: Harbin University of Science and Technology, 2011

“Since I don’t need to spend my time to make money because of the DGSF, I can spend all my time doing research.”

Yihan seeks the solution to a problem known as the shuttle effect that shortens the life of lithium-sulfur (Li-S) batteries. Unlike other scientists, she will employ quantum chemistry computation. “This method needs the researcher to have a solid theoretical basis,” she says, “but it can save time and funds for doing research.” She says this method may have the potential to predict the materials that can be used in positive electrodes of Li-S batteries. Yihan said she was drawn to this field by the urgent need for electric vehicles.

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 or 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 U.S.).
- 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 programs (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.

Ala Abdeljaber, Communication Sciences and Disorders

MS Program

BS: UW-Milwaukee, 2018

“I can focus solely on earning my degree and building my experiences to advance in my passion/career of helping individuals in need.”

As a McNair Scholar, Ala explored in a museum setting the impact of caregiver-child interactions on emerging literacy skills that children should have before beginning school to better prepare them to read and write. She hopes to conduct a similar research study with children with autism.

Ala says she learned the importance of helping individuals in need and raising awareness about special needs as a volunteer at the Jasmine Charitable Society in Palestine and the Palestinian Happy Child Center.

Alison Elaine Becker, Mathematics PhD Program

UW-Milwaukee: MS, 2015 • BS, 2013

“I will be able to focus on finishing my degree and pursuing a career in which I can inspire future generations of mathematicians.”

Alison studies representation theory in algebra. “A representation is something that makes an algebraic object more tangible by describing it in terms of something much easier to work with than its original abstract definition,” she explains. “Currently my research is looking at the relationships between invariants, that is, properties that do not change after performing various actions, of certain representations.” Initially not a math student, Alison found her calculus professor’s passion for the subject contagious.
New Advanced Opportunity Program (AOP) Fellows

Nathon Breu, History MA Program

BA: UW-Milwaukee, 2018 • ASSOCRT: Milwaukee Area Technical College, 2018

“This award gives me the opportunity to continue my research, giving an otherwise silenced voice to indigenous people.”

Nathon is researching the history of plant use in the Great Lakes by indigenous people. “Culture and environment have always been intricately connected,” he says. “In traditional indigenous cultures, this connection holds the key to our survival.”

Using a linguistic approach, Nathon notes that “understanding indigenous language helps us understand traditional ecological knowledge.”

Jesse Campa, Sociology MA Program

BA: Beloit College, 2017 • AA: Rock Valley College, 2014

“With this fellowship, the necessity of looking for employment unrelated to my field of study is alleviated.”

As a first-generation college student from an underrepresented racial/ethnic group (self-identifying as Latino/Hispanic) Jesse became interested in the study of inequality/inequity, particularly in education. “Race/ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic class standing all intersect and play a role in the navigation of the institution of education as well as in others,” he explains, “and it is a research goal of mine to delve further into the topic that is often left out regarding the perspectives of those affected.”

Jeremy Michael Carnes, English PhD Program

Ball State University: MA, 2014 • BS, 2012

Jeremy has presented at conferences including the International Comic Arts Forum, Native American Literature Symposium, Pop Culture Association, and Modernist Studies Association.

Joseph D. Censor, Psychology PhD Program (Clinical Psychology)

BA: Brooklyn College-CUNY, 2013 • ASSOC: Kingsborough Community College, 2012

As an undergraduate, Joseph was involved in several research studies on associative learning phenomena in humans, including learning acquisition, extinction, generalization, summation, and external inhibition.

Su Cho, English PhD Program (Poetry)

MFA: Indiana University, 2017 • BA: Emory University, 2014

“This award means that I will have the time and resources to accomplish even more during my time at UWM.”

Su’s current writing and research focuses on revitalizing “otherized” folklore, folklore that is portrayed as alien or different. “I strive to create nuance in stories that are easily essentialized into those about accepting or rejecting heritage” says Su, managing editor of cream city review. “I believe that my work can create productive transmutations as it attempts to reconcile heritage and fluid identity.” Her poetry has attracted many awards, including a National Society of Arts and Letters Award and the Guy Lemmon Award in Public Writing.

Willy A. Diaz Tapia, Educational Psychology PhD (Counseling Psychology) Program

BA: University of California-Santa Cruz, 2014

“The support provided by the AOP fellowship will eliminate barriers that hinder my ability to achieve my full potential.”

One of Willy’s projects aims to help decrease chronic homelessness in Milwaukee by assessing the impact that a “housing first” project has on the lives of those who suffer from chronic homelessness. He is also investigating how an if social supports and self-confidence influence academic persistence among low-income students of color. Willy’s inspiration to pursue counseling psychology came from experience as a volunteer for a community-based organization that teaches English language and citizenship classes.
Lehua Estrada, MFA in Dance
BFA: University of Utah 2004

“This fellowship grants me, above all else, time to commit my entire self creatively and physically to my research.”

Lehua’s research encompasses dance science, kinesiology, anatomy, kinesthetic empathy, and wellness. At UWM she is investigating the kinesiology of emotional connection.

“I am interested in finding and developing empathetic connections between dancers through movement in the classroom, she says, “and to then more deeply understand these connections through examining the kinesiological underpinning to these physiological experiences.” She believes that dance “can bring communities together, heal wounds of isolation, and generate empathy and connection.”

Maren Maria Hawkins, Public Health PhD Program
BA: Beloit College, 2014

“This award will aid me in my goal to one day apply for professorships and to be able to serve both the school and the Milwaukee community.”

Maren studies the intersecting factors that affect the health of minorities and migrants, specifically healthcare access language and gender inequality. Her first public health course was a prerequisite in another field, but it was the first many experiences—working in a domestic violence shelter, as a community health educator with the Peace Corps in Uganda, and as a certified personal trainer—that guided her to a career in public health. All her experiences, she says were “vital in demonstrating the importance of academia in addressing complicated, multifaceted problems.”

Ricardo Jaimes, Freshwater Sciences and Technology MS Program
BA: Ripon College, 2017

“With the fellowship, I can focus more of my time pursuing fieldwork and other career development opportunities.”

Ricardo is interested in the complex relationship between Lake Michigan and its tributaries. He is investigating the physical and biological factors that interact with nutrients as the water in streams and rivers flows to larger bodies o water. Learning more about the chemical, physical and biological processes in aquatic systems, he says, will benefit society. He adds, “Coming from a low socioeconomic household made me very aware that education is a valuable resource for escaping poverty.”

Paulina Lim, Psychology PhD Program (Clinical Psychology)
BA: University of California-Irvine, 2016

“Receiving the AOP fellowship lessens my current time constraints and allows me to focus on conducting research studies.”

Paulina studies pediatric feeding problems and disorders in both clinical and community settings. “Feeding problems generally occur in up to 25 percent of typically developing children,” she says. “They can range in type and severity and can include feeding skills delay, picky eating, disruptive behaviors, or unpleasant mealtime environments. I am interested in exploring how parental factors such as stress and mealtime anxiety can affect the development of feeding problems among families.”

Robert Olive Little Jackson, Art History MA Program
UW-Milwaukee: BA (2), 2017 • CertMaj, 2017 • BA: Carthage College, 1995

“I will be able to greatly expand the scholarship of Native American art and culture in the field of art history.”

Robert’s “eureka” moment was seeing the image of Native American rights activist Vernon Bellecourt hurling a pint of his own blood upon the sails of a replica of the Niña during the observance of the 500th anniversary of Christopher Columbus’ voyage. “I was intrigued and captivated by the actions of this individual,” he recalls. In addition to the event itself, Robert seeks to understand the symbolic and historical implications of Bellecourt’s use of his blood, as well as the cultural significance of blood performance in Native American society.

Stephanie Menders, Media Studies MA Program
BA: Salve Regina University, 2017

“I am thankful for this award because it encourages me to focus completely on my coursework and research.”

As a graduate student, Stephanie will continue her undergraduate research, analyzing portrayals of masculinity in mass media. “I am looking forward to a curriculum focused on unraveling race, gender and sexuality in film and television, she says. “This has become increasingly crucial as our society struggles to understand diverse identities and continues to offer confining and problematic representations.” Taking an undergraduate film class as an elective requirement change her way of thinking about media.
**New Advanced Opportunity Program (AOP) Fellows**

**Melissa Monier, Media Studies MA Program**
BA: University of Michigan-Dearborn, 2016

“I am moving all the way from Detroit to attend UWM. Without the AOP Fellowship, this would not have been possible.”

Melissa examines the relationship between the construction and portrayal of queer identities in the media (television, music, internet/social media) and the impact of acceptance of queer bodies in the public sphere. Her previous research explored how the media and popular culture shape public perceptions of queer (LGBTQIA+) identities. “I was drawn to Media Studies in undergrad while learning about the intricacies of media and culture—how they affect public opinion and reinforce social hegemonic norms,” she says.

**Christina Nelson, Women’s & Gender Studies MA Program**
Marquette University: MA, 2019 • BA, 2012

“Being awarded the AOP Fellowship means that a committee fully believes in my abilities to create change and support communities in my work.”

Influenced by her adverse background and intersectional identities, Christina wants to empower marginalized individuals to thrive through difficulties they face. Her research interests include intersectional feminism, which is the focus of overlapping identities through systems of oppression. “My identities and childhood trauma have encouraged my interest to gain more concrete language by providing terms for the lived experiences of marginalized individuals and to learn and teach through a feminist lens.”

**Alexandra Rodriguez, Kinesiology PhD Program**
MS: California State University-Long Beach, 2018 • BA: Loyola Marymount University, 2015

“Being granted this fellowship has allowed me to pursue a doctoral degree so that I may achieve my career goal of becoming a university faculty member.”

“I am interested in research that assesses body image among athletes,” Alexandra says. “My most recent research work examined social comparison and the personal acceptance of societal ideals (e.g., masculinity, thinness, and general attractiveness) among athletes with physical disabilities. As a former athlete and sport enthusiast, I have always wanted to be a part of a field that provides the opportunity to mix my passion for sport and scholarly work.”

**Wendy Rae Semski, Biological Sciences PhD Program**
BS: UW-Milwaukee, 2016

Wendy was first author of a talk at the national meeting of the Botanical Society of America and is coauthor on four additional talks presented at that meeting and in Dublin, Ireland.

**Kia S. Smith, Dance MFA Program**
BFA: Western Michigan University, 2010

“The financial support of the Graduate School has been immensely key to the success of my creative and scholarly endeavors.”

Kia’s movement research explores African diasporic influences on American contemporary dance through composition, improvisation and dance technique. She is also interested in cultural diplomacy through dance, the development of identity through movement histories, inciting kinesthetic empathy through choreography, and the creation of a comprehensive training practice to serve her choreographic work.

**Tia Stenson, Coordinated Library & Information Science MLIS and Anthropology MS Program; and Museum Studies Certificate Program**
MLIS: UW-Milwaukee, 2019 • BA: Luther College, 2016

“This fellowship means I can continue to pursue my career goals and dreams when I thought my health and financial situations were going to put a stop to it.”

Tia is exploring the gravestone as material culture, examining different gravestone design features in relation to different ethnic groups in Milwaukee County before 1920. Visiting museums when she was younger, “I was fascinated by all the objects and all the history I was able to see,” she says. “I didn’t really care about who ruled who, or who fought who. I wanted to know how people lived and acted in the past.”
Falyn Strey, Geosciences MS Program
BS: UW-Oshkosh, 2017
“This award enables me to devote more time towards my professional development as a researcher and more detailed exploration of course topics.”

Falyn is examining quartz microstructures at the grain and atomic scale to understand how water infiltrates quartz grains during rock deformation, and the importance of this process on macroscopic bending and flowing of rock, known as ductile deformation. “I was drawn to the way geology inspires the synthesis and integration of ideas, information, and disciplines,” she says. “I love that I am able to apply my passion for critical thinking and problem solving to the outdoors.”

Angela Swan, Art MFA Program
BS: University of Iowa, 1983
“My fellowship covers the majority of my graduate school budget and frees up time to focus on my new body of work.”

Angela makes “interactive sculptures that build peace between people.” The pieces “highlight how we are in common and the values we share,” she says. “The collaboration of the viewer/participant completes the artwork. This research is in response to the division we currently experience. I choose to breathe life and space into what we hope for instead.” After seven years as a wedding photojournalist, Angela recalls, “I maxed out and switched careers. Along the way I attended one semester of sculpture and have never stopped.”

Telashay Swope Farr, Urban Education PhD Program
(Mathematics Education)
UW-Milwaukee: MS, 2007 • TeachCrt, 2009 • BS: Rust College, 2005
“(It) has been a blessing, allowing me to focus on this degree without having to balance a full-time job and coursework.”

Telashay’s experience with teachers who had knowledge of their field but lacked ability to teach it sparked her interest in becoming a mathematics professor. Telashay’s research is centered on elementary teachers’ attitudes about math and their self-efficacy toward teaching math. “As a person who naturally does well in math, I realized as an undergraduate need for math professors who can assist students in understanding mathematics better,” she says. “I wanted to encourage them along the way personally and educationally.”

Molly E. Ubbesen, English PhD Program (Rhetoric and Composition)
UW-Milwaukee: MA, 2014 • BS, 2010
“I am grateful to receive extra support for my dissertation.”

Molly is exploring inclusive pedagogy by applying disability studies to writing pedagogy education in settings such as new teacher orientation, mentoring, practica and ongoing professional development. She cites the prevalence of mental and/or physical disabilities in the college student population and the growing number of students who have or will encounter trauma. “Teachers need to make their pedagogy as accessible as possible,” she says. “Creating a culture of access in teacher preparation programs can help this effort.”

Sunstar Moukongmeng Vue, Information Studies PhD Program
UW-Milwaukee: MS, 2018 • MLIS, 2018 • BS, 2016 • BA: University of Washington, 2011
“AOP opens doors for students like myself who would otherwise not have the opportunity to pursue a doctoral degree.”

Sunstar’s primary research areas are information retrieval and access, mobile technology, social commerce, policy formation and privacy. His dissertation examines the digital phenomena of mobile technology and social commerce in Southeast Asia. “I am fascinated that people of developing countries have clashed and assimilated with mobile technology, that their entrepreneurship abilities have created a growing social commerce market, and that mobile technology can sustain their dying culture through the lens of digital libraries,” he says.
**Monea Rose Warrington, Anthropology MS Program**

BA: UW-Milwaukee, 2016 • ASSOC: College of Menominee Nation, 2013

“This award gives me an opportunity that I thought was unobtainable—to be the first person in my family with a master’s degree.”

Monea is researching Menominee prehistory through the artifacts left behind. “I believe that research should be available and digestible for everyone,” she says, “and museums are the best place to accomplish that. When our history wasn’t being taught in schools, I wanted to make changes,” she recalls, noting the importance of culture and oral histories in a traditional Native American family. “I chose anthropology because it would give me the opportunity to work with all aspects of our past history.”

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**Justin Womack, Engineering MS Program**

BS: UW-Madison, 2014

“I am very thankful to receive this fellowship. Continuing without the aid would have not have been an option. This opportunity allows me to devote my time to my research and studies.”

Justin is designing a scaffolding on which to grow new bone tissue. His structure—made of porous magnesium—will slowly deteriorate as new cells grow on it, creating a newly formed bone from scratch. As an undergraduate in chemical engineering and biochemistry, Justin became interested in combining the fields, specifically in the field of tissue engineering. “The ability to grow new bone or organs for an individual is an amazing scientific breakthrough,” he says.

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**Linda Hli Xiong, Sustainable Peacebuilding MSP Program**

Indiana University: BA, 2012 • BS, 2012

“I will have more time for mastering my coursework and taking advantage of networking and service opportunities on campus.”

Linda’s goal is to study how artisans can create peace and understand the context in which artisan entrepreneurship is sustainable. “I want to apply peacebuilding to my interest in artisans because I believe they create change in their community,” she says, “especially with their expanding presence in the marketplace.” Linda plans to study the rise in conscious consumerism and demand for artisan-made products and, ultimately, to work in community development in the areas of women’s empowerment and cultural preservation.

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**Meng Xiong, Epidemiology PhD Program**

MPH: George Washington University, 2018 • BS: UW-Madison, 2015

“(This award) will enable me to focus on my academic work and become a great epidemiologist. Completing my degree will propel me to pursue my dream to become a great disease detective.”

Meng will conduct public health research related to infectious diseases, refugee and immigrant population health, and maternal child health. He was initially drawn to epidemiology while studying global health as an undergraduate. “It was a perfect marriage of my quantitative skills with my passion to work in global health.” Meng says the death of his grandfather from tuberculosis influenced his current path to study health and disease.

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**Hanna Yousuf, Psychology PhD Program**

MS: UW-Milwaukee, 2016 • BA: College of Wooster, 2012

“The AOP fellowship will extend my time at UW-Milwaukee and help me complete my dissertation project.”

Hanna investigates learning-related changes in neuronal activity in the retrosplenial cortex, a critical brain structure that coordinates information between higher-order brain regions to support associative learning and memory. Her research will provide insight into cellular and molecular mechanisms underlying complex, associative learning and could lead to improved treatments of clinical disorders such as post-traumatic stress disorder. Hanna is a student in the lab of Associate Professor of Psychology James Moyer.
Elaine Joy (EJ) Basa, English PhD Program
(Media, Cinema and Digital Studies)
MA: Northwestern University, 2012 • BA: Reed College, 2004
“I’m thrilled to be given this award since it is essential for continuing my research and completing my dissertation.”
EJ’s research interests include global childhood cinema, affect and the cinematic experience, embodiment, trauma and post-dictatorship Latin American cinema. “Media is an ever-expanding, influential component of society,” she says, “and its study can lead insights into our own world, so that we might make progress to a more just and equal world.” Political and economic oppression of peoples has led EJ to explore “how media can help us understand the deep impacts and residues of social imbalance at the group and individual level.”

Crystal Ellis, African and African Diaspora Studies PhD Program
BA: Alverno College, 2012
“This fellowship will sustain me for the year in conducting research and through my dissertation writing process.”
Crystal is examining the post-World War II work of the NAACP, traveling to important historical archives in Washington and New York. “Using historical archives, I examine the role this organization played in recognizing and addressing the unique barriers faced by black women and girls,” she says. Crystal takes pride in her long-time service in Milwaukee’s nonprofit sector. “I have been a part of organizations that develop strategies to improve the lives of socially and economically marginalized groups.”

Monique Hassman, Anthropology PhD Program
UW-Milwaukee: MS, 2010 • Cert, 2008 • BA, 2005
“This award provides the gift of time that fosters my ability to produce quality research and complete it.”
Monique studies human (cultural) dimensions of space. “My research examines ‘place making in the aftermath of disaster,’ which explores the processes by which people re-constitute their lives, livelihoods, and landscapes in locales subjected to calamitous impact.”
Monique’s dissertation focuses on New Orleans’ Lower Ninth Ward neighborhood in the years following hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005. Monique uses data gathered by traditional means—field research, interviews, etc.—and by innovative GIS methodologies.

Sabrin Rizk, Health Sciences PhD Program
UW-Milwaukee: MS, 2008 • BA, 2007
“This award bears testament to the guidance and support from all who helped shape my academic career path.”
Sabrin examines intersections between medical and educational systems in order to reduce service gaps for children with disabilities and their families. Using national data, she is measuring the relationship between these service systems for children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). She hopes to improve their coordination and decrease health and educational disparities for children with ASD. Sabrin also wants to help future students like her—first-generation and from underrepresented groups—successfully pursue academic and research career paths.

Mike Visetsouk, Biological Sciences PhD Program
BS: Marquette University, 2012
“This award comes with great relief and gratitude in knowing I will be supported during this final step in the program.”
Mike studies how tissue structure arises during early embryonic development to form organs—specifically, basal tissue folding, a process which creates a structure that gives rise to the vertebrate brain and spinal cord. “What we learn in this particular system can be applicable to tissues found throughout the body,” he says. It will be a useful tool for understanding how different genetic and environmental factors can influence early embryonic development and may someday lead to methods to mitigate structural birth defects.

R1 Advanced Opportunity Program Fellowship (R1 AOP)
The R1 AOP is for current UWM PhD students who are eligible for AOP funding and who plan to finish and defend their dissertation, complete all requirements for the PhD degree, and graduate with their doctoral degree by the end of academic year 2018-19. The R1 AOP is a one-year, non-renewable fellowship. The academic-year fellowship stipend for 2018-19 is $16,500. Fellows receive full tuition coverage and are eligible for health benefits.
Christina Nelson, Women’s & Gender Studies MA Program
Marquette University: MA, 2019 • BA, 2012
Christina is the recipient of the 2018 Dr. Tomás Garrett-Rosas Research Award. Nelson will receive an additional stipend of $1,500 each year of her fellowship and be asked to present her research publicly in the final year.

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.

Nyles Breecher, Mathematics PhD Program
MS: UW-Milwaukee, 2013 • BS: Hamline University, 2012
“This award helps me stay focused on finishing my research and reminds me of the value of my hard work along the way.”
Nyles studies pricing models that help companies develop strategies to maximize profit. As an example, he offers commercial airlines, which constantly change prices based on remaining seats and remaining time before a flight. He studies a generalization of the basic model which accounts for customers buying multiple items simultaneously. The generalized model has insightful comparisons and features not seen in the basic model. Nyles enjoys teaching and has always been drawn to “the puzzle of finding the right explanation.”

Genelle Uhrig, Biological Sciences MS Program
BS: Michigan State University, 2014 • ASSOC: Lansing Community College, 2005
“Part of this fellowship will be used to attend The Wildlife Society’s annual conference in October, in which I will be presenting my thesis research.”
Genelle is working to better understand the dynamics and genetic variation of the snowshoe hare population in the Hiawatha National Forest East in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula. Extracting DNA from fecal pellets at sites across the forest, she is investigating whether the decline of this population has produced negative genetic consequences. “They are an integral part of the communities they inhabit,” she says. “Understanding their status can inform conservation efforts within those communities.”

Jeannette Seloover Johnson (’62) and R. Douglas Johnson are the generous donors of this fellowship award, which supports graduate students from the natural sciences, mathematics, engineering and computer sciences.

Maria R. Replogle, Biological Sciences PhD Program

BS: UW-Milwaukee, 2012

“This award will help me in furthering my graduate research and support my progression towards completing my doctoral studies.”

Maria studies neural crest cells, stem-like cells that produce many cell types in humans, ranging from pigment cells to neurons to cartilage and bone. Abnormal development of the neural crest can lead to a wide variety of birth defects. Maria seeks to understand how genetic and environmental factors contribute to such birth defects, particularly those that impact the formation of the skeletal elements in the head. Maria is supported by her husband and two children as she pursues her dream of becoming a scientist.

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.

Adam J. Barnas, Psychology PhD Program (Neuroscience)

MA: University of Dayton, 2014 • BS: University of Illinois-Urbana Champaign, 2011

“This fellowship demonstrates that my research is interesting and appealing to an audience outside of UWM and academia.”

Adam’s primary research interest is the neurobiology of attention and perception in the visual and auditory domains and their relation to the brain. He uses psychophysical and neuroimaging methods, such as functional magnetic resonance imaging, to understand how our behavior and attention are guided by the world we perceive.

Mollie Boutell, English PhD Program

UW-Milwaukee: MA, 2013 • BA, 2011

“I’m a first-generation college graduate and a parent, so fellowship support is essential.”

Mollie’s dissertation is a novel focused on several generations of women who gather in northern Michigan for the final clearing of a family cottage that has recently been sold. At the center is a woman who has been separated from the family due to the death of her mother. “The novel draws a strong connection between individual and collective memory and evolving American cultural issues,” she says, “including how individuals and groups function in a post-factual world.” Mollie is a past editor-in-chief of cream city review.
Samantha Brown, Library and Information Science MLIS Program
BA: University of Wyoming, 2017
Samantha presented at the American Association of Physical Anthropologists Committee on Diversity Undergraduate Research Symposium and was a McNair Scholar.

Nicholas R. Davis, Political Science PhD Program
MA: UW-Milwaukee, 2012 • BA: UW-Eau Claire, 2009
“This award is essential to my attendance at key conference meetings this year.”
Nicholas studies the politics of authoritarian countries, particularly how authoritarianism survives in certain places, despite the recent spread of democracy throughout the world. “My work suggests that such regimes ‘learn’ by incorporating information about other regimes into their survival strategies,” he says. He also explores how authoritarian governments react to offers of foreign aid and assistance following a disaster. Nicholas says his computer programming background allowed him to overcome some of the challenges of gathering data on authoritarian countries.

Todd J. Ebling, Anthropology PhD Program
Eastern College: MA, 2011 • BA, 2010
Todd is an associate lecturer in Anthropology and Comparative Ethnic Studies at UWM. His conference presentations include the American Ethnological Society, Society for Psychological Anthropology, and American Anthropological Association.

Shuchen Feng, Freshwater Sciences PhD Program
BMED: Zhejiang Chinese Medical University, 2012
“This award means a very strong positive feedback and support for my research work.”
Up to 12 percent of annual U.S. gastroenteritis cases are from waterborne pathogens in human fecal pollution—a higher health risk than animal fecal pollution, Shuchen says. So she is working to identify human-source fecal pollution and resolve multiple fecal pollution sources in urban waters. Shuchen helped develop a novel human-associated fecal indicator using next-generation sequencing data from sewage and animal feces and is working to “understand the mechanism of certain ecological factors—e.g., host diet and cohabitation—impacting the indicators’ host specificit .”

Michael Gonzalez Jr., Public Health MPH Program
BS: UW-Milwaukee, 2016
“Awards like these are important for everyone. They encourage students to never settle and always put your best foot forward.”
Michael embraces the wide range of topics within the field of epidemiology. While addressing his concerns about violence against women, which he witnessed firsthand, he can also monitor and research the spread of infectious diseases that he observed as a volunteer at Brady East STD Clinic. “My work will help me become another professional actively promoting social justice and health equity in the field of epidemiology,” Michael says.

Brittany Heintz, Kinesiology PhD Program
UW-Milwaukee: Cert, 2017 • MS, 2013 • BS, 2011
“This award will aid in my continued quest towards success as an academic and my passion for improving the lives of others.”
Brittany studies changes that occur in the nervous system with age, and their relationship with movement impairments in older adults. Her dissertation aims to examine how visual information is processed into movement control in older adults and, ultimately, to inform interventions and improve function in this population. Brittany says working in long-term care settings during physical therapy school “left me with the stark realization that many older adults face significant movement impairments and a strong desire to determine why.”
Graduate Student Excellence Fellows (GSEF)

Elaheh Kheirandish, Engineering PhD Program
BS: Shiraz University, 2014
“The award is highly encouraging and inspires me to pursue my passion. Moreover, this award helps the progress of my research.”
Elaheh is investigating novel nano-materials and fabrication methods to increase the efficiency of solar cells and photodetectors. Because of its low production cost, silicon is the dominant material for photovoltaic cells. Elaheh says research on developing different materials is “an exciting topic in both academia and industry.” Elaheh is vice president of the Society for Applied Spectroscopy UWM student section.

Minji Kim, Geography PhD Program
Korea University: MA, 2013 • BA, 2011
“The GSEF is a form of financial support, but also an incredible source of encouragement for my academic career path.”
Minji is examining urban policies for promoting tourism and how they affect residents’ everyday lives—specifically two marginalized urban neighborhoods in South Korea where the government installed public art projects as tools for urban regeneration. “My research can help advance geographic knowledge of the role of tourism in the process of gentrification,” she says, “including conflicts it generates between residents and powerful economic and political actors over the social, cultural, and physical aspects of gentrified spaces.

Shabnam Lashkari, Engineering PhD Program
(Industrial & Manufacturing Engineering)
BSE: Iran University of Science and Technology, 2012
“Being recognized as an excellent graduate student among many great minds in our university is such a wonderful honor.”
Shabnam seeks to improve the operational efficiency of port facilities where container ships are unloaded and loaded. She is using programming languages to develop mathematical models that will optimize supply-chain logistics for a new type of crane that can lift more than one 40-foot container at a time. “My journey as an industrial engineer started when I was in high school,” Shabnam recalls. “I always loved working on anything to improve its performance and get the best possible outcomes out of it.

Danilo Doche Linhares, Philosophy MA Program
BA: University of Chicago, 2016
“The award will help me have more time to focus on my research, given what would otherwise be the constraints of living on a very small stipend.”
Danilo explores meta-ethics and its interplay with research on morality in the cognitive sciences. He’s currently studying the ways our best science of moral thought affects how we adjudicate between different moral theories. “My key concern is with what kinds of meta-theoretical standards of justification are available for theories of ethics,” he says, “and how the cognitive sciences may help tease apart those standards which are based on germane and meaningful distinctions from those which aren’t.”

Melissa Maki, Physical Therapy DPT Program
BS: UW-Milwaukee, 2016
As an undergraduate, Melissa was a two-year recipient of the Life Impact Scholarship, awarded to student parents based on academic performance and financial need. She was also recognized with UWM’s Outstanding Non-Traditional Student Award in November 2016.

Lydia Marcus, Public Health MPH Program
BS: Dordt College, 2017
“This award makes it feasible for me to pursue further education, enabling me to serve my community while doing work I’m passionate about.”
Lydia is working on the Young Women’s Health History Study, which surveyed 4,000 women in an effort to identify risk factors for breast cancer in women under the age of 50. She says the MPH in epidemiology represents an opportunity to combine two of her interests—cancer and microbiology—and prepare her to apply her skills and interests in a practical way. “A degree in public health will help me to better serve the people in my community by improving their quality of life,” she says.
Ada McMahon, Performing Arts MFA Program
AB: Harvard University, 2006
“This award helps me feel recognized by UWM. It feels good to be associated with ‘excellence.’”
When creating documentary film and video, Ada is “interested in making work that builds collective liberation beginning with the growth and healing of participants in the process, myself included.” This process can involve co-authorship with the people depicted in her documentaries. When she began making videos, Ada says it was “captivating—a way to connect with people and question culture—and much more fun than writing papers.” She said her documentary work has developed in connection with social justice organizing in post-Katrina New Orleans.

Parisa Meymand, Urban Education PhD Program
MA: Columbus University, 2007 • BA: North Central College, 2002
“I’m so grateful for the financial support this year while I write my dissertation.”
Parisa is analyzing college geography textbooks to study their portrayal of Southwest Asians from the 1970s to the present. “In our increasingly diverse country, there is a need for inclusion,” she says. “As textbooks are primary sources of knowledge for many students, it is important to analyze how they portray marginalized groups.” Parisa, who teaches ethnic and social geographies at St. Norbert College, also plans to work with pre-service educators “to help them better understand these challenges and to think critically about instructional choices.”

Tia Milkova, Architecture MArch Program
BA: Northeastern Illinois University, 2015
“Without receiving fellowships, scholarships and awards, my dream would not be cultivating into reality.”
Tia is interested in the ways architectural design and space can influence the human mind and behavior, and vice versa. “I would like to conduct research on the ways psychological, political, and environmental factors affect design, space, and architecture,” says Tia, a first-generation college graduate from Bulgaria. “I want to investigate ecologica design practices in building that can induce positive moods, behaviors, and interpersonal relationships to create higher productivity and promote well-being across various populations.”

Alannia Mosley, Educational Psychology PhD Program
MA: Western Michigan University, 2015 • BA: Dillard University, 2013
“I am honored to receive such a generous award. This award will allow me to continue pursuing my doctorate.”
Alannia’s interests include intimate partner violence, substance use, and help-seeking behavior. Her graduate training has been with low-income communities, providing therapy in group and individual settings. Alannia currently works with individuals with a wide range of psychopathology and substance use disorders. 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.

Daria Mueller, Social Work PhD Program
“This award assists me, as a single mom, to continue in this program and, ultimately, open new doors with a PhD.”
Daria examines the experiences of women involved in the street sex trade, and those impacted by sex trafficking. “I am particularly interested in how policy and practices facilitate or impede harm reduction or exiting from the sex trade,” she says, “while examining the intersecting impact of poverty, sexism, racism and other forms of discrimination on their lives.” A longtime social worker, Daria helped create policy and programming that benefited women with a history of prostitution and sex trafficking.

Nima Nikmehr, Engineering PhD Program (Electrical Engineering)
ME: Islamic Azad University, 2014 • BE: Azarbaijan Shahid Madani University, 2012
“Graduate Excellence Fellowship is a great feedback for me to pay more attention to my future research.”
The simultaneous worldwide increases in both deployment of smart power grids and cyber-physical attacks to modern power systems led Nima to pursue research in cyber-physical energy systems, which he calls a “sizzling topic for research.” Cyber-attacks, especially on power systems, “can lead a country toward irreparable economic losses,” Nima says. “I believe my current research can lead to some advancements in covering the cyber holes in distribution networks and microgrids.”
Chinyere Obasi, Coordinated Business Administration MBA and Nursing Practice DNP Program

BSN: University of Texas Medical Branch-Galveston, 2010 • BBA: Southern Methodist University, 2003

Chinyere was chosen for the Harvard Business School Summer Venture in Management Program. She has also been a Women in Business Scholar and is a member of the International Honor Society in Economics.

Prince Osei-Sarfo, Economics PhD Program

MS: Illinois State University, 2015 • BA: University of Ghana, 2012

“I am simply honored to have been chosen. This award will provide me with both financial and moral support to achieve.”

Prince studies debt flows in emerging economies. He identifies episodes of extreme debted capital flow movements, sudden increases or decreases in borrowing or lending—and tries to determine whether these extreme movements of debt are triggered by domestic macroeconomic characteristics, global factors, or contagion factors. When Prince chose his field of study, “I recognized that economics is intellectually stimulating, demanding, rigorous, and for the agile mind… I was in full flush of ardor in studying economics.”

Suraj Pandey, Physics PhD Program

Tribhuvan University: MS, 2013 • BS, 2009

“As an international student, I will be able to focus more on my research with less economic worries.”

Suraj is working in X-ray protein crystallography, which is used to determine the 3-D structure of protein at the atomic level. He is analyzing the data obtained on protein crystals at various high-energy x-ray sources. “With this, we can see how they interact with each other at the atomic level,” he says. “I was always interested, since my childhood, in behind-the-scenes of everything. This research is basically knowing the behind-the-scenes of biological interactions.”

Elizabeth Parisi, Psychology PhD Program

BA: Stony Brook University, 2014

In 2017, Elizabeth had an article published in the International Journal of Psychophysiology. Her memberships include the Association for Psychological Science and the Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies. As an undergraduate, she was recognized multiple times for academic excellence.

Jeffrey Peterson, Kinesiology PhD Program

MS: UW-Milwaukee, 2015 • BS: UW-LaCrosse, 2007

“This award will help me dedicate my focus to my research and also help in paying for travel to multiple conferences.”

Jeffrey studies the risk of falls in older adults, specifically the neuromuscular changes associated with aging that influence balance and the role of attention in maintaining balance. “With an aging population,” he says, “it is critical to further our understanding of the aging process and what interventions can most effectively reduce the impact of the changes associated with aging.” When he was a personal trainer with primarily older adults, Jeffrey was frustrated by the lack of information available on how to reduce the risk of falls.

Riley Richards, Communication PhD Program

Western Michigan University: MA, 2016 • BA, 2013

“The award helps financially and eases the student loan debt that is crippling to many graduate students.”

Riley studies sexual communication as it relates to affection and sexual consent in romantic relationships. He says he initially wanted to teach high school sexual education. “However,” he points out, “it is commonly taught with an emphasis only on biology and excludes what a healthy relationship is like.” Riley also does work in human-robot interaction.
Graduate Student Excellence Fellows (GSEF)

Josh Rivers, Anthropology PhD Program
MSocSci: University of Amsterdam, 2017 • BA: George Washington University, 2013
“Receiving this award means that my work at UW-Milwaukee has not gone unnoticed, is appreciated and is considered worthwhile.”

Josh examines the intersection between technological institutions and notions of cultural belonging, with a focus on massively-multiplayer online game developer CCP Games. Through participant observations, interviews, and working closely with CCP employees, he hopes to “broaden our understanding of how the companies that shape cyberspace are themselves shaped by their own cultural contexts.” Growing up “queer in the Deep South,” Josh says he was drawn to anthropology, “a field that celebrated diversity and ‘othe ness.”

Amber Schramm, Educational Psychology PhD Program
MA: University of Northern Iowa, 2014 • BS: Minnesota State University-Mankato, 2012
“I am very appreciative of the opportunities this fellowship will provide for the dissemination of school psychology research.”

Amber has found a passion for working with children and adolescents with disruptive behaviors. She has also become concerned about the effectiveness of many of the interventions developed to help them. “While these interventions are well intentioned, they are not always found through research to be effective.” Amber is currently working on a project funded by the Institute of Education Sciences, examining Check-In / Check-Out, a school-based intervention for students who are at risk for behavior problems.

Morgan Stevenson, Psychology PhD Program
MS: UW-Milwaukee, 2016 • BA: Wartburg College, 2012
“Having this award on my CV is professionally advantageous, and shows my work is valued by my university.”

The goal of Morgan’s research is to understand how motor skills are learned. “The ability to learn and remember motor skills is an important indicator for living a high-quality life,” she says. “I aim to better understand how motor skills are learned in the healthy brain, so this knowledge can be used to better treat motor impairments caused by stroke or other conditions.” Morgan says her fascination with behavior and desire to understand its basis in the brain led her to pursue graduate study in neuroscience.

Lisa Taxier, Psychology PhD Program (Experimental Psychology)
BA: Carleton College, 2013
“This award allows me to pursue my scientific interests and make my own significant and unique contributions to my field.”

Using a mouse model, Lisa studies the memory-enhancing effects of estrogen hormones in the brain. “I’m fascinated by brain-behavior connections,” says Lisa, whose ultimate goal is a career in academia studying the neurobiological mechanisms that consolidate memories. She says a challenge in her field is the inclusion of both sexes as biological variables and is fine tune to be in a lab using both men and women to ask scientific questions. Lisa works with Milwaukee Area Science Advocates to promote science advocacy.

Keila Tirado-Leist, Urban Studies MS Program
BS: UW-Stout, 2011
Keila is a former McNair Scholar and was a clinical research coordinator at the Medical College of Wisconsin from 2011 to 2013.
Emily Tyner, Freshwater Sciences PhD Program
MS: UW-Milwaukee, 2013 • BA: Smith College, 2006
“This award sends a message that student research is a valuable investment.”
Emily’s research examines the impacts and public perception of government investment in restoring and conserving the Great Lakes, specifically the $2 billion Great Lakes Restoration Initiative at National Park Service sites and at Great Lakes areas of concern. After studying the ecology of the invasive quagga mussel for her master’s degree, she decided to turn to the policy and management of Great Lakes resources. “The intersection of science, policy, and management is an emerging concern in the Great Lakes,” she says.

Chandler J. Zolliecoffer, Psychology PhD Program (Clinical Psychology)
BS: Loyola University-Maryland, 2015
“The GSEF will have a substantial impact on my life as a graduate student, as I work to ensure my future success.”
“My research spans three domains of neuropsychology: attention, executive functioning, and intelligence,” Chandler says. Her master’s thesis will seek to characterize the mechanism through which stereotype threat—one’s concern about being viewed through the lens of a negative stereotype—impacts test performance on measures of intelligence and athletic ability. Attenuating the potential for stereotype threat would “effectively increase diagnostic accuracy and aid in the equitable treatment of all patients.”
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