



UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH CAROLINA
College of Arts and Sciences



Russell J. and Dorothy S. Bilinski Dissertation Fellowships Administrative Guidelines

This document details practices developed in the College of Arts & Sciences at the University of South Carolina for administering the Russell J. and Dorothy S. Bilinski Dissertation Fellowships in the Humanities and Social Sciences.

Funds from the Bilinski Educational Foundation are used to provide financial support for top Ph.D. students pursuing humanistic research in the Humanities and Social Sciences as they complete and defend their dissertations. A student who either holds a Presidential or a national graduate fellowship or is awarded and accepts another fellowship for the period July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022 will become ineligible for the Bilinski Fellowship due to the financial need eligibility requirement of the Bilinski Fellowship. Fellowship funds will be disbursed beginning in the fall semester following selection of the fellowship recipients. Fellowship recipients must be actively enrolled (on Z status) to receive payment. Fellowship funds will be distributed equally between fall and spring semesters, unless a special request is submitted to distribute over fall, spring, and summer semesters. Payment will be made to students on a semester basis at the beginning of each semester and consecutive summer term if desired. The funds may be used for the payment, partially or totally, of tuition, fees, books, materials, other educational expenses, and for necessary living expenses. The fellowship recipient is responsible for all University fees and charges incurred. **Please note:** selected Fellows may not hold concurrent graduate assistantships or student wage positions since Fellows are required to devote full-time effort toward dissertation completion for each semester (including summer semesters) in which fellowship funds are provided. As such, the fellowship recipient must agree that he or she will devote full-time effort toward dissertation completion with no employment either outside or within the University of South Carolina for the entire period covered

by the award, including summer terms, until the dissertation has been defended and filed.

Students must already have passed all their comprehensive exams and have defended a dissertation prospectus to be eligible for nomination by their programs. In no case will funds be awarded if a student's dissertation has already been substantially completed. Continued receipt of funding is dependent upon continuing to meet all fellowship criteria.

Timeline for the application, evaluation, and selection process:

Information about the Russell J. and Dorothy S. Bilinski Dissertation Fellowships is circulated via the College of Arts & Sciences website and through direct contact with chairs and graduate directors of Humanities and Social Science departments.

The initial call for nominations is sent out by the dean's office to chairs and directors of eligible units in the College of Arts & Sciences. The intention is to give graduate directors, eligible doctoral students, and their advisors adequate lead time to prepare their application packages. This year nominations of eligible, internally-vetted candidates are due to the College by **Friday, April 16, 2021**. (See **Appendix A** for the timeline for the entire process.)

Eligibility Criteria

Students are invited to submit applications based on the following eligibility criteria:

To be eligible to receive Fellowship funds, to be awarded a Bilinski Fellowship, and to remain a Bilinski Fellow, each doctoral student must meet and agree to ALL of the following criteria:

1. Be a full-time doctoral student at the University of South Carolina pursuing humanistic research in one of the relevant graduate programs who has advanced to candidacy, passed all comprehensive exams, and successfully defended a dissertation proposal;
2. Maintain good academic standing at all times;
3. Have demonstrated exceptional ability and potential in his or her field of study;
4. Be a student who needs financial support to complete his or her degree;
5. Commit to devoting full-time effort toward dissertation completion for each semester (including summer period) in which Fellowship funds are provided;
6. Not be employed either outside or within the University of South Carolina;
7. Understands and agrees that the only fellowship he or she will hold during the July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022 Fiscal Year will be the Bilinski Fellowship itself;
8. Abide by the University of South Carolina Academic Code of Conduct.

Note: Fellowship Funds will **not** be awarded to a candidate whose dissertation has already been substantially completed.

Additional Eligibility Criteria

To be awarded a Fellowship and to remain a Bilinski Fellow, a recipient must – in addition to the eligibility criteria set forth above – be a United States citizen or a Permanent Resident eligible to apply for U.S. citizenship.¹

¹ A Permanent Resident is an alien (immigrant) person who has been granted such status through an immigration process (now handled under Homeland Security), and has been issued a *United States Permanent Residency Card*. This card (informally called Green Card) must be carried at all times. Permanent residents may live and work in the United States, permanently, and males 18-25 must register for selective service system. They cannot vote, hold state or federal public elected offices, or hold federal government jobs. They may apply for citizenship after 5 years of

Fellowship Application Materials

To be eligible for consideration, nomination packets from departments of their selected nominees must be submitted to the Office of the Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences by the deadline of 5:00 p.m. on Friday, April 16. Incomplete applications will not be reviewed. All specified forms can be found on the [Bilinski Fellowship website](#).

Each nomination packet should include the following components:

1. **The Fellowship Application Cover Sheet** signed by the applicant and the applicant's Director of Graduate Studies (DGS). By signing this form, the DGS certifies that the applicant has advanced to candidacy, passed all comprehensive exams, and successfully defended a dissertation proposal prior to the application deadline;
2. **The Financial Disclosure Form**;
3. **A statement** (maximum one-page) of the student's professional goals;
4. **A proposal** describing the dissertation that includes the following, double-spaced sections: a proposal narrative (2-3 pages) and a timetable for completion (maximum 1 page);
5. **A curriculum vitae** containing information about the applicant's previous education, teaching and research experience, professional publications, and awards or honors;
6. **A letter of recommendation** from the student's dissertation director addressing the significance of the dissertation topic and the applicant's ability to complete the dissertation in the time period covered by the fellowship;
7. The **signed Fellow's Agreement Form on Use of Bilinski Fellowship Funds**; and
8. In addition, all nominees selected by departments to move forward to the Office of the Dean must complete an **online FAFSA application**, filed no later than **March 15** at www.fafsa.ed.gov.

Two-Stage Evaluation Process

Stage 1: Internal Unit Evaluations

Chairs and graduate directors will solicit nominations from eligible candidates in their units. Each unit must establish an **internal deadline** for nominations to be submitted to the graduate director. It is recommended that this deadline be set early enough in the cycle to allow for the completion of the internal evaluation and selection process by Monday, **March 8, 2021**.

Nomination packets submitted to graduate directors will include components 1 – 7 from the list of required fellowship application materials (see above). In other words, nominees do **not at this initial stage** need to complete a FAFSA.

All of the completed nominations received by the internal deadline must be evaluated on the basis of merit by either the unit's Graduate Committee or an *ad hoc* fellowship committee that is formed for the purpose of evaluating and ranking departmental nominees.

Internal evaluations of merit should take into consideration the factors that are considered by the College selection committee (a sample of the College's **Merit and Financial Need Assessment Tool** is given in **Appendix B**).

Once a decision has been made on which candidates to recommend to the dean's office, those candidates should be

residency (or 3 years if married to a US citizen) and be granted citizenship upon meeting all requirements.

notified by the departmental DGS of the result and asked to complete an online FAFSA by the required date of **March 15**.

The nomination packets of the selected candidates (limited to 8 per unit) should be sent forward to the dean's office by **the Friday, April 16 deadline**. All packets must be submitted electronically. Thanks to the continued generosity of the Bilinski Foundation, this year we will be able to fund a total of up to twelve (12) Bilinski Fellowships.

Whenever multiple nominations are being sent forward to the dean's office, the complete set of individual nomination packets should be accompanied by a separate cover memo, signed by the chair, that lists the names of the nominees, ranks them according to merit, and offers a narrative justification of that ranking.

Stage 2: College-Level Evaluations

The Bilinski Selection committee is composed of members of the dean's senior staff, including associate deans who come from diverse academic backgrounds representing disciplines across the range of the College of Arts and Sciences.

The selection committee will meet shortly after the applications are received in the dean's office and roughly three weeks after the FAFSA filing deadline. By this date, the results (EFC scores) of the online FAFSAs filed by departmental nominees will have been received by the USC Office of Scholarships and Financial Aid, and these results will have been made available to the dean's office.

Prior to the decision meeting, the applications will be divided up among committee members for detailed assessments. Whenever possible, each application will be assigned to at least one dean in a field close but not identical to the candidate's own. The deans will make their assessments of merit using a standardized **Merit and Financial Need Assessment Tool (see Appendix B)**. The deans assigned to each file will read the application materials and use the **Merit and Financial Need Assessment Tool** to evaluate each application; these preliminary assessments will be tabulated, and the table will be circulated to members of the selection committee prior to the start of the decision meeting.

Also prior to the start of the decision meeting, the deans assigned to each file will make their assessments of financial need, again using the **Merit and Financial Need Assessment Tool (See Appendix B)**; this portion of the assessment will be based on the FAFSA EFC scores along with information gathered from candidates' Financial Disclosure forms.

The actual decision meeting proceeds according to the following process:

1. (Approx. 5 min. per candidate) Presentations of candidates by the two deans assigned to each file. Candidates will be discussed in alphabetical order, by department and then by last name. Deans will draw on their completed **Assessment Tool** when presenting their evaluations of the candidates assigned to them. Group discussion based on those presentations, the aforementioned table, and the applications themselves will ensue.
2. By the end of the meeting, all initial evaluations will be revisited and finalized and the Bilinski Fellows for the upcoming academic year will be selected.

Appendix A

TIMELINE

- January
- ◆ Dean's office issues call for nominations.
 - ◆ Units establish process for Stage 1 of the evaluation process.
 - ◆ Units solicit nominees internally.
- February
- ◆ Units work with nominees, dissertation directors, and directors of graduate studies to assemble nomination packets.
 - ◆ Units evaluate nominations according to established process.
- March 8**
- ◆ Unit nomination process should be completed. Units select no more than 8 nominations to forward to the College level.
 - ◆ Units notify all nominees of internal decisions and instruct those whose packets will move forward to the College level to complete the FAFSA.
- March 15**
- ◆ Students whose nominations will be forwarded to the College level must have completed the FAFSA.
- March-early April
- ◆ In the case of multiple nominations, department chair or, where relevant, program director writes separate letter both ranking and explaining the unit's ranking of the nominees.
 - ◆ Units ensure that nomination packets are complete.
- April 16**
- ◆ Units submit nomination packets electronically to the College. Electronic copies (single pdf, labeled with degree program, student's last name, student's first name) should be e-mailed to CASPROG@mailbox.sc.edu
 - ◆ In cases of multiple nominations, units submit letter explaining ranking of nominations and include letter with **each** nomination packet. (Letter should be included with **each** paper copy and attached to **each** electronic copy.)
- May 14**
- ◆ College notifies nominees and units of results.

Appendix B



UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH CAROLINA
 College of Arts and Sciences

**Russell H. and Dorothy S. Bilinski Dissertation Fellowship
 Merit and Financial Need Assessment Tool**

Instructions to reviewers: Fill out the form for each of the applicants assigned to you; bring copy to evaluation meeting.

Applicant Name: _____

Department: _____

Level of Need
 (result of FAFSA): _____

Very High Need = EFC \$ 1,000 - 5,999
 High Need = EFC \$ 6,000 - 11,999
 Moderately High Need = EFC \$ 12,000 - 17,999
 Moderate Need = EFC \$ 18,000 - 23,999

**1. Financial disclosure checklist
 (Please select the checkbox)**

YES

NO

Does the applicant have the possibility of continued funding through their own department/ program for the next academic year?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the applicant have a realistic chance of other grant/fellowship support for next year (based on a successful track record of getting external support?)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the applicant have any special financial circumstances? (Use the comments section below to describe these.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. Applicant's academic and professional achievements (Please select the checkbox)

Does the applicant have any peer reviewed publications (including articles, book chapters, conference proceedings)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the applicant have any non-reviewed publications?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Has the applicant presented his/her work at regional-level professional conferences/ workshops?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Has the applicant presented work t national or international level professional conferences/ workshops?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Has the applicant received any significant awards/ honors?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Has the applicant received any internal grant funding (do NOT include travel grants)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Has the applicant received any external grant funding (e.g., NEH, NSF)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

3. Nominee's departmental rank and justification of that ranking.

4. Endorsement from the dissertation director:

- a) How innovative and original is the dissertation?**
- b) Does the dissertation make a potential contribution to the applicant's field?**
- c) Additional comments?**

