

2004 Minority Scholarship Fund Committee Report
Revised Report, September 13, 2004

TO: Executive Board, Society for the Study of Social Problems

FROM: Teresa L. Scheid,
Chairperson, Minority Scholarship Fund Committee

COMMITTEE: Lionel Maldonado, (Chair Elect)
Amalia Lucia Cabezas
Lorna Rivera
Marta Malanando
Marcel Ionescu
Andrea Smith

COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES:

The committee initially met at the SSSP meetings in Atlanta as there was to be a discussion of expanding the inclusion criteria to include disabled persons as a minority. We also discussed the criteria for making the award. Our understanding was that the definition of a minority used in the establishment of the Scholarship Award was someone whose minority group was underrepresented in higher education. Our feeling was that we should not make “minority” too expansive. We also discussed expanded the criteria for making the award to include disadvantaged status or need, rather than summarily excluding certain minority groups. We discussed using a ranking system from 1 to 5 for four categories: activism, scholarship grounded in activism, financial need, and budget. The current ranking system (1 to 5) uses the following categories: activism, evidence of financial need, strength of letters of recommendation, and soundness of proposed scholarship. We also discussed the need for some form of accountability to ensure that funds were used as specified. Later in the fall the Chair was asked to poll the Minority Fellowship Committee and the Accessibility Committee to see if we should expand the criteria governing the Minority Scholarship to include disability. Everyone who responded (5 out of 9) voted yes.

We received over 40 applications via the web; however only 19 completed packets were received with a post-mark of March 15th. Two were from MA students and hence were not ranked. One file came in late, and it was also incomplete and was not sent to committee members, although the Chair evaluated it to be sure we were not excluding a top candidate (it was judged to be a weak case and not sent on to the committee). Of the 16 applications evaluated by the committee, half were male and half were female, six were African American, six were Hispanic/Latino, one was American Indian and disabled, and one was disabled. The pool was somewhat smaller than last year (when 19 files were evaluated).

MINORITY SCHOLARSHIP AWARD:

Salvidor Vidal Ortiz was ranked in the top three by all five committee members who submitted evaluation by the deadline (April 12). He was ranked number one by three of the committee members. Salvidor Vidal Ortiz is the recipient of the 2004-2005 SSSP Minority Graduate Scholarship. The pool of candidates was very good, and there were four or five candidates who emerged as top candidates. Once again we feel it is unfortunate that we can only award one scholarship.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

These recommendations were developed by the Chair based on two year's experience in evaluating files. They were submitted to the committee for discussion and consensus was reached.

I: Minority Status

There has been much discussion as to whether minority status should be expanded to include people with disabilities (and perhaps other minority groups).

The first call for nominations for the Minority Fellowship provided a definition of minority to include the following racial or ethnic groups of color only:

African Americans, American Indians/Native Americans, Asians and Latino Americans. This definition does not preclude persons meeting the definition of minority who are physically challenged or who choose alternative life styles. Our intent is to restrict our definition to traditionally under-represented racial/ethnic groups as recognized by such groups as the ASA.

We recommend that the Minority Scholarship be used for racial/ethnic minorities as defined above. Peoples and Communities of Color have historically faced institutional racism which has hindered their representation in higher education. The Minority Scholarship is intended to increase the pool of racial/ethnic social and behavioral scientists and widening the definition of minority status would undermine this objective.

While there was some discussion of altering the title of the scholarship, no-one came up with an acceptable alternative. We did agree upon a revised evaluation form to be used in the upcoming year.

EXPANDED CRITERIA FOR THE AWARD:

I. Ranking

A ranking of 1 to 5 is currently used, but there is variability in how committee members use these numbers. It would be clearer to use a scoring system consistent with federal grants with 0 (none or poor), 1 (evidence or good), or 2 (strong or excellent). This would reduce variability in final scores and allow for an averaging of committee members' scores.

II. Activism

Currently we evaluate activism on one scale from 1 to 5; however activism can be evident in either research and school activities or in the community or both. We recommend that each form of activism be evaluated from 0 to 2 (as described above).

III. Financial Need

The Chair or Graduate Coordinator should include in their letter a statement that corroborates the applicant's statement (and this needs to be specified in the application guidelines). The applicant's social background should also be included in a specification of "need;" this information is included in the application form, but it is not used in the criteria. Financial need should be separated from social status and each evaluated separately.

IV. Scholarship

The award should be used for original research and the soundness of this scholarship should be evaluated based on a proposal. Applicants should provide a budget detailing how scholarship funds will be used.

V. Supporting Materials

There should be some evaluation of the quality and strength of the candidate's personal statement. Supporting letters should also be evaluated, and these letters should specifically address the candidate's activism, scholarship and financial need.

NEW CRITERIA FORM:

Evaluate each factor from 0 (none or poor), 1 (evidence or good), or 2 (strong or excellent):

I. Activism (25%:)	Is there evidence of commitment to a career of activism in		
a. Research and/or School (coursework or activities)	0	1	2
b. Community involvement	0	1	2
II. Scholarship (25%)			
a. Potential Contribution of the Study	0	1	2
b. Proposed Budget is Justified	0	1	2
III. Evidence of Financial Need (25%)			
a. Disadvantaged Social Background	0	1	2
b. Current Financial Status	0	1	2
IV. Supporting Materials (25%)			
a. Strength of Applicant's Personnel Statement	0	1	2
b. Strength of Letters of Recommendation	0	1	2

Total Score (potential high of 16):