

## **Memorandum**

To: Board of Directors, Society for the Study of Social Problems (SSSP)  
From: Sandra L. Barnes, 2010 Racial/Ethnic Minority Graduate Scholarship Committee Chair  
RE: SSSP 2010 Racial/Ethnic Minority Graduate Scholarship Committee Report  
Date: July 1, 2010

The members of the SSSP 2010 Racial/Ethnic Minority Graduate Scholarship Committee were; Michelle Beadle, Angie Beeman, Michelle Harris, J.S. Sandoval, Rashwan Ray, Mia Yang, and Sandra Barnes (Chairperson).

### **APPLICANT POOL**

The committee received 23 strong applications this year. Last year's committee evaluated 12 applicants. In light of concerns from the 2009 committee about a limited number of candidates, the 2010 committee was extremely pleased with the significantly larger pool this year. Applicants reflected the following demographic profiles:

#### *Gender*

The applicants included 19 women (82.6%) and 4 men (17.4%).

#### *Race/Ethnicity*

The applicants included ten Latino/candidates (43.5%), seven Asian American candidates (30.4%), five African American candidates (21.7%), and one mixed-race candidate who self-identified as Asian and White (4.3%).

#### *Matriculating Year*

Three candidates were in their third year of their PhD programs (13.0%), five candidates were in their fourth year (21.7%), ten were in their fifth year (47.8%), one was in her/his sixth year (4.3%), and three candidates were in their seventh year (13.0%).

#### *Academic Discipline*

The overwhelming majority of applicants (nineteen) were from the discipline of Sociology (82.6%). One candidate was from Education (4.3%), one candidate was from Planning & Policy Development (4.3%), one candidate was from Criminology (4.3%) and one candidate was from Teaching and Learning (4.3%).

### **ROLE OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE**

The committee would like to thank both Michele Koontz and Sarah Hendricks for their support and timely responses during the data collection and deliberation processes.

### **SELECTION PROCESS**

After receipt of the applications from Sarah Hendricks, the committee utilized the criteria rating sheet from prior evaluation periods and scored the twenty-three applicants accordingly. After the votes were tallied, the top applicant was evident based on both the number of rankings she received as well as the quality of her rankings. Mrs. Koontz notified the recipient, Yung-Yi Pan,

by official letter. The chair provided additional feedback to the one candidate (the 2<sup>nd</sup> runner up) who requested suggestions to improve her application.

## **CONCERNS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### *A. Adherence to Application Deadlines*

The committee encourages consistency regarding the application process. According to the “Call for Papers,” incomplete packets will not be reviewed. Furthermore, applicants are provided with a clear set of criteria regarding the items that should be included in the packet as well as the deadline. It appears that some latitude has historically been given regarding inclusion of transcripts and/or letters of recommendation in the actual packets (i.e., some items were mailed separately). However, such decisions are contrary to the application instructions. Unless applicants are prohibited from receipt of official transcripts, it would only seem fair that SSSP should expect to receive (and only evaluate) packets that are complete by the deadline and as stipulated in the Call Out. Consistent adherence to the process is fair to all candidates and extremely important in light of the magnitude of the overall outcome.

### *B. Explanation of Review Process*

In retrospect, it would be prudent for the committee to meet via teleconference before the evaluation process begins or if more detailed guidelines were provided. Two revisions to the evaluation process are recommended. First, committee members should avoid submitting candidate “ties,” but make the difficult decision of ranking candidates such that clear determinations can be made with the compiled information. Second, committee members should not consider personal information about candidates (for example, number of children and its potential impact on degree completion) during the evaluation process. Members should adhere to the evaluation guidelines as provided (unless SSSP decides to revise them).

### *C. Minority Graduate Scholarship Committee Make-Up*

The Chairperson recommends that SSSP insures that the committee reflect a cross-section of faculty and students that includes equal numbers of Full Professors (n=2), Associate Professors (n=2), Assistant Professors (n=2), and students (n=2). Although it may take some effort to get senior faculty involved, such a cross-section would include newer persons to academia as well as persons with experience more objectively evaluating large numbers of candidates for a single award. SSSP should avoid committees where the only Full Professor is the Chairperson (who, based on the post, cannot actively evaluate applicants).

### *D. Multiple Awards or Focus on Disadvantaged Groups*

As suggested by the 2009 committee, SSSP should consider focusing the fellowship on disadvantaged racial groups rather than minority groups in general. It is unclear whether the scholarship, as currently designed, benefits the most vulnerable candidates in need of assistance. Lastly, SSSP may want to consider providing 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> place awards. This process would be particularly appropriate if the top two candidates are extremely close in rankings and appear equally deserving.

Thank you for requesting our participation on this committee. It was an honor to the involved in this important process.