

Lee Student Support Fund Committee 2015 Report to the SSSP Board

The Lee Student Support Fund Committee is charged to complete two tasks. The first is the distribution of scholarship funds for students attending the SSSP Annual Conference. The second is the coordination of the Meeting Mentor Program. Both of these tasks were facilitated by the administrative office of SSSP.

Lee Student Support Fund:

The Lee Student Support Fund received 61 applications this year. At the time of the application deadline, 6 students were not 2015 SSSP members. Since this was a requirement, those students were removed from consideration. Of the remaining 55 students, The Committee elected to distribute funds based on the price of the submitted travel quotes. Distributions of the funds were as follows:

3 students (\$75) = \$225
12 students (\$150) = \$1800
27 students (\$200) = \$5400
7 students (\$250) = \$1750
1 student (\$300) = \$300
*5 students (\$305) = \$1525

TOTAL: 55 students = \$11,000

*Upon initial allocation, there was a \$25 surplus. This was distributed among the 5 students with the highest travel price quotes.

Meeting Mentor Program:

This year, there were 69 Mentee and 22 Mentor applications. In 2014 there were 60 Mentee and 18 Mentor applications, in 2013 there were 58 Mentees and 21 volunteer mentors, and in 2012, there were 30 mentee requests for 20 volunteer mentors. These numbers suggests a sharp increase in Mentee requests with a stable number of volunteer Mentors.

During the decision process, 5 Mentees and 1 Mentor were not registered for the Annual Meeting. All were contacted to confirm their attendance at the meeting. Those who were not attending were removed from the Meeting Mentor Program list. Additionally, 1 Mentee and 1 Mentor later indicated that they would be unable to attend the meeting. After the deadline, 3 additional Mentors were identified and added to the Meeting Mentor Program list. In the end, there were 63 Mentees and 23 Mentors.

The Mentors were contacted and asked to confirm their interest and availability in mentoring 3-4 Mentees. Most agreed, with a significant number of Mentors requesting to have fewer Mentees because of their Meeting responsibilities. Those Mentors who were assigned 4 Mentees were contacted to confirm this detail. Because of the Meeting responsibilities of many Mentors, we encouraged them to consider scheduling group meetings with their Mentees, and taking advantage of the time at the SSSP evening receptions to meet with them.

Items for Board Approval:

Regarding the Lee Student Support Fund:

The application currently states, “In addition to need, the committee may recognize the Society’s commitment to diversity, the applicant’s commitment to scholar-activism, and interdisciplinary work among other factors.” As there were no other applicable guidelines this year for fund allocation other than students’ estimated travel costs, we recommend that there be an open-text item added to the application in which students have an opportunity to reflect on their “commitment to diversity, scholar-activism, and interdisciplinary work” to be considered as an item of criteria when necessary.

Regarding the Meeting Mentor Program:

In recent years, the Program has had a number of Mentee applications with fewer Mentor applications by comparison. This causes an extra burden on those Mentors who do apply, who are asked to mentor multiple students, and who often already have multiple responsibilities at the Annual Meeting. In the research on mentoring, there have been many identified benefits to “group mentoring,” in which the small groups facilitate both collective mentoring and peer-to-peer mentoring. We recommend that the Meeting Mentor Program provide Mentors the opportunity to “group mentor” their assigned Mentees when necessary.

The objectives of the Lee Meeting Mentor Program are, “to facilitate interaction between new members or graduate students and meeting veterans at the Annual Meeting. Mentors provide valuable knowledge about the SSSP and Annual Meeting activities as well as insight into their own experiences as scholar activists.” However, a number of Mentee applicants this year indicated their interest in receiving mentorship on professional elements like the academic job market and tenure review. This could perhaps explain the fewer number of Mentors who apply, many of whom may have similar assumptions about the Program objectives and thus are unwilling/unable to commit their time to this kind of mentoring at the Meeting. Thus, we recommend that the objectives of the Program are either A) emphasized to applicants as primarily SSSP Meeting Mentorship, or B) changed to accommodate the mentoring that recent Program participants expect (for the job market, etc.)

Conclusion:

As Chair of this Committee, I want to recognize the outstanding and timely work the Committee members provided to these tasks:

- Ligaya McGovern, Chair-Elect
- Daina Cheyenne Harvey

In addition, Michele Smith Koontz, Administrative Officer & Meeting Manager, provided excellent support and guidance throughout our work. Her professionalism and timely responses with accurate and clear information enabled this committee to function extremely well.

Respectfully submitted,

Bhoomi K. Thakore

2015 Chair, Lee Student Support Fund Committee