

MEMORANDUM

To: The Board of Directors of the Society for the Study of Social Problems (SSSP)

From: Shirley A. Jackson, Chair, 2016 Racial/Ethnic Minority Graduate Scholarship
Committee

RE: SSSP 2015-2016 Racial/Ethnic Minority Graduate Scholarship Committee Report

Date: June 28, 2016

The members of the SSSP 2014-2015 Racial/Ethnic Minority Graduate Scholarship Committee included: **Shirley A. Jackson, Chair** (Portland State University); **Rachael Neal** (St. Edward's University); **Meghan Rich** (University of Scranton); **Rebecca Wiersma** (Madonna University); and **Geoffrey L. Wood** (University of Pittsburgh). The committee began with seven members but only five participated. An explanation may be found at the end of this report.

There were twenty-two applications received by the SSSP Administrative Office by the posted deadline. We were fortunate to have a number of very strong applications for the two scholarships. Several of the candidates had applied the previous year, one of whom was an honorable mention recipient last year and again this year.

Last year, the committee expressed concern about the information requested on the application form. One concern involved the inclusion of additional space for more specifics about applicants' financial needs. A proposed budget was requested and information on dependent family members was included. While this was indeed helpful, there still appear to be some weaknesses in the application. The primary concern was a lack of examples of what the budget should include. There is a difference between budget and financial need which is not always clear on the existing application.

The committee met via conference call on April 11th to review the scores that were received by the participating committee members. There was a good deal of consensus in the scoring, although it would have been very instructive to see if the scores of the two individuals who were dismissed from the committee would have impacted the outcome. The committee was pleased to be able to select two \$15,000 scholarship recipients this year: Cassaundra Rodriguez (University of Massachusetts, Amherst) and Janet Garcia (Rutgers University-Newark). In addition, the committee also recognized three individuals for honorable mention: Celeste V. Curington (University of Massachusetts, Amherst); Robert Reece* (Duke University); and Aisha Upton* (University of Minnesota).

As has been past practice, the names of the winners were forwarded to the SSSP Administrative office. Letters were sent to award and honorable mention recipients. When contacted by those who did not win, the committee chair emailed each individual to provide information on perceived limitations and offered suggestions for submitting a stronger application in the future.

Two individuals, *Reuben Jonathan Miller* (University of Michigan) and *Ruth Thompson-Miller* (University of Dayton) who were originally on the committee had to be asked to step down because they had not submitted their scores by the already extended deadline for submission of scores. This posed some difficulty since one of these individuals, Reuben Miller, was the

committee's chair-elect. As a result, the chair-elect has not participated in the process which is a potential problem if he is to serve as chair next year. The SSSP Administrative office was apprised of these matters and of the chair's concerns. It is the opinion of this year's chair of the Racial/Ethnic Minority Graduate Scholarship Committee that Geoffrey L. Wood be considered as chair next year. He is familiar with the selection process, was timely in his submission of scores, and offered a great deal of insight during our deliberation.

Finally, a student contacted the committee chair to express concern that there continues to be no award for those who are ineligible for the Racial/Ethnic Minority Graduate Scholarship because they are international students. While it is understandable that the student should desire there to be an award for which she can apply, it is the committee chair's belief that this should not come at the expense of the racial/ethnic disadvantaged students who have historically not had the same opportunities for financial support. This matter is placed in the hands of the board for its review.

*tied for honorable mention