

Dissertation Fellowship Program in Retirement or Disability Research 2025 Proposal Guidelines

The Center for Retirement Research at Boston College (CRR) is soliciting proposals for the Dissertation Fellowship Program in Retirement or Disability Research. The program is funded by a grant from the U.S. Social Security Administration (SSA) through the Retirement and Disability Research Consortium (RDRC). The program's purpose is to promote the next generation of scholars in retirement or disability policy research and to improve the quality of scholarship in retirement and disability research studies. Historically underserved or underrepresented individuals are encouraged to apply.

Applicants must demonstrate that their proposal focuses on at least one of SSA's [research focal areas](#): (1) Understanding service needs and improving service delivery; (2) Studying causes and inequities of overpayment and underpayment; (3) Addressing barriers to disability and SSI programs participation and processes; (4) Understanding and improving communication; (5) Identifying disparities by race, ethnicity, and sex; (6) Examining economic security of program applicants and beneficiaries; and (7) Addressing employment barriers for people with disabilities.

The Fellowship is designed to provide support for one chapter/paper of a dissertation. Applicants are required to: (1) be enrolled in a qualified doctoral program at a U.S. university; (2) have completed all coursework for a Ph.D. by the time funding would start; (3) have a dissertation advisor and/or committee; and (4) have the chair of the dissertation committee confirm that he/she has read and approved the research methodology for the proposal. Doctoral candidates from all academic disciplines are encouraged to submit a proposal.

Two grants of \$28,000 will be awarded. **The deadline for submitting a proposal is 5:00 p.m. EST on Friday, January 31, 2025.** Awards will be announced in April 2025.

PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

Minimum Requirements for Fellowship Applicants:

1. Applicant must be enrolled in a qualified doctoral program at a U.S. university.
2. Applicant must have completed all coursework and have completed the appropriate examinations or qualifications to be considered A.B.D.
3. Applicants must have a dissertation proposal focused on one of SSA's Research Focal Areas (below).
4. Applicants must have a dissertation advisor and committee.
5. Applicants must have the chair of the dissertation committee approve the research methodology using the provided form.
6. Applicants cannot receive other federal funding concurrently with this fellowship. Please contact the CRR if you have a potential conflict.

Research Focal Areas

Dissertation proposals must be focused on at least one of SSA's [research focal areas](#):

- Understanding service needs and improving service delivery;
- Studying causes and inequities of overpayment and underpayment;
- Addressing barriers to disability and SSI programs participation and processes;
- Understanding and improving communication;
- Identifying disparities by race, ethnicity, and sex;
- Examining economic security of program applicants and beneficiaries; and
- Addressing employment barriers for people with disabilities.

Format of Fellowship Proposal

Proposals should not exceed 12 pages. Twelve-point, Times New Roman font, 1.5 line spacing, and 1-inch margins are required.

Required elements of the proposal include:

1. Cover page with the researcher's name, dissertation title, institution, list of committee members and advisor [1 page].
2. Abstract describing the project purpose, data, and methods [1 page].
3. Description of research question, methodology, data, and timeline [9 pages]. Applicants should focus proposals primarily on one chapter/paper, but also provide background that places the section into the context of their full dissertation.
4. References [1 page].

SUBMISSION PROCESS

All applicants must complete the online submission form found on the [Center's website](#).

Required components of the online application include:

1. Contact information, institutional affiliation, and education history.
2. Research proposal (PDF attachment).
3. Current CV.
4. Electronic copy of doctoral transcript (scanned copies and/or degree audits are permitted).
5. Name and contact information of two people writing letters of recommendation.
6. Signed form from dissertation committee chair approving the research methodology.

Submissions must be received through the online system by 5:00pm (EST) on Friday, January 31, 2025.

Letters of Recommendation

Fellowship applicants are required to submit two letters of recommendation for their dissertation proposal. One letter must be from the dissertation chair or academic advisor. Letters are also subject to the above deadline, and must be submitted through the online system by the person writing the letter at the [Center's website](#).

REVIEW PROCESS

Submissions will be reviewed by a panel of representatives from the RDRC and SSA. The following criteria will be used to evaluate proposals:

1. Relevance to retirement or disability policy as listed in the Research Focal Areas section.
2. Evidence that the candidate has passed any or all comprehensive and/or special area exams associated with A.B.D. status.
3. Qualifications of the applicant.
4. Dissertation advisor and committee members.
5. A proposal that has been formally approved by the student's full dissertation committee.
7. Research design and methodology.
8. Research proposal schedule and timeline.

NOTIFICATION OF AWARD

Awards will be announced in April 2025. Fellowship recipients are required to provide quarterly report updates to the program administrator and a draft of the paper must be submitted within one year to demonstrate adequate process. Awardees may be selected to present their results during the annual RDRC meeting in Washington, DC.

QUESTIONS AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For any questions about the Dissertation Fellowship Program, please call Marina Tsiknis at (617) 552-1092 or e-mail tsiknis@bc.edu.

About the Center for Retirement Research

The Center for Retirement Research at Boston College was established in 1998 through a grant from the Social Security Administration. The Center's mission is to produce first-class research and forge a strong link between the academic community and decision makers in the public and private sectors around an issue of critical importance to the nation's future. To achieve this mission, the Center sponsors a wide variety of research projects, transmits new findings to a broad audience, trains new scholars, and broadens access to valuable data sources. Since its inception, the Center has established a reputation as an authoritative source of information on all major aspects of the retirement income and policy debate.

Potential applicants are encouraged to visit the Center's website at crr.bc.edu to learn more about our research and activities. To join the Center's mailing list, please send an e-mail to crr@bc.edu or fill out an online form through our website.

BLANK DISSERTATION FELLOWSHIP ONLINE APPLICATION

(to use for preparation purposes, applications must be submitted online at:
<https://crr.bc.edu/dissertation>)

Required information is marked with an asterisk. All information must be completed within a section before moving to the next. If there are any changes that need to be made, click the “Previous” button and make the necessary change. Please review all information before submitting.

Personal Information

- Name*

First

Last

- Citizenship*

- Home Address*

Street Address

Address Line 2

City

State / Province / Region

ZIP / Postal Code

Country

- Email*

Enter Email

Confirm Email

- Phone*

Institutional Information

- Institution*

- Department*

- Department Contact (to verify enrollment status)*

- Dissertation Advisor Name*

Project Information

- Proposal Title*

- How did you hear about the program?

- Proposal* (upload)
- CV* (upload)
- Doctoral Transcript* (upload)
- Dissertation Committee Chair Form* (upload)

Education Information

- Highest Degree*

- Institution*

- Field*

- Degree 2

- Institution

- Field

- Degree 3

- Institution

- Field

- How many years from now do you expect to complete your Ph.D.?*

- Have you obtained ABD status?*

Yes

No

Reference 1

- Name*

<input type="text"/>	First
<input type="text"/>	Last

- Title*

- Institution*

- Email*

- Phone*

- Relationship to applicant*

Reference 2

- Name*

<input type="text"/>	First
<input type="text"/>	Last

- Title*

- Institution*

- Email*

- Phone*

- Relationship to applicant*

Verify Information

- Do you verify that the information submitted is true and does not include misleading information to the best of your knowledge?*

Yes