
William T. Grant Scholars Program Application Guidelines

Updated February 2021

Online Application Opens:
April 1, 2021, 3 PM EST

Mentor and Reference Letter Deadline:
June 16, 2021, 3 PM EST

Application Deadline:
July 7, 2021, 3 PM EST

Announcement of Awards:
March 2022

Contents

01	Program Overview
03	Focus Areas
03	—Reducing Inequality
09	—Improving the Use of Research Evidence
15	Featured William T. Grant Scholars
18	Awards
21	Eligibility
22	Application Materials
28	Selection Criteria
33	Application Review Process
34	Scholars Selection Committee
36	Scholars Classes

Program Overview

The William T. Grant Scholars Program supports career development for promising early-career researchers. The program funds five-year research and mentoring plans that significantly expand researchers' expertise in new disciplines, methods, and content areas.

Applicants should have a track record of conducting high-quality research and an interest in pursuing a significant shift in their trajectories as researchers. We recognize that early-career researchers are rarely given incentives or support to take measured risks in their work, so this award includes a mentoring component, as well as a supportive academic community.

Awards are based on applicants' potential to become influential researchers, as well as their plans to expand their expertise in new and significant ways. The application should make a cohesive argument for how the applicant will expand their expertise. The research plan should evolve in conjunction with the development of new expertise, and the mentoring plan should describe how the proposed mentors will support applicants in acquiring that expertise.



Top: Micere Keels, Class of 2017; Bottom: Matthew Desmond, Class of 2021



Focus Areas

The Foundation's mission is to support research to improve the lives of young people ages 5-25 in the United States. We pursue this mission by supporting research within two focus areas: 1) Reducing inequality in youth outcomes, and 2) Improving the use of research evidence in decisions that affect young people.

Proposed research plans must address questions that are relevant to policy and practice in one of the Foundation's focus areas.

Focus Area: Reducing Inequality

In this focus area, we support studies that aim to build, test, or increase understanding of programs, policies, or practices to reduce inequality in the academic, social, behavioral, or economic outcomes of young people, especially on the basis of race, ethnicity, economic standing, language minority status, or immigrant origins.

Background

Our focus on reducing inequality grew out of our view that research can do more than help us understand the problem of inequality—it can generate effective responses. We believe that it is time to build stronger bodies of knowledge on how to reduce inequality in the United States and to move beyond the mounting research evidence about the scope, causes, and consequences of inequality.

Toward this end, we seek studies that aim to build, test, or increase understanding of programs, policies, or practices to reduce inequality in the academic, social, behavioral, or economic outcomes of young people. We prioritize studies about reducing inequality on the basis of race, ethnicity, economic standing, language minority status, or immigrant origins.

Proposing a Study on Reducing Inequality

Studies on reducing inequality aim to build, test, or increase understanding of programs, policies, or practices to reduce inequality in youth outcomes.

We welcome descriptive studies that clarify mechanisms for reducing inequality or elucidate how or why a specific program, policy, or practice operates to reduce inequality. We also welcome intervention studies that examine attempts to reduce inequality. In addition, we seek studies that improve the measurement of inequality in ways that can enhance the work of researchers, practitioners, or policymakers. The common thread across all of these approaches, however, is a distinct and explicit focus on reducing inequality. While we value research on the causes and consequences of inequality, we are interested in supporting research that will inform a policy, program, or practice response that can be implemented through an organization, institution, or system.

Applications for research on reducing inequality must:

Identify a specific inequality in youth outcomes, and show that the outcomes are currently unequal by engaging with the extant literature on the causes and consequences of inequality

We are especially interested in supporting research to reduce inequality in academic, social, behavioral, or economic outcomes.

Make a compelling case for the basis of inequality the study will address

We are especially interested in research to reduce inequality on the basis of race, ethnicity, economic standing, language minority status, or immigrant origin status. Proposals for research on reducing inequality on a basis not listed here, or on ways in which a basis of inequality intersects with another, must make a compelling case that this research will improve youth outcomes. For example, we encourage research on reducing inequality for LGBTQ youth, particularly in intersection with at least one of these prioritized dimensions. We also ask for specificity in naming the groups to be examined. Rather than use vague terms (e.g., “at-risk youth”), applicants are encouraged to be very clear about the groups on which the study will focus. Applicants are also discouraged from treating bases of inequality (e.g., race, poverty) as variables without providing conceptual and/or theoretical insight into why and how these inequalities exist.

Articulate how findings from your research will help build, test, or increase understanding of a specific program, policy, or practice to reduce the specific inequality that you have identified

We encourage applicants to draw on extant theoretical and empirical literature to provide a rationale for why the programs, policies, or practices under study will equalize outcomes between groups or improve outcomes

of the disadvantaged group. Likewise, applicants must identify how the study will investigate this rationale to determine whether it holds up to empirical scrutiny.

Recognizing that findings about programs and practices that reduce inequality will have limited societal impact until the structures that create inequality in the first place have been transformed, the Foundation is particularly interested in research to combat [systemic racism](#) and the [structural foundations of inequality](#) that limit the life chances of young people. Such research shifts the focal point of change from individuals to social institutions and examines how institutions might be altered to dislodge the deep roots of inequality and develop a way forward toward greater equity. Studies might examine how structural responses improve outcomes for youth or focus on the mechanisms through which such change occurs. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Research on dramatic changes to the U.S. federal tax system, such as those examined in the Foundation-supported National Academies Study on [A Roadmap to Reducing Child Poverty](#)
- Research on shifts in power structures, such as changes in governance systems, or on the process through which the mindsets and behaviors of those who hold power are changed
- Research on the role of social movements to reduce inequality in youth outcomes, as laid out by Jenny Irons and Vivian Tseng in a recent piece on the Foundation’s website, “[Social Movement Research to Reduce Inequality for Young People](#)”
- Research on the potential impact on youth outcomes of reparations to American descendants of enslaved people, as proposed by William J. Darity, Jr. in an essay for the Foundation titled, “[A New Agenda for Eliminating Racial Inequality in the United States: The Research We Need](#),” and in his recent book with A. Kirsten Mullen, *From Here to Equality*
- Research on the consequences for reducing educational inequality of significant school finance reforms, as discussed by William T. Grant Distinguished Fellow Robert Kim in “[How School Finance Research Can Sharpen the Debate, Strengthen Policy, and Improve Student Outcomes](#)”

- Research on implementing new approaches to prosecution aimed at eliminating racial and ethnic disparities, such as explored in [recent Foundation grants](#)
- Research on whether equitable bank lending policies can reduce housing segregation, improve neighborhood quality, and enhance youth development
- Research on the consequences for youth outcomes of a reallocation of municipal resources away from punitive action and towards social services, sometimes known by the slogan of “defund the police”

This list is intended to illustrate what we mean by systemic racism and the structural foundations of inequality and is not an exhaustive set of possible grant topics. Please note that to be eligible for funding, the research still needs to focus on outcomes for young people ages 5-25 in the United States.

For an explanation of why we continue to fund research on programs and practices to reduce inequality in youth outcomes even as the larger structures of racism and inequality persist, please see “[Research on reducing inequality: Why programs and practices matter, even in an unequal society](#),” by William T. Grant Scholar David Yeager.

Must studies of reducing inequality focus on disparities?

The short answer is no. Though many studies we fund examine strategies to improve outcomes for disadvantaged groups or to reduce disparities between groups, applicants may propose different approaches to understanding how programs, policies, or practices might address inequality. For example, a study may examine how to dismantle racism in a system or organization to improve youth outcomes, shifting the focus from individuals to structure. A study might offer a rich conceptualization of inequality and how it is experienced by moving past typical measures of outcomes (e.g., test scores) to look more holistically at measures of well-being. Finally, a study might also upend the notion of disadvantaged and advantaged groups that is often taken-for-granted in our society. In fact, we encourage researchers to scrutinize how they conceptualize inequality to avoid a deficit approach.

Is your interest in reducing inequality in economic outcomes limited to studies of poverty?

Our interest in economic inequality is not exclusively about poverty. Although we have special concern for the outcomes of youth in the most difficult circumstances, we are interested in reducing inequality across the entire spectrum—not just for the least fortunate. Some studies may focus on middle-class families who are increasingly challenged to provide resources to support their children’s development, such as high-quality youth programs or college tuition. Moreover, our interest is in promoting better outcomes for youth who have been underserved, not in diminishing outcomes for youth who have been successful in the past.

Definitions

Programs are coordinated sets of activities designed to achieve specific aims in youth development.

Policies are broader initiatives intended to promote success through the allocation of resources or regulation of activities. Policies may be located at the federal, state, local, or organizational level.

Practices consist of the materials and activities through which youth development is enabled (e.g., coaching, mentoring, parenting, peer interactions, teaching). Practices involve direct interaction with youth (though not necessarily in person, as technology affords direct interaction from anywhere).



Top: Adriana Galván, Class of 2018; Bottom: Mesmin Destin, Class of 2021



Focus Area: Improving the Use of Research Evidence

In this focus area, we support research to identify, build, and test strategies to ensure that research evidence is used in ways that benefit youth. We are particularly interested in research on improving the use of research evidence by state and local decision makers, mid-level managers, and intermediaries.

Background

Over the past decade, a growing body of research has illuminated the conditions that facilitate the use of research evidence in policy and practice. For example, studies find that when research is relevant to decision makers, deliberated over thoughtfully, and embedded in policymaking processes, routines, and tools, the findings are more likely to be used. Still, there remain many unanswered questions that are critical to understanding how to improve the production and use of research evidence. What's more, there is a scarcity of evidence supporting the notion that research use in policy and practice will necessarily improve youth outcomes. Serious scientific inquiry is needed. We need to know the conditions under which using research evidence improves decision making, policy implementation, service delivery, and, ultimately, youth outcomes. In short, we need research on the use of research.

Toward this end, we seek studies that identify, build, and test strategies to enhance the use of research evidence in ways that benefit youth. We are particularly interested in research on improving the use of research evidence by state and local decision makers, mid-level managers, and intermediaries. Some investigators will focus on the strategies, relationships, and other supports needed for policy and practice organizations to use research more routinely and constructively. Others may investigate structures and incentives within the research community to encourage deep engagement with decision makers. Still other researchers may examine activities that help findings inform policy ideas, shape practice responses, and improve systems.

Proposing a Study on Improving the Use of Research Evidence

Studies on improving the use of research evidence should identify, build, and test strategies to ensure that research evidence is used in ways that benefit youth. We welcome ideas from social scientists across a range of disciplines, fields, and methodologies. Research teams have drawn on conceptual and empirical work from political science, communication science,

knowledge mobilization, implementation science, organizational psychology and other areas related to the use of research. Critical perspectives that inform studies' research questions, methods, and interpretation of findings are also welcome. Broadening the theoretical perspectives used to study ways to improving the usefulness, use, and impact of research evidence may create a new frontier of important research.

We welcome investigations about research use in various systems, including justice, child welfare, mental health, and education.

In addition to theory-building and theory-testing projects, we are interested in measurement studies to develop the tools to capture changes in the nature and degree of research use.

Proposals for research on improving the use of research evidence must pursue one of the following lines of inquiry:

Build, identify, or test strategies to improve the use of existing research

Proposals may investigate strategies, mechanisms, or conditions for improving research use. We also encourage studies that measure the effects of deliberate efforts to improve routine and beneficial uses of research in deliberations and decisions that affect young people. For example, prior work suggests that decision makers often lack the institutional resources and requisite skills to seek out and apply research, and certain organizational norms and routines can help overcome those barriers (Honig, Venkateswaran, & Twitchell, 2014; Mosley & Courtney, 2012; Nicholson, 2014). Future projects might study efforts to alter the decision making environment. For example, studies might compare the effectiveness of different ways (e.g., technical assistance, research-practice partnerships, cross-agency teams, etc.) to connect existing research with decision makers or exploit natural variation across decision making environments to identify the conditions that improve research use.

Identify or test strategies for producing more useful research evidence

Proposals may investigate ways to create incentives, structures, and relationships that facilitate research production that responds to decision makers' needs. Applicants might seek to identify strategies for altering the incentive structures or organizational cultures of research institutions so that researchers conduct more practice- or policy-relevant studies and are rewarded for research products that are considered useful by decision makers. Other applicants might seek to identify the relationships and

organizational structures that lead to the prioritization of decision makers' needs in developing research agendas. Studies may also examine ways to optimize organized collaborations among researchers, decision makers, intermediaries, and other stakeholders to benefit youth. For example, one might investigate the effectiveness of funders' efforts to incentivize joint work between researchers and decision makers. Other projects might test curriculum and training experiences that develop researchers' capacity to conduct collaborative work with practitioners.

Test the assumption that using high-quality research evidence improves decision making and youth outcomes.

Studies may examine the impact of research use on youth outcomes and the conditions under which using research evidence improves outcomes. The notion that using research will improve youth outcomes is a long-standing assumption, but there is little evidence to validate it.

We suspect that the impact of research on outcomes may depend on a number of conditions, including the quality of the research and the quality of research use. As illustrated in Figure 1, one hypothesis is that the quality of the research and the quality of research use will work synergistically to yield strong outcomes for youth. For the purpose of this example, high-quality research is defined as rigorous, relevant, and designed for use. High-quality research use is represented as critical consideration and appropriate application of research.

Applicants are encouraged to identify and test other conditions under which using research evidence improves youth outcomes. For example, recent federal policies have instituted mandates and incentives to increase the adoption of programs with evidence of effectiveness from randomized controlled trials, with the expectation that the use of these programs will lead to better outcomes. Do these policies actually increase the use of those programs and improve child outcomes?



Figure 1

The lines of inquiry described above call for a range of methods, from experimental to observational designs, from comparative case approaches to systematic reviews. In hypothesis-testing studies, the research design should provide credible evidence to support or refute hypotheses about the strategies that improve use of research. For example, a randomized controlled trial might test whether a technical assistance intervention that provides schools with coaching on the use of research evidence increases adoption of evidence-based programs. Alternatively, observational studies might leverage state variation to examine whether states that use research in policy making improve youth outcomes.

Where appropriate, applicants should consider using existing methods, measures, and analytic tools so that findings can be compared and aggregated across studies (please see Gitomer & Crouse, 2019). We strongly encourage applicants to utilize a new methods and measures repository, which will be fully launched in spring 2021 (<https://www.uremethods.org/>). That said, existing measures may not be well-suited for some inquiries, and thus we applicants may propose to adapt existing measures or develop new ones that can be employed in future studies. Finally, we continue to promote the use of mixed methods wherein multiple types of data are collected and integrated.

We encourage applicants proposing projects on the use of research evidence to review the resources provided on our website, including writing by staff, grantees, and other experts in the field.

Is the Foundation's interest in improving the use of research evidence focused on any specific groups of users?

State and local departments of education, child welfare, public health and juvenile justice are of interest because they influence the frontline practices that affect youth outcomes. Increased attention to evidence-based policy also creates unprecedented demands to use research in decision making in state and local agencies.

Mid-level managers are particularly important, given their roles deciding which programs, practices, and tools to adopt; deliberating ways to improve existing services; shaping the conditions for implementation; and making resource allocation decisions.

Intermediaries that shape the production of research or facilitate its uptake by policymakers or practitioners are also important. These organizations and individuals include think tanks, advocacy groups, consultants, professional associations, and others.

Which journals publish studies about the use of research evidence?

A variety of peer-review journals publish investigations about the use of research evidence. Some journals are dedicated to this topic, such as *Evidence and Policy*. Other outlets serve a broader ranges of interests but have published articles related to research use. These journals include *American Journal of Evaluation*, *Evaluation and Program Planning*, *Implementation Science*, *Educational Policy*, *Educational Researcher*, *American Journal of Education*, *Sociological Methodology*, *Management Science*, *Organization Science*, *Research on Social Work Practice*, *Child Welfare Journal*, *Journal of Health Services Research & Policy*, *American Journal of Community Psychology*, *Criminology and Public Policy*, *Communication Theory*, and others.

Definitions

Research evidence is a type of evidence derived from applying systematic methods and analyses to address a predefined question or hypothesis. This includes descriptive studies, intervention or evaluation studies, meta-analyses, and cost-effectiveness studies conducted within or outside research organizations.

Use of research evidence can happen in many ways and may involve the direct application of research evidence to decision making, conceptual influences on how decision makers think about problems and potential solutions, strategic uses of research to justify existing stances or positions, or imposed uses that require use of research.

Strategies are systematic and replicable methods, activities, or policies intended to improve the use of research evidence or to maximize its benefits on decision making and youth outcomes.



Top: Phillip Hammack,
Class of 2018; Bottom:
Sara Goldrick Rab, Class
of 2015

Featured William T. Grant Scholars

Donald Chi, Scholars Class of 2018

Professor, University of Washington

For my Scholars award, “Neighborhood Social Capital and Oral Health for Publicly-Insured Adolescents,” I had two main interests: 1) to understand the causes of oral health inequalities and 2) to use this understanding of causes to develop programs aimed at solving oral health inequalities. As a practicing pediatric dentist, I treat patients at a community dental clinic affiliated with Seattle Children’s Hospital.

My work has focused primarily on socioeconomically vulnerable children and adolescents, many of whom are at increased risk for dental diseases including tooth decay, the most common disease in U.S. children. We have known for a long time about the causes of tooth decay, namely high sugar intake and inadequate fluoride exposure. When left untreated, it can lead to toothaches, which can lead to missed school days and difficulty concentrating and learning in the classroom. Not surprisingly, poor oral health leads to adverse behavioral, educational, psychosocial, and systemic health outcomes.

Tooth decay is a largely hidden public health problem because it mostly affects lower-income individuals. Low-income children generally consume more sugar and have less exposure to fluoride than higher-income children. However, the primary focus of interventions in dentistry has been to find

ways to increase access to dental care, which is important but not enough to prevent tooth decay in high-risk children. As I began treating patients in clinic, I saw how factors

related to poverty can constrain one’s ability to engage in habits like healthy eating and toothbrushing, even among low-income children who visit a dentist regularly. This got me thinking about ways we might intervene outside the dental office setting.

More researchers in dentistry have become interested in behavioral interventions to improve oral health inequalities in children. However, many of the behavioral interventions overlook social context or use randomization to control for social context as a nuisance variable.

My Scholars project involved recruiting 335 low-income adolescents across 72 neighborhoods in three counties in Oregon. I used Medicaid files to identify and recruit adolescents and caregivers. During the study visit, I administered surveys, took a hair sample to measure cortisol (a biological marker of stress), and conducted dental screenings. We also administered neighborhood-level surveys. It took our team nearly two years to collect the data



and another year to process and clean the data. We are interested in assessing if neighborhood social capital is linked to stress, home health behaviors, and dental disease.

The Scholars Program gave me the opportunity to stretch beyond the comfort areas of dentistry and public health and to develop new expertise in medical sociology and neighborhoods. I worked with two sociologist mentors, Drs. David Takeuchi and Kyle Crowder, to develop a research plan that would help me better understand how neighborhood social capital influences adolescent oral health outcomes. This knowledge is important in understanding how to design neighborhood-based interventions to help address health inequalities. Another part of the study involved working with my policy mentor, Dr. Mitch Greenlick, a health services researcher and member of the Oregon House of Representatives, to disseminate our findings to state-level policymakers.

The Scholars Program has been my most intellectually rewarding professional experience to date. The program opened doors I didn't know existed and embedded me into a rich network of scientists who aim to improve the world through research. The program helped me to reorient the way I approach public health problems and how I use my privilege as a university professor.

As part of the Scholars program, you are given access to many resources: annual retreats that focus on explicating challenges and developing solutions in a safe environment; mid-year workshops focusing on methods and disseminating research findings; opportunities to help develop your skills mentoring junior scholars of color; and networking opportunities

with other early stage investigators and senior mentors. Through these activities, I have made lifelong friends. The Scholars program also afforded me the opportunity to spend a sabbatical at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences (CASBS) at Stanford.

My goal is to continue developing scalable interventions to address children's oral health inequalities. Down the road, I am hoping to direct a research center focused on addressing oral health disparities using ideas adapted from the social and behavioral sciences.

Kristin Turney, Scholars Class of 2021

Professor, University of California, Irvine

My Scholars project, "The Unequal Intergenerational Consequences of Paternal Incarceration: Considering Sensitive Periods, Resiliency, and Mechanisms," investigates the intergenerational consequences of paternal incarceration during childhood and adolescence. Specifically, I have been documenting how and why paternal incarceration has negative consequences for children's wellbeing; how these processes vary across groups; and how these processes change over time. Because paternal incarceration disproportionately affects minority and economically disadvantaged children, any deleterious consequences of paternal incarceration may increase racial, ethnic and socioeconomic inequalities. This project further investigates the role of parental incarceration in shaping inequality from childhood to adolescence

by specifying the racial and/or ethnic and socioeconomic groups of children for which parental incarceration is most detrimental. Finally, this project provides one of the first understandings of leverage points for policies and practices to reduce inequality between children with and without incarcerated fathers.

I initially became interested in how the justice system affects children and families soon after graduate school. As a trained family demographer, I was studying inequality between and within children and families. I didn't think it was possible to fully understand family inequality in the U.S. without considering the justice system because of its disproportionate impact on the lives of so many vulnerable individuals and families. At the time, I began using survey data (Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study) to investigate the consequences of men's incarceration for their children and the mothers of the children. Broadly speaking, I found wide-ranging



negative consequences of paternal incarceration for children and families. While the survey data that I was using was extremely useful for understanding broad patterns, it was not designed to study the specific processes underlying the experience of paternal incarceration. I realized that it was imperative to collect qualitative interview data designed specifically to illuminate these processes. In light of this, my current study draws on both primary (longitudinal in-depth interviews with 123 incarcerated fathers and their family members, including children) and secondary data.

One of the most challenging and rewarding components of the Scholars award has been my “stretch goal.” As a scholar who had been steeped in the deductive reasoning of quantitative methods, the conceptual transition to qualitative data collection and analysis—requiring that I train my brain to think beyond relationships between independent and dependent variables—has been challenging. But the Scholars Program has given me the opportunity to embrace this new methodological approach. For the past three years, my team and I have interviewed fathers in jail in Southern California and their family members. We have also conducted a second interview with everyone after the father was released from jail (or, if the father was sentenced to prison, shortly after he was sent to prison). Now that the interviews are complete, we are in the middle of analyzing the data.

My mentors have been so helpful throughout the development of this project. Sandy Danziger has provided guidance on all aspects of the project, including how to develop an effective interview guide; when and how to end data collection;

how to draw emerging themes from the qualitative data, such as how to generate broadly applicable and inductively-driven theoretical insights; and how to support graduate student interviewers who experience emotional difficulties conducting interviews with a vulnerable population. Likewise, Julie Poehlmann-Tynan has provided advice on developmental psychology, as having a solid understanding of child development is critical to successfully pulling off this project. She has provided guidance on the psychological literature on the topic, when and how to refer study respondents for social services, and how code the interviews with children.

Beyond my stretch and the mentoring that has helped me develop new skills, the annual Scholars retreat and other Foundation meetings have put me in conversation with top-notch qualitative scholars that have notably expanded my theoretical and analytical toolkit. I also received a mentoring grant to mentor a junior scholar of color, and attending the Foundation’s annual mentoring meetings has been so useful for developing my capacity as a mentor, specifically as it concerns mentoring across difference. These meetings have given me the opportunity to strengthen my relationship with my graduate student mentee and have also provided me the time, emotional space, and resources to reflect more squarely on my mentoring style for all of my graduate students.

My long-term goals include using what I’ve learned from the qualitative interviews conducted as part of my Scholars project to develop a comprehensive, representative, and longitudinal survey of families exposed to criminal justice contact.

Awards

Award recipients are designated as William T. Grant Scholars. Each year, four to six Scholars are selected, and each receives up to \$350,000, distributed over five years.

Awards begin July 1 and are made to the applicant's institution. The award must not replace the institution's current support of the applicant's research.

Capacity Building

The Foundation holds an annual retreat during the summer to support Scholars' career development. Designed to foster a supportive environment in which Scholars can improve their skills and work, the retreat allows Scholars to discuss works-in-progress and receive constructive feedback on the challenges they face in conducting their projects. The retreat consists of workshops centered on Scholars' projects, research design and methods issues, and professional development. The meeting is attended by Scholars, Scholars Selection Committee members, and Foundation staff and Board members. Scholars are also invited to attend other Foundation-sponsored workshops on topics relevant to their work, such as mixed methods, reducing inequality, and the use of research evidence in policy and practice.

In years one through three of their awards, Scholars may apply for an additional award to mentor junior researchers of color. The announcement and criteria for funding are distributed annually to eligible Scholars. Our goals for the mentoring grant program are two-fold. First, we seek to strengthen the mentoring received by Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and Asian and Asian Pacific Islander American junior researchers and to position them for professional success. Second, we want to support William T. Grant Scholars and principal investigators in developing a stronger understanding of the career development issues facing their junior colleagues of color and to strengthen their mentoring relationships with them. In the longer term, we hope this grant program will increase the number of strong, well-networked researchers of color doing research on the Foundation's interests and help foster more diverse, equitable, and inclusive academic environments.

What are the Foundation's top recommendations for applicants?

For all applicants, we recommend focusing on doing a few things well rather than trying to cover the waterfront. For example, pursue a few key research questions or hypotheses thoroughly and rigorously, rather than proposing an extensive list.

For applicants proposing research on improving the use of research evidence, we recommend that you:

1. Prioritize the research activities. We need to study efforts to leverage research evidence to improve youth outcomes. Specify research questions about what it takes to get research used or what happens when research is used. Questions might concern the effectiveness of a strategy to improve the use of research evidence, the identification and testing of hypothesized mechanisms to improve research use, or an exploration of the conditions under which research use leads to improved decision making and youth outcomes.
2. Include a strong conceptualization and operational definition of research use. Make clear how the conceptualization relates to prior work and is situated within a larger theoretical framework. This also provides a roadmap for thinking about how to assess research use.
3. Make a compelling case that the study is focused on issues for which high-quality research is available for use in decision making that affects youth. Include a description of the body of available research, its relevance to the policy or practice issue under study, and the rationale for promoting its use by particular research users and in certain decision making contexts.

For applicants proposing research on reducing inequality, we recommend that you:

1. Clearly describe the theory or conceptual frame guiding the study to help reviewers understand why you are approaching the project in a particular way and how your study will inform extant literature. Relatedly, describe how findings from the project may challenge or change key assumptions about reducing inequality.
2. Propose research methods that are tightly aligned with the project's research questions or hypotheses. Offer a convincing rationale for why your methods are well-suited to answering the research questions.
3. Make a strong case for how the study will help build, test, or increase understanding of a program, policy, or practice for reducing inequality in youth outcomes, and how it will advance work on those issues. In intervention studies, the potential of the research to build, test, or increase understanding usually goes beyond the specific program, policy, or practice being studied.



Top: Awilda Rodriguez,
Class of 2022; Bottom:
Phillip Goff, Class of 2015

Eligibility

Eligible Organizations

Grants are made to organizations, not individuals. Grants are limited, without exception, to tax-exempt organizations. A copy of the Internal Revenue Service tax-exempt status determination letter is required from each applying organization.

Eligible Applicants

Applicants must be nominated by their institutions. Major divisions (e.g., College of Arts and Sciences, Medical School) of an institution may nominate only one applicant each year. In addition to the eligibility criteria below, deans and directors of those divisions should refer to the Selection Criteria to aid them in choosing their nominees. Applicants of any discipline are eligible.

Applicants must have received their terminal degree within seven years of submitting their application. We calculate this by adding seven years to the date the doctoral degree was conferred. In medicine, the seven-year maximum is dated from the completion of the first residency.

Applicants must be employed in career-ladder positions. For many applicants, this means holding a tenure-track position in a university. Applicants in other types of organizations should be in positions in which there is a pathway to advancement in a research career at the organization and the organization is fiscally responsible for the applicant's position. The award may not be used as a post-doctoral fellowship.

Applicants outside the United States are eligible. As with U.S. applicants, they must pursue research that has compelling policy or practice implications for youth in the United States.

Application Materials

The William T. Grant Foundation accepts applications only through our online application system, which is accessible through our website at wtgrantfoundation.org. For specific deadlines and submission instructions, please visit our website.

Applications to the William T. Grant Scholars Program are accepted once per year and must include the following:

Mentor and Reference Letters

We recommend beginning the online application early in order to give mentors and references ample time to complete their sections. Mentor and reference letters are due on June 16, 2021. You may work on other sections of the application while waiting for your mentors and references to submit their letters, but you will not be able to submit your application until all letters are received.

— Mentor Letters

Each proposed mentor should submit a letter. Mentor letters are not recommendations, and applicants should discourage cursory letters of support. Please refer to the Selection Criteria for more information. The letter should include:

- a brief assessment of the applicant's research plan, and a summation of the applicant's potential, his or her strengths, and areas for growth;
- a discussion of current relationship with the applicant, and how the award will add significant value beyond what would normally occur in the relationship;
- an explanation of the expertise the mentor will help the applicant acquire and the mentoring activities that will be undertaken. Provide a persuasive rationale that the types of activities and time commitments are appropriate for developing the proposed expertise. Activities generally include direct interactions with applicants but can also include indirect support such as facilitating access to new professional networks, readings, or training opportunities. Describe how the mentor and applicant will interact (e.g., in-person, email, phone), the frequency of that interaction, and how potential barriers such as distance and busy schedules will be addressed; and

- confirmation of willingness to complete annual reports for the award (mentors receive an honorarium of \$500 upon receipt of reports).

— Reference Letters

Three letters of recommendation should be submitted from colleagues, supervisors, or the department/division chairperson who nominates the applicant. Proposed mentors may not submit these.

Budget

Provide budget information for five years using the form included in the online application. The total budget can be up to \$350,000. It can include an indirect cost allowance of up to 7.5 percent of total direct costs.

Requests to fund recipient's salary must not exceed 50 percent of the total salary received from the sponsoring institution. The portion of the grant used for salary must be equivalent to the time made available for research by this award. The remainder of funds may be used to support research-related work. (The Foundation pays expenses related to the Scholars' participation in Foundation-sponsored meetings.)

All uploaded documents should be formatted as follows: 12-point Times New Roman font, single-spaced text with a line space between each paragraph, numbered pages, and 1-inch margins on all sides.

Please adhere to the page limits specified below. Files can only be uploaded one at a time. They may be uploaded in any order; the final application PDF will sort the uploads as they are listed below.

Budget Justification Form

Complete and upload the Foundation's budget justification form, which can be found within the Uploads tab of your online application.

Abridged Curriculum Vitae

Use the Foundation's form on the website.

Full Curriculum Vitae

Abstract (6 pages maximum)

Use the Foundation's form on the website. Do not edit or delete instructions from the form. Abstracts are a critical part of the application, and Foundation staff use them to screen applications. In addition, Selection Committee members will review the abstracts of all finalists but will not read all the full applications. We advise applicants to include sufficient details about the research sample, methods, and designs for all reviewers to be assured of the quality of the proposed research.

Full Research and Mentoring Plan (40 pages maximum)

— The five-year research plan (20 pages maximum) should include one or more research projects and provide convincing evidence that the projects meet the Selection Criteria. The project descriptions should include:

- the unique contribution of the research,
- its significance in terms of policy and/or practice,
- a brief literature review,
- research design and methodology,
- data sources and collection procedures,
- data analysis plans, and
- plans for protection of human subjects.

— The mentoring plan (4 pages maximum) must be developed in conjunction with the proposed mentors and must meet all Selection Criteria. Applicants should describe a systematic plan with detailed descriptions of the following:

- applicant's current areas of expertise, and the new areas of expertise that will be developed during the award;
- the mentoring activities designed to develop the new areas of expertise;
- the rationale for the proposed mentors, the applicant's current relationship with each, and how the award will add significant value to the proposed relationship;
- how the applicant and mentors will interact (e.g., in-person, email, phone), how often, around what substantive issues, and how barriers such as distance and busy schedules will be handled.

— Plans should also include:

- Bibliography (8 pages maximum)
- Appendices (8 pages maximum)

(Examples of successful mentoring plans can be found on the [Foundation's website](#).)

The Foundation is committed to helping Scholars navigate their way through successful mentoring relationships. The following resources can be found on our website and are provided to aid applicants in creating strong mentoring plans: [Maximizing Mentoring: A Guide for Building Strong Relationships](#), [Pay it Forward: Guidance for Mentoring Junior Scholars](#), and [Moving it Forward: The Power of Mentoring, and How Universities Can Confront Institutional Barriers Facing Junior Researchers of Color](#). The latter two resources focus on personal and institutional strategies to help Scholars become stronger mentors but may also provide insights on being mentored.

Publications 1 and 2 (20 pages maximum, each)

Submitted publications should be journal articles, chapters, or research reports that exemplify the applicant's research. Ideally, the publications are relevant to the proposed research. The documents can be published or in press.

Nominating Statement

This statement from the chairperson of the nominating division should describe why the applicant was selected; an assessment of the applicant's plan; the applicant's current and expected future roles in the division; the supporting resources available; the applicant's current source and amount of salary; and the appointment, promotion, and institutional support plans for the applicant, including a guarantee that 50 percent of the applicant's paid time will be devoted to research. (Successful examples of nominating statements can be found on the Foundation's website.)

Endorsement of Project

This document should come from the appropriate institutional office and personnel (e.g., Office of Sponsored Research, chief administrative officer), contain general information about the applicant, and confirm that the institution is aware the applicant is submitting the proposal.

Letter of Independence of Multiple Applicants (if applicable)

If an institution nominates more than one applicant, a central administrative officer must submit confirmation that the applicants represent distinct schools or major divisions (e.g., College of Arts and Sciences, Medical School, major division of a nonprofit) of the institution.

Resubmission Statement (if applicable)

Applicants who have applied previously should describe their response to reviewer comments on the prior application and the major ways this application differs from the prior one.



Top: Eve Tuck, Class of 2020; Bottom: Patrick Sharkey, Class of 2015

Selection Criteria

Selection is based on applicants' potential to become influential researchers, as well as their plans to expand their expertise in new and significant ways. The application should make a cohesive argument for how the applicant will expand his or her expertise. The research plan should evolve in conjunction with the development of new expertise, and the mentoring plan should describe how the proposed mentors will support applicants in acquiring that expertise.

Applicant

- Applicant demonstrates potential to become an influential researcher. An ability to conduct and communicate creative, sophisticated research is proven through prior training and publications. Competitive applicants have a promising track record of first authored, high-quality empirical publications in peer-reviewed outlets. The quality of publications is more important than the quantity.
- Applicant will significantly expand their expertise through this award. The applicant should identify area(s) in which the award will appreciably expand their expertise, and specific details should be provided in the research and mentoring plans. Expansion of expertise can involve a different discipline, method, and/or content area than the applicants' prior research and training.

Research Plan

- Research area is a strong fit with one of the Foundation's current focus areas. Proposed research on reducing inequality should aim to build, test, or increase understanding of a program, policy, or practice to reduce inequality in the academic, social, behavioral, or economic outcomes of young people ages 5–25 in the United States. Proposed research on improving the use of research evidence should inform strategies to improve the use of research evidence in ways that benefit young people ages 5–25 in the United States.
- Proposals reflect a mastery of relevant theory and empirical findings, and clearly state the theoretical and empirical contributions they will make to the existing research base. Projects may focus on either generating or testing theory, depending on the state of knowledge about a topic.

- Although we do not expect that any one project will or should impact policy or practice, the findings should have relevance for policy or practice.
- Research plan reflects high standards of evidence and rigorous methods, commensurate with the proposal's goals. The latter years or projects of the research plan may, by necessity, be described in less detail than those of the first few, but successful applicants provide enough specificity for reviewers to be assured of the rigor and feasibility of the plan.
 - Research designs, methods, and analysis plans clearly fit the research questions under study.
 - Discussions of case selection, sampling, and measurement include a compelling rationale that they are well-suited to address the research questions or hypotheses. For example, samples are appropriate in size and composition to answer the study's questions. Qualitative case selection—whether critical, comparative, or otherwise—are appropriate to answer the proposed questions.
 - The quantitative and/or qualitative analysis plan demonstrate awareness of the strengths and limits of the specific analytic techniques and how they will be applied in the current project.
 - If proposing mixed methods, plans for integrating the methods and data are clear and compelling.
 - Where relevant, there is attention to generalizability of findings and to statistical power to detect meaningful effects.
- Research plan demonstrates adequate consideration of the gender, ethnic, and cultural appropriateness of concepts, methods, and measures.
- Research plan is feasible. The work can be successfully completed given the resources and time frame. Some research plans require additional funding, and in those cases, applicants have viable plans for acquiring that support.
- Research plan is cohesive and multiple studies (if proposed) are well-integrated.
- Research plan will significantly extend the applicant's expertise in new and significant ways. Applicant provides specific details about how the research activities will stretch his or her expertise.

Stretching into Qualitative Research Methods

Many applicants to the Scholars program are researchers trained in quantitative methods who identify learning qualitative methods as at least one area into which they will stretch their expertise. This is a laudable and valuable stretch that enriches the proposed research and develops new skills that can be carried into future projects. What is often missing from these proposals, however, is a robust set of activities to support such a stretch. Rather than a single activity, such as a monthly meeting with a mentor expert in qualitative methods, successful applicants detail a combination of activities, such as taking courses; enrolling in summer workshops; getting continuous feedback as they develop data collection tools, practice qualitative data collection techniques, and analyze qualitative data; and consulting with an advisory committee, in addition to frequent and regular meetings with a mentor expert in qualitative methods. New methodological and analytical skills take time and effort to develop, and reviewers expect to see research plans that reflect this.

Mentoring Plan

- Applicant proposes one to two mentors for the first two years of the award. Two is typical and recommended. (The mentoring plan for the latter years will be developed in consultation with Foundation staff after the second year of the program.)
- The mentoring plan and mentor letters demonstrate that all parties have identified and agreed on specific goals that expand the applicant's expertise in the ways outlined in the research plan.
- Each mentor has appropriate credentials, expertise, and resources to aid the applicant's acquisition of the new expertise; has a strong track record of mentorship; and demonstrates a commitment to mentoring the applicant.
- The mentoring plan and mentor letters convincingly detail how the mentor will aid the applicant in acquiring the new expertise. A compelling rationale and specific details about the mentoring activities are provided. This includes information about how the mentor and applicant will interact, how frequently, and around what substantive issues. Reviewers must be persuaded that the mentoring activities are sufficiently robust to result in the new expertise that has been identified, and that the mentor is making a sufficient time commitment.

Careful consideration should be devoted to the types of activities and time that is required to learn different types of skills (e.g., new methods versus disciplinary perspectives). Examples of activities include advising on new disciplinary norms, data collection plans, analytic techniques, and publication; providing feedback on manuscripts; arranging training opportunities; facilitating access to new professional networks; recommending readings; and more general career advising.

- Award will add significant value to each mentoring relationship beyond what would normally occur. Applicants should propose relationships and activities that are unlikely to occur without the award. Deepening a relationship with a casual colleague, or developing a new relationship, adds greater value to an applicants' mentoring network than proposing a former advisor or committee chair.

Institutional Support

- The supporting institution nominates the applicant. Each year, only one applicant may be nominated from a major division (e.g., College of Arts and Sciences, Medical School) of an institution.
- The institution is committed to providing the researcher with sufficient resources to carry out the five-year research plan. This includes computer equipment, colleagues, administrative staff, research facilities, and the balance of his or her salary, absent denial of tenure or dramatic reduction in institutional funding. At least half of the Scholar's paid time must be spent conducting research.

What does “at least half of the Scholar’s paid time must be spent on research” mean?

This means that the institution demonstrates a willingness to allow the Scholar to engage in their own program of research at least 50 percent of the time for each year of the award. This does not require them to spend 50 percent of the time on the Scholar project, but on their research, broadly speaking. Often this takes the form of teaching buyouts because this is a very concrete way to calculate time and for the institution to indicate their support of and investment in the Scholar. At other times Scholars are granted course releases or reduced service loads. However, some career ladder positions don’t involve a lot of teaching, so in those cases, the institution might indicate that the Scholar will engage in their program of research at least 50 percent of the time by having a reduced administrative burden.

Does at least half of the Scholar’s 9-month salary have to be covered by the grant?

At least half time for research is not an indicator that 50 percent of the Scholar’s 9-month salary has to be covered by the grant. We see a wide variety of salary portions allocated to the grant (e.g., 0%, 25%, 40%). Applicants also use these funds to pay for summer salary, research assistants, lab equipment, travel, fieldwork, and other research-related expenses.

Application Review Process

Review occurs in the following stages: Staff screen abstracts, brief CVs, and, if warranted, full applications to determine whether they fit our research focus areas and potentially meet other Selection Criteria. Next, the Scholars Selection Committee reviews the remaining applications. Each application receives detailed reviews by two Committee members. The Committee then chooses approximately 10 finalists, who will be invited to New York City for an interview in February 2022. Prior to the interview, finalists' proposals are reviewed by two external reviewers.

During the interview, finalists have the opportunity to respond to Committee members' and external experts' reviews. Following the interviews, the Selection Committee chooses three to six William T. Grant Scholars. Applicants will be notified of the Committee's decision by the end of March 2022.

Scholars Selection Committee



Lawrence Palinkas, Ph.D.

Selection Committee Chair

Albert G. and Frances Lomas

Feldman Professor of Social Policy and Health

School of Social Work

University of Southern California



Dolores Acevedo-Garcia, Ph.D.

Samuel F. and Rose B. Gingold Professor of Human Development and Social Policy

Director of the Institute for Child, Youth, and Family Policy

Heller School for Social Policy and Management

Brandeis University



Margaret R. Burchinal, Ph.D.

Senior Scientist and Director, Data Management and Analysis Center

FPG Child Development Institute

University of North Carolina



Cynthia Coburn, Ph.D.

Professor of Human Development and Social Policy

Professor of Learning Sciences

School of Education and Social Policy

Northwestern University



David Figlio, Ph.D.

Orrington Lunt Professor of Education and Social Policy and of Economics

Dean of the School of Education and Social Policy

Northwestern University



Adam Gamoran, Ph.D.

President, William T. Grant Foundation



Sandra Graham, Ph.D.

Professor and Presidential Chair in Diversity
Department of Education
University of California, Los Angeles



Nikki Jones, Ph.D.

Professor
Department of African American Studies
University of California, Berkeley



Nonie K. Lesaux, Ph.D.

Academic Dean
Juliana W. and William Foss Thompson Professor of Education and Society
Graduate School of Education
Harvard University



Roberto Lewis-Fernández, M.D.

Professor of Clinical Psychiatry
Columbia College of Physicians and Surgeons
Director of the New York State (NYS) Center of Excellence for Cultural Competence and the Hispanic Treatment Program, and Co Director of the Anxiety Disorders Clinic New York State Psychiatric Institute



Stephen Russell, Ph.D.

Priscilla Pond Flawn Regents Professor in Child Development
Department Chair, Human Development and Family Sciences in the College of Natural Sciences
The University of Texas at Austin



David Takeuchi, Ph.D.

Professor and Associate Dean
Office for Faculty Excellence
University of Washington School of Social Work



Bruce Western, Ph.D.

Professor of Sociology
Department of Sociology
Co-Director, Justice Lab
Columbia University



Scholars Class of 2021

Matthew Desmond, Ph.D.

Understanding the American Child Welfare System

Mesmin Destin, Ph.D.

Healthy Pathways Toward Academic Achievement and Social Mobility for Low-SES Youth

Laura T. Hamilton, Ph.D.

How Does Institutional Context Matter? Shaping Success for Disadvantaged College Students

Jacob Hibel, Ph.D.

Supporting Young Students' Special Needs in New Immigrant Destinations

Kristin Turney, Ph.D.

The Unequal Intergenerational Consequences of Paternal Incarceration: Considering Sensitive Periods, Resiliency, and Mechanisms

Clockwise from top left: Laura T. Hamilton, Mesmin Destin, Matthew Desmond, Kristin Turney, Jacob Hibel



Scholars Class of 2022

Seth M. Holmes, Ph.D., M.D.

Unequally “Hispanic”: Intersectional Inequalities and Resiliency Among Indigenous “Hispanic” Youth

Julie Maslowsky, Ph.D.

Preventing Unintended Repeat Births to Hispanic Adolescents

Awilda Rodriguez, Ph.D.

Can an Informational Intervention Increase Black, Latino, and Low-income Student Participation in Advanced Placement Courses?

Clockwise from top left: Julie Maslowsky, Awilda Rodriguez, Seth M. Holmes



Scholars Class of 2023

Anjali Adukia, Ed.D.

Do School Disciplinary Structures Ameliorate or Exacerbate Inequality?

Rachel H. Farr, Ph.D.

Reducing Harm of Discrimination among Diverse Adolescents with LGBTQ Parents: How do Family, Peers, and Community Matter

Mark Hatzenbuehler, Ph.D.

Evaluating Structural Strategies for Reducing Homophobic Bullying

Simone Ispa-Landa, Ph.D.

Creating More Equitable and Developmentally Attuned Disciplinary Environments for Adolescent Students

Daniel Schneider, Ph.D.

Unstable and Unpredictable Work Schedules and Child Development: Descriptive and Quasi-Experimental Evidence

Pamela Wisniewski, Ph.D.

Reducing Digital Inequality by Empowering At-Risk Youth to be Resilient against Online Sexual Predation Risks

Clockwise from top left: Anjali Adukia, Mark Hatzenbuehler, Rachell H. Farr, Simone Ispa-Landa, Daniel Schneider, Pamela Wisniewski



Scholars Class of 2024

Carolyn Barnes, Ph.D.

How Politics, Poverty, and Social Policy Implementation Shape Racial Inequality in Child Development in the Rural South

Anna Haskins, Ph.D.

School Engagement and Avoidance among System-Involved Parents with Young Children

Ann Owens, Ph.D.

Place-Based Opportunity: Housing Models to Reduce Inequality in Children's Contexts

Adela Soliz, Ph.D.

How Does Working while Enrolled Affect the Academic and Labor-Market Outcomes of Low-Income College Students?

Clockwise from top left: Anna Haskins, Ann Owens, Adela Soliz, Carolyn Barnes



Scholars Class of 2025

Manasi Deshpande, Ph.D.

Reducing Inequality through Improved Outcomes for Children Receiving SSI Benefits

Terrance Green, Ph.D.

Are Racial Equity Policies an Effective Lever to Reduce Educational Inequality for Black Students?

Sarah Lipson, Ph.D.

Structural Stigma and Suicide Risk in Gender & Racial Minority Students: A Novel Study to Understand & Reduce Inequality

Jayanti Owens, Ph.D.

What Drives Racial/Ethnic Disparities in School Discipline? Understanding Mechanisms to Inform Policy Solutions

Valerie Shapiro, Ph.D.

Measuring Educator's Use of Research Evidence from Intermediary Websites Seeking to Support Social Emotional Learning

Clockwise from top left: Sarah Lipson, Jayanti Owens, Manasi Deshpande, Valerie Shapiro, Terrance Green



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