Russell J. and Dorothy S. Bilinski Dissertation Fellowships
Administrative Guidelines

This document details practices developed in the College of Arts & Sciences at the University of South Carolina for administering the Russell J. and Dorothy S. Bilinski Dissertation Fellowships in the Humanities and Social Sciences.

Funds from the Bilinski Educational Foundation are used to provide financial support for top Ph.D. students in the Humanities and Social Sciences as they complete and defend their dissertations. Support will be provided for a maximum of one year (from July 1st – June 30th). Students must already have passed all their comprehensive exams and have successfully defended a dissertation prospectus to be eligible for nomination by their programs. In no case will funds be awarded if a student’s dissertation already has been substantially completed. Fellowship funding may be used by the student for payment, partially or totally, of tuition, fees, books, field research, materials, other educational expenses, and for necessary living expenses. Continued receipt of funding is dependent upon continuing to meet all fellowship criteria.

Timeline for the application, evaluation, and selection process:
Information about the Russell J. and Dorothy S. Bilinski Dissertation Fellowships is circulated via the College of Arts & Sciences website and through direct contact with chairs and graduate directors of Humanities and Social Science departments.

The initial call for nominations is sent out by the dean's office in mid-November to chairs and directors of eligible units in the College of Arts & Sciences. The intention is to give graduate directors, eligible doctoral students, and their advisors adequate lead time to prepare their application packages. Nominations of eligible candidates are due to the College by first Friday in April of the following year. (See Appendix A for the timeline of the entire process).

**Eligibility Criteria**

Students are invited to submit applications based on the following eligibility criteria, also posted on the USC College of Arts & Sciences webpage:

http://artsandsciences.sc.edu/russell-j-and-dorothy-s-bilinski-dissertation-fellowship-program

To be eligible to receive Fellowship funds, to be awarded a Bilinski Fellowship, and to remain a Bilinski Fellow, each doctoral student must meet and agree to ALL of the following criteria:

1. Be a full-time doctoral student at the University of South Carolina in one of the relevant graduate programs who has advanced to candidacy, passed all comprehensive exams, and successfully defended a dissertation proposal;
2. Maintain good academic standing at all times;
3. Have demonstrated exceptional ability and potential in his or her field of study;
4. Be a student who needs financial support to complete his or her degree;
5. Commit to devoting full-time effort toward dissertation completion for each semester (including summer period) in which Fellowship funds are provided;
6. Abide by the University of South Carolina Academic Code of Conduct

**Note:** Fellowship Funds will not be awarded to a candidate whose dissertation has already been substantially completed.

**Additional Eligibility Criteria**

To be awarded a Fellowship and to remain a Bilinski Fellow, a recipient must—in addition to the eligibility criteria set forth above—be a United States citizen or a Permanent Resident eligible to apply for US citizenship.¹

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¹ A Permanent Resident is an alien (immigrant) person who has been granted such status through an immigration process (now handled under Homeland Security), and has been issued a United States Permanent Residency Card. This card (informally called Green Card) must be carried at all times. Permanent residents may live and work in the United States, permanently, and males 18-25 must register for selective service system. They cannot vote, hold state or federal public elected offices, or hold federal government jobs. They may apply for citizenship after 5 years of residency (or 3 years if married to a US citizen) and be granted citizenship upon meeting all requirements.
Fellowship Application Materials

To be considered for a Bilinski Fellowship, nomination packets from departments of their selected nominees must be submitted to the Office of the Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences by the deadline of 5:00pm on the first Friday in April. Incomplete applications will not be reviewed. All specified forms can be downloaded from the following website: http://artsandsciences.sc.edu/bilinski-fellowship-application. Each nomination packet should include the following components:

1. The Fellowship Application Cover Sheet (available online) signed by the applicant and the applicant’s Director of Graduate Studies (DGS). By signing this form, the DGS certifies that the applicant has advanced to candidacy, passed all comprehensive exams, and successfully defended a dissertation proposal prior to the application deadline.
2. The Financial Disclosure Form (available online);
3. A statement (maximum one-page) of the student’s professional goals;
4. A proposal describing the dissertation that includes the following, double-spaced sections: a proposal narrative (2-3 pages) and a timetable for completion (maximum 1 page);
5. A curriculum vitae containing information about applicant’s previous education, teaching and research experience, professional publications, and awards or honors;
6. A letter of recommendation from the student’s dissertation director addressing the significance of the dissertation topic and the applicant's ability to complete the dissertation in the time period covered by the fellowship;
7. The signed Fellow's Agreement Form on Use of Bilinski Fellowship Funds (available online);
8. In addition, all nominees selected by departments to move forward to the Office of the Dean must complete an online FAFSA application, filed no later than March 14 at www.fafsa.ed.gov.

Two-Stage Evaluation Process

Stage 1: Internal Unit Evaluations

Chairs and graduate directors will solicit nominations from eligible candidates in their units. Each unit must establish an internal deadline for nominations to be submitted to the graduate director. It is recommended that this deadline be set early enough in the cycle to allow for the completion of the internal evaluation and selection process by the first week of March.

Nomination packets submitted to graduate directors will include components 1-7 from the list of required fellowship application materials (see above). In other words, nominees do not at this initial stage need to complete a FAFSA.

All of the completed nominations received by the internal deadline must be evaluated on the basis of merit by either the unit’s Graduate Committee or an ad hoc fellowship committee that is formed for the purposes of evaluating and ranking departmental nominees.
Internal evaluations of merit should take into consideration the factors that are considered by the College selection committee (a sample of the College's Merit Assessment Tool is given in Appendix B, Item 1).

Once a decision has been made on which candidates to recommend to the Dean's office, those candidates should be notified by the departmental DGS of the result and asked to complete an online FAFSA by the required date of March 14.

The nomination packets of the selected candidates (limited to 8 per unit) should be sent forward to the Dean's office by the first Friday in April deadline. All packets must be submitted electronically, and six (6) hard copies of each packet must be delivered to the Dean's office by the April deadline. Thanks to the continued generosity of the Bilinski Foundation, this year we will be able to fund a total of twelve (12) Bilinski Fellowships.

Whenever multiple nominations are being sent forward to the Dean's office, the complete set of individual nomination packets should be accompanied by a separate cover memo, signed by the chair, that lists the names of the nominees, ranks them according to merit, and offers a narrative justification of that ranking.

Stage 2: College-Level Evaluations

The Bilinski selection committee is composed of members of the Dean's senior staff, which includes assistant and associate deans from the College who come from diverse disciplinary backgrounds, representing disciplines across the range of the Arts & Sciences.

The selection committee meet around the second week of April, roughly three weeks after the FAFSA filing deadline. By this date, the results of the online FAFSAs filed by departmental nominees will have been received by the USC Office of Scholarships and Financial Aid, and these results will have been made available to the Dean's office.

Prior to the decision meeting, the applications will be divided up among committee members for detailed assessments. Whenever possible, applications will be assigned to a Dean in a field close to the candidate's own. The Deans will make their assessments based on merit, using a standardized assessment tool. (A sample of the Merit Assessment Tool is given in Appendix B, Item 1)

The actual decision meeting proceeds according to the following process:

1. (Approx. 5 min. per candidate). Presentations of each candidate by the deans assigned to the file. Candidates will be discussed in alphabetical order, by department and then by last name. The following information will be covered during these presentations:
   a. list name, program, how many years in Ph.D. program, proposed dissertation defense date;
   b. briefly restate main idea of dissertation;
   c. give gist of cv, highlighting regional/national level of presentations, publications, awards;
d. describe case made by the letters of recommendation as to the significance and potential impact of the project;

e. justify merit scores given by the two leads

2. After all presentations have been made, each selection committee member ranks all candidates according to merit, with "1" being the highest score. The chair of the selection committee tallies results of this ranking during a brief break and then present results to the group, with tallies visible on white board or projection screen.

3. Financial need of candidates is discussed, beginning with the candidate who has highest financial need, down the composite list. (This information is compiled prior to the decision meeting by the chair of the selection committee, based on the FAFSA results and information from candidates' Financial Disclosure forms, using the Financial Need Assessment Tool – See Appendix B, Item 2).

4. Decision on the final recipients of Bilinski Award.
Appendix A

TIMELINE
Russell J. and Dorothy S. Bilinski Fellowships

November
♦ Dean’s office issues call for nominations.

December
♦ Units establish process for Stage 1 of the evaluation process.

January
♦ Units solicit nominees internally.

February
♦ Units work with nominees, dissertation directors, and directors of graduate studies to assemble nomination packets.

♦ Units evaluate nominations according to established process.

March 3
♦ Unit nomination process should be completed. Units select no more than 8 nominations to forward to the College level.

♦ Units notify nominees whose packets will move forward to the College level and instruct them to complete the FAFSA.

March 14
♦ Students whose nominations will be forwarded to the College level complete the FAFSA.

March-early April
♦ In the case of multiple nominations, department chair or, where relevant, program director writes separate letter both ranking and explaining the unit’s ranking of the nominees.

♦ Units ensure that nomination packets are complete.

April 7
♦ Units submit nomination packets to the College office. Six (6) paper copies of each nomination packet should be delivered to Petigru 3rd floor reception desk and electronic copies (pdf, labeled with degree program, student’s last name, student’s first name) should be e-mailed to shinnc@mailbox.sc.edu (attn Associate Dean for Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences).

♦ In cases of multiple nominations, units submit letter ranking and explaining ranking of nominations.

May 5
♦ College notifies nominees and units of results.

Appendix B
- Item 1: Merit Assessment Tool
- Item 2: Financial Need Assessment Tool
Russell J. and Dorothy S. Bilinski Dissertation Fellowship
Merit Assessment Tool

Instructions to reviewers: Fill out one form for each of the applicants for which you are either "lead 1" or "lead 2"; bring copy to evaluation meeting.

Applicant name:

1. Assessment of dissertation research proposal

Please give your judgments about the following statements, using the scale:
1. Not at all
2. Somewhat
3. Moderately well/so
4. Clearly
5. Very clearly

(i) Has a theoretical framework been clearly articulated?  
(ii) Are the stated research questions well-grounded in theory?  
(iii) Has the need for an exploration of these questions been justified?  
(iv) Are the methods used appropriate for addressing the specific research questions?  
(v) Does the study make a potential contribution to the applicant's field?  
(vi) How innovative and original is the study?

2. Endorsement from dissertation director – briefly comment on this

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3. Applicant’s academic and professional achievements

Does the applicant have any peer reviewed publications (including articles, book chapters, conference proceedings)?

Does the applicant have any non-reviewed publications?

Has the applicant presented his/her work at regional-level professional conferences/workshops?

Has the applicant presented work at national or international level professional conferences/workshops?

Has the applicant received any significant awards/honors?

Has the applicant received any internal grant funding (do NOT include travel grants)?

Has the applicant received any external grant funding (e.g., NEH, NSF)?

4. Additional comments/factors to consider

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Applicant Name

1. Results of FAFSA check

Very High Need = EFC $1,000-5,999
High Need = EFC $6,000-11,999
Moderately High Need = EFC $12,000-17,999
Moderate Need = EFC $18,000-23,999

The applicant's level of financial need based on the FAFSA EFC score is:

2. Financial disclosure checklist

Yes  No

Does the applicant have the possibility of continued funding through their own department/program for the next academic year?  

Does the applicant have a realistic chance of other grant/fellowship support for next year (based on a successful track record of getting external support)?  

Does the applicant have any special financial circumstances? (Use the comments section below to describe these)  

3. Other comments/considerations