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Herb Kohl Public Service Research Competition – Overview

Description

Society's most challenging problems rarely resolve themselves. New idea creation and applied, nonpartisan research are needed to move us forward, especially in an atmosphere of heightened partisanship and polarization. The Kohl Competition funds faculty research that informs critical public policy and governance debates and advances evidence-based decision-making in Wisconsin and beyond.

The competition is open to all La Follette School faculty members, and multiple winners will be selected each year. Over time, the awards are intended to reflect the rich variety of work undertaken by La Follette faculty.

The primary competition will fund four basic activities: (A) the hiring of La Follette student project assistants, (B) the collection of original data or analysis of existing data, (C) the salary support attached to faculty members who devote significant time in the summer toward the completion of their Kohl Competition research projects, and (D) the funds to further the "impact" of the research with the public and/or public decision-makers.

Award process

The Herb Kohl Public Service Research Competition will support innovative research that addresses today's toughest public policy challenges. To accomplish this, Sen. Kohl pledged \$300,000 for each of the next five years. We expect to fund two types of awards:

Research awards: These awards are intended to primarily support faculty members' research. We expect the bulk of the resources to go to this category, with three to four awards ranging from \$50,000 to \$100,000, depending upon the ambition of the project.

Outreach awards: These awards are intended to amplify exposure and influence to our ongoing faculty research, through scholarly workshops, public symposia, or other outreach activities on or off campus. One to two outreach awards of approximately \$10,000 each are expected annually. However, there may be years when no outreach awards are made.

Awards will be made for approximately one calendar year, with funds spent during this time frame (some limited exceptions can be made). The first awards committee will be made up of Don Moynihan, Susan Yackee, and La Follette School Board of Visitors' member Chuck Pruitt. In subsequent years, the previous year's award winners will serve on the committee.

All awardees must agree to work closely with La Follette School outreach staff to promote the findings and implications of the work. After the completion of a research project, the faculty member also must evaluate her/his success in achieving impact in a short report and/or presentation.

Application and award criteria

Applications will be judged on the relevance, importance, and impact of the research.

The applications should be no longer than two single-spaced pages, including a simple budget or discussion of the budget breakdown. The committee reserves the right to seek additional information or hold in-person interviews with some applicants, if necessary, and to modify proposed budgets.

Applicants must clearly explain how the proposed funding will positively influence the public debate in Wisconsin and beyond, and impact society. The competition is intended to support faculty research and encourage investments in explaining the value of research. Award proposals must include at least one impact activity—which is defined as an activity that translates or informs the research process or that shares the research findings with a larger audience than typical academic research. Creativity in achieving this goal is encouraged, and the awards committee will look for this. Outreach applications do not need to include a separate impact activity.

All faculty members with some tenure or tenure-track appointment at the La Follette School are eligible to apply. Applications from research teams are encouraged, including those made up of La Follette School faculty affiliates. Those who have not won research awards in previous years will be prioritized in subsequent years. Individuals may apply for outreach awards in the same year they apply for research awards.

Moreover, faculty members will not be penalized for subsequent eligibility for a research award if they have previously won an outreach award. No funds will be available to buy-out La Follette School courses or support non-La Follette School students. All else being equal, faculty members who are more active and engaged within the La Follette School will hold preference.

Sen. Kohl is particularly keen on making these awards to the “best and brightest” La Follette School faculty members—especially those who are vital to UW-Madison’s success and to the School’s reputation and influence.

There will be five rounds of the Kohl Competition. Round One applications are due September 15, 2016. Winners will be notified on or before October 30, 2016. Award funds will be available from November 2016 to December 2017. This allows award recipients to hire graduate students for the spring and fall of 2017, and summer of 2017.

We expect Round Two applications to be due June 1, 2017, with notification of winners by July 1, 2017, and award funds available from August 1, 2017 to September 1, 2018. We expect Round Three applications to be due June 1, 2018, with notification of winners by July 1, 2018, and award funds available from August 1, 2018 to September 1, 2019, and so on.