



Association for Institutional Research



*Improving Institutional Research in
Postsecondary Educational Institutions*



Grants Program 2009 Dissertation Grant Proposal Guidelines



Proposal Deadline: January 16, 2009

Introduction to AIR Grant Programs

With support from the National Science Foundation (NSF), the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) of the Institute of Education Sciences, and the National Postsecondary Education Cooperative (NPEC), the Association for Institutional Research (AIR) operates two grant programs that support research on a wide range of issues of critical importance to U.S. higher education. The program has two separate purposes:

- NSF and NCES support grants aimed to increase the number of researchers using national datasets and demonstrate the contribution that these datasets make to the national base of knowledge on higher education policy, theory, and practice.
- The NPEC funding supports grants that increase the understanding and knowledge of a specific issue area identified by NPEC. This year, the focus will be “Student Flow in Postsecondary Education.”

Two levels of grants are supported:

- **Research Grants:** Faculty and practitioners are eligible for research grants of up to \$40,000 for one year of independent research. (Note: These research grants are not available to students). All grant recipients must be affiliated with a U.S. postsecondary institution or relevant nonprofit higher education organization.
- **Dissertation Grants:** Doctoral students are eligible for dissertation grants of up to \$20,000 for one year to support dissertation research and writing under the guidance of a faculty dissertation advisor.

To qualify for funding, proposal submissions must meet one or more of the following criteria:

- **Use data from one or more of the national NCES and/or NSF datasets** — Research topics may cover a wide range of policy- or practice-related issues. For a list of previously funded topics, see (airweb.org/fundedgrants.html). Applicants must include the analysis of data from at least one NSF or NCES dataset in the project. Additional large-scale nationally representative datasets may be used in conjunction with the obligatory NSF or NCES dataset. (For more information, see Appendix A.)
- **Address the NPEC focus topic of “student flow”** — Broadly defined, “student flow” includes movement from high school to various institutional sectors; movement among the various institutional sectors; concurrent enrollments in multiple institutions and student “swirling”

among institutions; movement of students with various characteristics; success and graduation rates and time-to-degree analyses for students based on various student flow patterns; and other research on student flow. The analyses can focus on federal, state or regional data and does not require the use of NCES or NSF databases. Nonetheless, the results of the research should have some applicability to the IPEDS data collection efforts. (See Appendix B for more information.)

Proposals may only be submitted electronically. The deadline for proposal submission is January 16, 2009. Applicants will be notified of the funding decisions no later than the first week of April 2009. Funding will be available starting May 1, 2009.

Dissertation Grants Overview

Dissertation Grants are intended to support one year of research conducted as part of the doctoral dissertation requirement and conducted under the guidance of a faculty dissertation advisor. The major portion of the research should be completed between May 1, 2009 and April 30, 2010. At the time of application, the dissertation should be in the early stage of development.

Note: A separate grant program is available to fund independent research by faculty and practitioners. See airweb.org/researchgrantoverview.html for details.

Doctoral students enrolled at a U.S. postsecondary institution may initiate proposals. A signed letter of support from the student's faculty dissertation advisor is required. Applicants may be U.S. citizens, U.S. permanent residents, or non-U.S. citizens. Applicants should be advanced doctoral students at the dissertation writing stage. The deadline for proposals is January 16, 2009. Applicants will be notified of the funding decision no later than the first week of April 2009, and grants will commence May 1, 2009. AIR funding cannot duplicate or replace dissertation funding from another source.

A complete application is comprised of eight major components:

1. Contact information: Name, physical address, e-mail address, institutional affiliation, name of faculty dissertation advisor, and name of the official institutional financial representative
2. Project description: Eight sections (2a-2h) describing the proposed research in detail
3. Letter of support from faculty dissertation advisor
4. Statement of Institutional Review Board approval or exemption
5. Statement of use of restricted datasets (if applicable)
6. Biographical sketch
7. Budget
8. Statement of the applicant's prior, current or pending funding

Applications must be submitted online. Assistance is available from the AIR grant staff at air@airweb.org or 850-385-4155 x200.

Application Process

STEP 1: Individuals are encouraged to begin the application process as soon as possible by providing initial contact information as the first step: name, e-mail address, physical address, and institutional affiliation. Providing this information assures that updates and deadline reminders will be sent to individuals via the e-mail address provided. Providing contact information does not commit an individual to submit a proposal. Go to airweb.org/dissertationcontactinfo.html to enter your contact information.

Individuals will receive an e-mail with a unique Web address once they have provided AIR with their initial contact information (STEP 1).

STEP 2: Review the Dissertation Guidelines.

STEP 3: Individuals will use the unique Web address sent to them via e-mail after completing Step 1 to complete their online application. The application contains eight components. **It is recommended that applicants write each section using word processing software and, when finalized, cut and paste the text into the online application.**

Note: Applicants can save parts of their application and return later, via their unique Web address, to add and/or edit their information until either they finalize their application or the application process closes on January 16, 2009. If applicant misplaces the e-mail with unique Web address, please contact the AIR grant staff at air@airweb.org or 850-385-4155 x200.

STEP 4: Submit the online proposal by following the directions at the end of the online application. When a proposal is successfully submitted a confirmation message will be sent to the applicant. It is the applicant's responsibility to submit the final proposal and store the confirmation notice as receipt of a successful submission.

STEP 5: Submit hard copy or scanned PDF letter of support from your faculty dissertation adviser. Your dissertation application is not considered complete and ready for review by the Dissertation Grant Review Panel until your signed letter of support from your faculty dissertation adviser is submitted to AIR. Letters may be submitted in the following formats:

- A hard copy letter may be mailed via U.S. Postal Service (postmark date no later than January 16, 2009) to:



Dissertation Grants
Association for Institutional Research
1435 E. Piedmont Drive, Suite 211
Tallahassee, FL 32308

- A scanned PDF document may be sent via e-mail (no later than January 16, 2009) to air@airweb.org.

For questions and assistance please contact the AIR grant staff at air@airweb.org or 850-385-4155 x200.

An application may be withdrawn at any time before the final funding decision is made. A request for withdrawal must be sent to air@airweb.org. Confirmation of the withdrawal request will be sent to the applicant and faculty dissertation advisor.

Selection Process

Applications are reviewed by a panel of national experts. A minimum of three panel members will read and evaluate each application. The panel will provide comments to each author along with the final funding decision. The panel may recommend funding pending revisions to the research plan. If so requested, a revised research plan must be submitted.

If any significant change in the research plan develops after the proposal application is submitted, the author is responsible for notifying AIR staff as soon as possible. AIR may allow a revision of the proposal after the application deadline or the new information may be presented to the review panel as an addendum to the original submission.

Award Announcement

Applicants will be notified of the status of the proposed project during the first week of April 2009. Faculty advisors and institutional financial representatives will be copied on notices of funded projects. Grant recipient names, project titles, and institutional affiliations are part of the public record which is provided to NCES, NSF, and NPEC and listed on the AIR Web site.

The Cameron Fincher & Charles I. Brown Awards, sponsored by the AIR Membership Committee, are given to the two highest rated dissertation proposals. The award covers travel expenses to attend the Annual AIR Forum and to receive recognition.

Information for Funded Proposals

Withdrawal

Withdrawal of funded research projects must be coordinated with the AIR office. Requests should be sent to air@airweb.org. Confirmations will be sent to the applicant, faculty dissertation advisor and the institutional representative.

Disbursement of Funds

Dissertation grants are paid in two installments (May 1, 2009 and January 3, 2010). Checks are jointly issued to the applicant and authorized institutional representative and mailed to the institution for disbursement.

Mid-Year and Final Report

A mid-year progress report is due by December 22, 2009; the January 2010 payment will not be processed until the report is received. The progress report must be submitted online. Applicants should briefly describe their progress to date on each deliverable and likelihood of successful completion of the dissertation by the close of grant period.

A final report is due thirty days after the end of the grant period. The final report is submitted online. Applicants should briefly report the achievement of each of the deliverables, including dissemination of the research findings. If a final report is not possible within 30 days of the end of the grant cycle, applicants should apply for a “No-Cost Extension” until the project is complete.

No-Cost Extension

Grantees may receive a one-time extension on the expiration date of the grant for up to 12 months with no additional funding. Additional time beyond the established expiration date is available to assure adequate completion of the original scope of work within the original budget. Request for a no-cost extension should be made to air@airweb.org and should contain a revised completion date.

Acknowledgement of Support and Disclaimer

An acknowledgment of support must appear in publications of any material, whether copyrighted or not, resulting from an AIR funded project similar to the language below:

This material is based upon work supported by the Association for Institutional Research, the National Center for Education Statistics, the National Science Foundation and the National Postsecondary Education Cooperative under Association for Institutional Research Grant Number _____ (grantee should enter AIR grant number.)

Except for articles or papers published in scientific, technical, or professional journals, the following disclaimer must be included:

Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Association for Institutional Research, the National Center for Education Statistics, the National Science Foundation or the National Postsecondary Education Cooperative.

Dissertation Grant Proposal Guidelines

Legal Rights to Intellectual Property

Authors retain legal rights to the intellectual property developed during grant funding. This policy provides incentive for development and dissemination of deliverables, but does not reduce the responsibility to make results available to the research community.

1. Contact Information

Contact information is required for the:

- a. applicant
- b. dissertation advisor
- c. authorized institutional representative (usually a staff member in the scholarships or research grants office)

2. Project Title and Description

The project description should be submitted via AIR's grant submission Web site. It is recommended that applicants compose the sections in their own word processor and then copy/paste to the Web. Please address all questions as these closely follow the scoring rubric used by the selection committee.

2a. Statement of the research problem and national importance (limit 750 words):

What is the research problem this proposal intends to address?

Why is this topic of national importance?

Why is it timely to conduct this research at this time?

2b. Review the literature and establish the theoretical grounding for the research (limit 1000 words):

What has prior research found about this problem?

What is the theoretical/conceptual grounding for this research?

2c. Describe the research method that will be used (limit 1000 words):

What are the research questions to be addressed?

What is the proposed research methodology?

What is the statistical model to be used?

2d. List the datasets that will be used and explain why they best serve this research (limit 250 words):

What NCES and NSF datasets to be used, if any?
Please include a variable list for each dataset used.
If applicable, how does the research address the
NPEC focus topic?

2e. Timeline of key project activities (no word limit)

2f. List deliverables such as research reports, books, and presentations that will be developed from this research initiative (no word limit)

Note: NPEC focus topics require 2 copies of the final paper by June 2010.

2g. How will you disseminate the results of this research (limit 250 words)

Note: A presentation at the 2010 AIR Forum in Chicago, Illinois is required.

2h. References cited (no word limit)

3. Letter of Support from Faculty Dissertation Advisor

A signed letter of support from the faculty dissertation advisor must be submitted with the dissertation grant proposal. Letters may be submitted in the following formats:

- A hard copy letter may be mailed via U.S. Postal Service (postmark date no later than January 16, 2009) to:

Dissertation Grants
Association for Institutional Research
1435 E. Piedmont Drive Suite 211
Tallahassee, FL 32308

- A scanned PDF document may be sent via e-mail (no later than January 16, 2009) to air@airweb.org.

The letter of support should contain the following components:

- Student's name
- Confirmation that the recommendation is from the student's dissertation advisor
- Advisor's name, signature, contact information, and title
- Statement that the student has completed coursework sufficient to begin dissertation work by Fall 2009

- Recommendation of the student's strengths and experience with national datasets showing the student's likelihood of successfully completing the dissertation in one year
- Statement of support if the dissertation will require restricted use license from NCES and/or NSF

4. Statement of Institutional Review Board Approval or Exemption

As part of the online application, a statement outlining a plan for Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval is required. The statement should outline the applicant's timeline and plan for submitting the proposal to an IRB or explain why IRB approval is not necessary. Final IRB action is not necessary prior to submitting the application. The statement is limited to 250 words.

5. Statement of Use of Restricted Datasets

Applicants should provide a statement indicating whether the proposed research will require use of restricted datasets. If restricted datasets will be used, the plan for acquiring the appropriate license should be described. Please review the requirements for restricted use license at the NCES and NSF Web sites. The statement is limited to 250 words.

6. Biographical Sketch

A biographical sketch should include prior degrees earned and current status in a doctoral program, relevant professional work experiences, skills necessary for completion of the proposed study, and prior research experiences with national datasets. The biographical sketch is limited to 750 words.

7. Budget

The budget should include travel for the 2010 AIR Forum in Chicago for a mandatory presentation of the findings. Miscellaneous expenses such as software, books and supplies may also be included. Computer hardware, printing a stand alone book, living expenses, overhead and indirect costs are not allowable.

8. Statement of Prior, Current, and Pending Funding

A statement of prior, current and pending funding for the proposed research from all sources is required. The statement should also include a history of all prior funding from AIR to the doctoral student researcher for any activity. Funding from other sources will not disqualify the application but may be considered in the funding decision. The statement is limited to 250 words.

Dissertation Grant Rating Rubric

Section 1: Qualifying Criteria

Reviewers use the criteria below to rate proposals. Answers of “No” in this section may disqualify the application. Items that are “unclear or missing” must be resolved by AIR staff prior to funding but will not stop an application from being fully reviewed and considered.

Overall, demonstrates a reasonable and defensible research methodology	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes		<input type="checkbox"/> No
Uses required dataset(s) or addresses NPEC focus: (check all that apply)	<input type="checkbox"/> NCES dataset(s) and/or <input type="checkbox"/> NSF and/or dataset(s) or <input type="checkbox"/> Addresses the NPEC focus on <i>Student Flow</i>		<input type="checkbox"/> No: Does not address necessary datasets or focus area
The selected data and variables are appropriate for the proposed research	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Unclear/Missing	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Proposes a “doable” project within a one-year timeline	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Unclear/Missing	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Proposes an acceptable plan for disseminating results	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Unclear/Missing	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Faculty advisor supports the application	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Unclear/Missing	<input type="checkbox"/> No
IRB plan is appropriate for the proposed research	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Unclear/Missing	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Plan for use of restricted datasets is appropriate	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Unclear/Missing	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Biographical sketch displays appropriate level of expertise	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Unclear/Missing	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Statement of prior, current, and pending funding	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Unclear/Missing	<input type="checkbox"/> No

Section 2: Rating of the Proposed Research Project

Score

Importance & Timeliness:

Rate the proposed research on its national importance and timeliness.

(5 points)

Low	Marginal	Acceptable	Strong	Exceptionally Strong
1	2	3	4	5

Literature Review:

To what degree does the literature review show a complete understanding of the issue and prior research on this topic? **(5 points)**

Low	Marginal	Acceptable	Strong	Exceptionally Strong
1	2	3	4	5

To what degree is the reference list complete and appropriate? **(5 points)**

Low	Marginal	Acceptable	Strong	Exceptionally Strong
1	2	3	4	5

Research Method:

To what degree is the proposed research methodology appropriate for this project?

(10 points)

Poor/Inappropriate	Adequate	Strong	Exceptionally Strong
1-2-3	4-5-6	7-8	9-10

To what degree is the theoretical grounding for the proposed research appropriate and fully developed? **(5 points)**

Low	Marginal	Acceptable	Strong	Exceptionally Strong
1	2	3	4	5

To what degree is the proposed analysis of data appropriate for the proposed research? **(5 points)**

Low	Marginal	Acceptable	Strong	Exceptionally Strong
1	2	3	4	5

Deliverables:

Rate the degree to which deliverables are appropriate and will be an important new contribution to knowledge. **(5 points)**

Low	Marginal	Acceptable	Strong	Exceptionally Strong
1	2	3	4	5

Budget:

Rate the degree to which budget is adequate to ensure success without being excessive. **(5 points)**

Low	Marginal	Acceptable	Strong	Exceptionally Strong
1	2	3	4	5

Total Score:

Section 3: Funding Recommendation

Should AIR fund this proposal?

- Fund
- Fund with Minor Revisions
- Do Not Fund

Section 4: Comments

Reviewer Comments: Please provide specific, constructive comments to help the applicant improve the quality of the proposed research. These comments will be shared with the applicant in the notification letter.

Appendix A

NCES/NSF SPONSORED RESEARCH

Applicants should choose research topics that can be supported by the samples and variables contained in one or more of the NCES or NSF dataset(s) listed below. Applicants should also be familiar with the specific dataset's survey methodology including sample limitations, when applicable. Applicants should be familiar with statistical methods and available computer programs that allow for analyses of the selected data.

NCES DATASETS

Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Study (B&B)
 Beginning Postsecondary Student (BPS) Longitudinal Study
 Career/Technical Education Statistics (CTES)
 Educational Longitudinal Study of 2002 (ELS: 2002)
 High School and Beyond (HS&B)
 IPEDS 12-Month Enrollment (E12)
 IPEDS Completions (C)
 IPEDS Fall Enrollment (EF)
 IPEDS Finance (F)
 IPEDS Graduation Rate (GRS)
 IPEDS Human Resources (HR)
 IPEDS Institutional Characteristics (IC)
 IPEDS Student Financial Aid (SFA)
 National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS:88)
 National Household Education Survey (NHES)
 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS)
 The National Study of Postsecondary Faculty (NSOPF)

NSF DATASETS

National Survey of College Students (NSCG)
 National Survey of Recent College Graduates (NSRCG)
 SESTAT
 Survey of Doctorate Recipients (SDR)
 Survey of Earned Doctorates (SED)
 Survey of Federal Funds for Research and Development
 Survey of Federal Science and Engineering Support to Universities, Colleges, and Nonprofit Institutions
 Survey of Graduate Students and Postdoctorates in Science and Engineering
 Survey of Industrial Research and Development
 Survey of Science and Development Expenditures at Universities and Colleges (academic R&D)
 Survey of Science and Engineering Research Facilities
 WebCASPAR

Appendix B

THE NPEC/AIR 2009 FOCUSED GRANT PROGRAM

The National Postsecondary Education Cooperative (NPEC) and the Association for Institutional Research (AIR) have announced the sixth year of their joint focused grant program. This program is designed to increase understanding and knowledge of a specific issue area identified by NPEC as critically important to the postsecondary education community and Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) data collection efforts. NPEC and AIR plan to award five to ten one-year grants for up to \$20,000 for dissertation grants and up to \$40,000 for other proposals focused on the theme of “student flow” in postsecondary education.

The NPEC/AIR 2009 Focused Grant Program is designed to achieve the goal of supporting innovative proposals from the postsecondary education research community that will inform research and development efforts for the IPEDS data collection. IPEDS is the core postsecondary education data collection program for NCES. Data are collected from all primary providers of postsecondary education in the country in areas including enrollments, program completions, graduation rates, faculty, staff, finances, institutional prices, and student financial aid.

This year, grant proposals should focus on “student flow.” Broadly defined, this could include movement from high school to various institutional sectors; movement among the various sectors, including 2-year and 4-year, public, independent, not-for-profit, and independent for-profit; concurrent enrollments in multiple institutions and student “swirling” among institutions; movement of students with various characteristics, such as racial/ethnic categories, first generation students, part-time or full-time status, low income students, adults, or children of immigrants; success and graduation rates and time-to-degree analyses for students based on various student flow patterns, and other research on student flow. The analyses could focus on federal, state or regional data. This program does not require the use of NCES or NSF databases. Nonetheless, the results of the research should have some applicability to the NCES IPEDS data collection efforts. That is, the research that is undertaken should have some potential impact on federal IPEDS data collections, and the authors of the proposals are expected to define how the proposed student flow research might affect IPEDS.

NPEC is interested in studies that focus on questions such as the following:

- Who are the students who “swirl,” e.g., enroll in multiple institutions simultaneously and move back and forth among various institutions? What are their characteristics? How successful are these students in attaining degrees compared with other cohorts? What is their time-to-degree and how does it compare with other cohorts? What is the potential impact of these analyses on IPEDS?
- What data are needed to understand “student flow” and movement in postsecondary education? How do institutions and/or states track student enrollment in multiple institutions and/or movement across postsecondary institutions? How do institutions identify and verify *first-time* postsecondary students? How do institutions verify transfers out? How do institutions measure simultaneous enrollment in multiple institutions? What is the potential impact of these analyses on IPEDS?

- What is the true scale and scope of swirling enrollments, including student enrollment in multiple institutions as well as transferring among institutions? How many institutions do students' attend prior to completion? Do these "swirling" patterns affect degree attainment? How do traditional measures of success, such as graduation rates, capture the progress of students who follow these patterns? What are alternate ways to track and report progress and success among students who follow these paths? What is the potential impact of these analyses on IPEDS?
- What are the patterns of enrollment in college and transfer among institutions for certain non-traditional populations, such as part-time, adult, or underrepresented racial-ethnic minorities, and how do these patterns differ from the more traditional college student population? What is the potential impact of these analyses on IPEDS?

The grants can support a variety of research activities focused on student flow in postsecondary education, including:

- Data synthesis or meta-analysis of research studies that address a specific question regarding student flow;
- New analyses using national, regional, state, or institutional databases that focus on student flow;
- Literature review of available data, analyses, and research that are available regarding student flow of some specific student populations;
- Case studies that focus on one or more student flow issues;
- Studies that focus on identifying national or state level data that would be needed to help gain better insight into student flow; and
- Other creative and relevant studies.

Projects that propose the collection of data from individuals or groups or the observation of individuals or groups must include Institutional Review Board clearance to be considered.

Grant proposals will be due in January 2009 and grants will be awarded in April 2009. Grant recipients will be expected to begin work in June 2009 and two copies of a final paper will be due to AIR and NCES (one copy to AIR and one copy to NCES) in June 2010. As a condition of the grant, awardees would be expected to present their papers at the 2010 Annual AIR Forum in Chicago, Illinois. A portion of the grant funding should be reserved to cover registration and travel to the AIR Forum.

Appendix C – Budget Form

Dissertation Budget Summary

Salary/Stipend:

Tuition and fees (if any):

Travel:

2010 AIR Forum:

(Presentation at 2010 Forum required)

Other research related travel:

(Note: other planned travel should be listed in part 2g of proposal)

Other research expenses: *

(software, books, copying fees, etc.)

Total Requested:

* The purchase of computer hardware, printing a stand alone book, overhead or indirect costs, and living expenses are not allowable. If you have questions about specific expenditures please contact the AIR Project Manager.