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2006 Conference Proceedings (Minneapolis,  
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## Working for It: The Other Work in Graduate School, Procuring Fellowship Funding & Designing the Research to Accompany the Funds

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### Recommended Citation

Chlup, Dominique T.; Gardner Flores, Lisa; and Coryell, Joellen (2006). "Working for It: The Other Work in Graduate School, Procuring Fellowship Funding & Designing the Research to Accompany the Funds," *Adult Education Research Conference*. <https://newprairiepress.org/aerc/2006/roundtables/3>

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## **Working for It: The Other Work in Graduate School, Procuring Fellowship Funding & Designing the Research to Accompany the Funds**

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Keywords: Fellowship funding, proposal writing, financial support

**Abstract:** Two current fellows at a state literacy center with University affiliations and a former doctoral fellow at a national center will discuss their experiences procuring a major fellowship to help pay for their graduate studies. How these fellowships allowed them to participate in the design and implementation of research are also discussed.

### **Introduction**

Given rising tuition costs, living expenses, and general maintenance expenses incurred while a graduate student, procuring fellowship funds to sustain graduate work is becoming less of an “added bonus” and more of a necessity (Sahadi, 2004; Baum & Payea, 2004). Unlike other fields of graduate study, though, research fellowship funds in the field of adult education are not commonplace (Baum & Payea, 2004b). Unfortunately, the availability of fellowship funds does not match the need for them. And unlike scholarship funds, which often have no “work” requirement, fellowship funds, oftentimes, require recipients to perform research in exchange for the funds. Given the competitive nature of fellowships, how then do graduate students find out what’s available and procure research fellowships in the field of adult education? What goes into a “winning” proposal? And after the fellowship is secured, how do students design and implement a doable research study given the often-limited timeframe of fellowships?

### **Purpose of the Session**

We invite all interested scholars to share their own experiences in obtaining financial support in addition to learning about the experiences of the three facilitators. Lisa Gardner Flores will share her research on transitions: what is currently in place and working in the state of Texas for transitioning adult learners from ESL courses into ABE, GED, and English composition courses. Joellen Coryell’s research focuses on adult English language learners and on-line instructional components. She is using insights from current empirical research and practice to inform program directors and instructors in Texas. Dominique Chlup will discuss the research she conducted while a fellow at a national center involving a large scale literature review that provided an analysis of Adult Basic Education, GED, and ESOL literacy classrooms from both a historical and a contemporary perspective.

### **Findings & Discussion: Procuring a Fellowship**

Applicants for these fellowships focused on the intersection of their own interests and that of the funding agency. An exploration into what kinds of services, approaches, and philosophy of the grantor is necessary to tailor the application to the fellowship’s purpose. A perceived “good fit” can make the difference in being awarded the fellowship.

The procuring of a research fellowship can appear daunting to the graduate student, who must deal with pressing issues of heavy workloads and short timelines. However, a two-fold

approach to a fellowship search can simplify this process. First, a student can evaluate the resources available to him or her through the Internet, the university, and other community networks. The Internet provides the graduate student with fundamental information about highly solicited national programs as well as state and regional options. This search should include university websites, which offer instructive information for broad-based searches. Not to be forgotten, however, are the networks closest to the student. For example, college and departmental personnel often provide information about opportunities within a discipline. Also, professors who know a student's academic work most closely can be the key to a fellowship opportunity. Finally, students can assess their community contacts and subsequent opportunities through civic or religious affiliations.

The second step to this process is to finalize that winning proposal. This procedure requires both effective organizational skills and an introspective assessment of one's suitability to the specific fellowship. The applicant should pay attention to deadlines and the application process. Special care should be taken to create a proposal statement that will succinctly describe the student's assets while reinforcing the unique fit that this person offers to the fellowship. It is hoped that roundtable participants will leave the roundtable with new tools (see Table 1) and inspiration to successfully apply for fellowship funding.

**Table 1.** Fellowship-related organizations: Useful sources for graduate students

<i>Organization</i>	<i>Web Address (Current as of March 15, 2006)</i>
U.S. Department of Education	<a href="http://studentaid.ed.gov/PORTALSWebApp/students/english/gradstudent.jsp">http://studentaid.ed.gov/PORTALSWebApp/students/english/gradstudent.jsp</a>
Michigan State University Libraries	<a href="http://www.lib.msu.edu/harris23/grants/3gradinf.htm">http://www.lib.msu.edu/harris23/grants/3gradinf.htm</a>
University of California Riverside, "How to Find money for graduate school: Internet Sources For Financial Support"	<a href="http://www.graddiv.ucr.edu/HowFindMoney.html">http://www.graddiv.ucr.edu/HowFindMoney.html</a>
Texas State University, San Marcos	<a href="http://www.gradcollege.txstate.edu/scholarships.html">http://www.gradcollege.txstate.edu/scholarships.html</a>
The Ruth Crymes TESOL Fellowship for Graduate Study	<a href="http://www.tesol.org/s_tesol/sec_document.asp?CID=370&amp;DID=666">http://www.tesol.org/s_tesol/sec_document.asp?CID=370&amp;DID=666</a>
American Educational Research Association (AERA): Minority Fellowship Program	<a href="http://www.aera.net/fellowships?id=88">http://www.aera.net/fellowships?id=88</a>
USA Funds: Access to Education Scholarships	<a href="http://www.usafunds.org/">www.usafunds.org/</a> Or email: <a href="mailto:scholarship@usafunds.org">scholarship@usafunds.org</a> .
American Association of University Women Graduate and Dissertation Fellowships	<a href="http://www.aauw.org/fga/fellowships_grants/american.cfm">http://www.aauw.org/fga/fellowships_grants/american.cfm</a>
Fellowship Database (hosted by Cornell University – but can be used by anyone)	<a href="http://www.gradschool.cornell.edu/?p=132">http://www.gradschool.cornell.edu/?p=132</a>

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