

# Dissertation of the Year Awards

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Doctoral students are a specific demographic in higher education increasingly recognized for their work with awards from most universities and many national higher education organizations. The most ubiquitous of these awards is the Dissertation of the Year award. Almost every university sponsors such an award; many colleges of education and education departments sponsor these awards. The purpose of this article is to report on a number of the dissertation of the year awards to encourage doctoral students, with support from their professors, to apply for them.

**The descriptions that follow were extracted from websites in January of 2023 on awards that were presented in 2022. In every case applicants must check the current descriptions and guidelines to ensure they are responding to the most current information. More information on awards can be found on the Internet by entering the name of the sponsoring organization and clicking on “Awards.” Some awards require students and the nominating professor to be members of the association sponsoring the award so make sure this is the case before applying. Membership fees for doctoral students are modest.**

**Richard M. Romano Dissertation of the Year Award The Council for the Study of Community Colleges (CSCC)**

**The dissertation chair and the student nominated must be members of CSCC.**

The annual CSCC Richard M. Romano Dissertation of the Year Award honors doctoral students who graduated during the previous calendar year, and whose dissertations have explored community college-related topics and exhibited exemplary skills in research and scholarship. Further, the dissertation should demonstrate excellence in scholarly inquiry, illustrate originality of thought, and include significant findings that make a substantial contribution to the extant literature on community colleges; that shed new light on how issues and challenges facing community colleges are researched, theorized, and interpreted; and/or that potentially could have an important effect on community college policy and/or practice.

To be considered for the award, the candidate must have defended the dissertation and must have had the doctorate conferred between January 1st and December 31st, 2023. Additionally, the chair of the dissertation committee must be an active, paid member of CSCC at the time of the nomination.

The award recipient will be announced during the Annual CSCC Conference.

## **NOMINATION PROCESS AND REQUIRED MATERIALS**

The nomination for Dissertation of the Year must be submitted by the nominee's dissertation chair. The chair should submit the following two documents via email as two (2) separate attachments in PDF format.

1. A PDF file consisting of 1 a. The completed Nomination Form, which accompanies this announcement as a separate document. b. A Nomination Letter from the Dissertation Chair of no more than three (3) pages which addresses at least the following:
2. 2 a. The reason the student's work is being nominated, including why this particular dissertation is exceptional compared to other dissertations that the nominator has chaired b. The potential significance of the dissertation to community college research, policy, and/or practice c. Plans for the publication and other dissemination of the results of the dissertation study d. A description of any other awards or honors that the student may have received related to the dissertation (optional) e. A Statement from the Dissertation Author of no more than three(3) pages which summarizes the major contributions of the dissertation to the field of community college research and practice and describes any future research endeavors related to the dissertation study.
3. A PDF file containing the Complete Dissertation, including the title page, abstract, table of contents, reference list, appendices, and any other ancillary materials submitted to and accepted by the student's university (and ProQuest, as applicable) must be submitted. No other letters of support or other ancillary materials may be included in this file. The file should be titled with the student's name and "CSCC-DOTY-2023- Nomination-Materials" (e.g., Mary-Smith-CSCC-DOTY-2023-NominationMaterials). Please send all nomination materials via email on or before January 15th , 2024, with the subject line: 2023 CSCC DOTY Nomination. Check current guidelines on where to send the materials.

Nomination Deadline 11:59 p.m. (CST), Sunday, January 15th, 2024.

## **The Bellwether Outstanding Dissertation Award**

This award bestows recognition to a worthy individual whose doctoral dissertation makes a substantial contribution to the literature and/or practice of community college instruction, governance, or workforce development. A substantial contribution is defined as dissertation research that demonstrably adds to the scholarly literature on community colleges, revises understanding of a researchable problem associated with community colleges, or looks at an aspect of community colleges in a new way. The dissertation may also be an interdisciplinary effort that identifies a research problem new to the field. Dissertations utilizing a diversity of methodological approaches are encouraged. Applicants vying for the award do not need to be members of the Bellwether College Consortium but do need to be enrolled or have recently completed their doctoral program at an accredited four-year university in the United States. The award recipient will be announced at the 2023 Community College Futures Assembly.

### **SIGNIFICANCE**

The creation of this dissertation award competition serves as a significant, unique, and valuable contribution to community college scholarship. The Community College Futures Assembly provides a high-energy venue to amplify research focused on issues central to public two-year colleges. This national recognition at Bellwether's signature event provides an ideal platform to showcase exemplary research sponsored, featured, and disseminated by the Bellwether College Consortium.

### **ELIGIBILITY**

The Bellwether Outstanding Dissertation Award is open to graduate students who conducted research for a dissertation study in partial fulfillment of a doctoral degree (i.e. Ed.D. or Ph.D.) and whose research focused on community colleges or community college students. All complete and eligible submissions are reviewed by a selective panel of esteemed scholars and practitioners with expertise in community college issues. The national panel will exclude any judge who is associated with the applicant's doctoral program or institution. The doctoral dissertation must be successfully defended between December 2, 2022, and December 1, 2024, and included in the submission form as an accessible link by the deadline.

## **AWARD & BENEFITS**

- Complimentary registration and two nights of complimentary accommodations for the 2023 Community College Futures Assembly.
- Awardee is formally announced at the Bellwether Award Ceremony and presented with the Bellwether Outstanding Dissertation Award. A short abstract of the study and photo of the recipient will be shared at the event.
- An exclusive invitation to present the winning study by the award recipient at the 2023 Community College Futures Assembly.
- Recognition provided on the Bellwether College Consortium website, in printed and electronic materials, and through the consortium's social media channels.

## **SUBMISSION PROCESS**

Applicants should complete an online submission form providing the following information:

- Dissertation author's name and contact information.
- Title of the dissertation, date successfully defended, name of university, and title and email address of the applicant's dissertation chair.
- A brief description of the dissertation not exceeding 500 words. This summarization may be the dissertation abstract or synopsis. It should address each of the award criteria and will be scored in the first round of the judging process.
- Provide a URL link to a pdf file of your successfully defended and accepted version of the dissertation.
- Submit a letter of support by the dissertation chair or a dissertation committee member addressing the exemplary features of the study and its relevance to the area of community college practice. The letter should not exceed one page. A committee member can provide a nomination letter for no more than two candidates.

## **SELECTION CRITERIA**

Criteria for round one are solely a review of the dissertation summary and letter of support:

- Timeliness of research (i.e. new or trending issue)
- Significance and/or originality of the problem and research questions pertaining to community colleges

- Overall applicability of the study to community college practice and scholarship
- A score based on the strength of the letter of support is added to the total score for each submission in the first round of the competition

Criteria for round two will consist of an evaluation of the entire dissertation document:

- Timeliness of research (i.e. new or trending issue)
- Relevant and appropriate use of theory/theories or a theoretical or conceptual framework
- Comprehensiveness and relevance of the literature review
- Detailed rationale and detail of methodology employed including research design
- Rationale and quality of the data analysis
- Comprehensibility and meaningfulness of the results to community college practice
- Applicability of the study to theory and/or practice to community colleges
- Precision and strength of writing, critical analysis, and scope and depth of bibliography as related to the research topic

#### **AWARD ANNOUNCEMENT & CEREMONY**

The Bellwether award recipient will be announced and recognized at the Community College Futures Assembly with an award for an outstanding dissertation.

#### **JUDGES**

The jury of judges will be comprised of representatives including community college trustees, seasoned researchers committed to the study of community college issues, leaders of national community college organizations, and members of higher education philanthropy.

### **CGS/ProQuest Distinguished Dissertation Award**

**Kansas State University**

Sponsored jointly by CGS (Council of Graduate Schools) and ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, the Distinguished Dissertation Award from Kansas State University is made annually to individuals who, in the opinion of the award committee, have completed dissertations representing original work that makes an unusually significant contribution to the discipline. Award recipients receive an honorarium of \$2,000 and a certificate of recognition, presented at the annual meeting of the Council of Graduate Schools. Travel expenses of the recipients will be paid by the CGS.

### Eligibility guidelines

The effective date of degree awarded must fall in the period of **July 1, 2022, through June 30, 2024.**

### 2023 award

K-State will select one nominee for each of the two award categories. Graduate program directors should determine the category in which their nominee's work fits best. Awards will be presented in Engineering/Math/Physical Sciences and Social Sciences in 2024.

## Outstanding Dissertation Award

**Division A: Administration, Organization, and Leadership of the American Educational Research Association (AERA)**

**The person nominating and the student nominated must be members of AERA, Division A.**

The **Outstanding Dissertation Award** will recognize outstanding dissertation research appropriate to the field, including the leadership, organization and administration of schools, and the preparation of educational leaders. Studies embracing both traditional and alternative conceptualizations and methodologies are welcomed. The honoree will be presented with a plaque and a \$500 honorarium at the Division A Business Meeting that will be held during the 2023 AERA Annual Meeting.

**ELIGIBILITY:** Nominees *must* be members of AERA Division A at the time of the nomination and have been awarded the Ph.D. or Ed.D. between **January 1, 2023, and December 31, 2024.** *No self-nominations will be accepted.*

**NOMINATION PROCESS:** Nominators *must* also be members of AERA Division A. Nomination packets must be submitted electronically and include the following:

1. A one-page letter and overview from a member of the dissertation committee that can be sent separately from the other materials;
2. A title sheet showing the dissertation title, awarding institution, members of the dissertation committee, date of completion of the degree, and nominee's current contact information, and
3. A **blind** summary of the dissertation written in APA style, not to exceed 7500 words, exclusive of title page, references, and appendices.

**CONTACT PERSON FOR THE AWARD:** This committee is chaired by **Dr. Rachel Roegman** at The University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. The nomination letter and supporting materials must be submitted electronically to the Outstanding Dissertation Award committee chair at [roegman@illinois.edu](mailto:roegman@illinois.edu) with the subject line: AERA Division A, Outstanding Dissertation Award Nomination.

**DEADLINE:** All nominations and supporting materials **MUST** be received by **Tuesday, January 31, 2024.**

## **The Bobby Wright Dissertation of the Year Award**

**Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE)**

**The person nominating and the student nominated must be members of ASHE.**

Named in memory of Irvin Lee (Bobby) Wright, the ASHE Dissertation of the Year award annually recognizes one or more exemplary dissertations in the field of higher education. Award criteria include the high quality of the methodology employed and the significance of the dissertation topic.

Bobby Wright received the 1986 ASHE Distinguished Dissertation of the Year award, as well as the Montana State University Alumni and Endowment

Foundation Graduate Achievement Award for outstanding performance. At the time of his death due to AIDS in 1991 at the age of 40, Dr. Wright was an assistant professor and research associate affiliated with the Centre for the Study of Higher Education in the College of Education at the Pennsylvania State University. Prior to joining Penn State in 1989, he was director of the Centre for Native American Studies at Montana State University, where he received his doctorate in Adult and Higher Education in 1985. He received his bachelor's degree in business administration from the University of San Francisco in 1973 and his master's degree in American Studies at the State University of New York at Buffalo.

A gay Native American, Dr. Wright contributed historical studies of Native Americans in higher education. He avidly mentored students and colleagues, encouraging them to instill compassion in their scholarship. As Bobby Wright explained (via W.G. Tierney, personal communication, 1990):

“As an Indian I saw discrimination; I learned up close how people hated for no reason, but I also learned the spiritual way, tribal ways. ...I'm glad to have been gay, to have been Indian, to have been poor. Each has made me what I am, and I have met extraordinary people. I pity those who hate, who don't understand, who want to discriminate because I'm Indian, or gay, or poor. I've tried to live an honest life to the best of my ability, and I only wish other people tried as hard to accept and honor the difference in all of us.

## **NOMINATION EVALUATION CRITERIA**

Individuals being considered for the award must have successfully defended and officially deposited their dissertation to the nominee's university between June 1, 2022 - May 31, 2023. Dissertations previously nominated will not be reconsidered. The nominee is required to be a current member of ASHE.

The following criteria will be used to evaluate nominees' dissertations for this award:

- Quality, Clarity, and Precision of Writing
- Clear Statement of the Problem and Purpose of the Study
- Clarity of Research Questions
- Synthesis of Relevant Literature, Theories, and/or Concepts
- Research Design
- Rigor and Systematic Execution of Research Methods
- Presentation and Interpretation of Data/Findings
- Implications for Higher Education Research, Policy, and/or Practice



- Originality and Unique Contribution to the Study of Higher Education

## **2022 AWARDS TIMELINE**

- Nominations will be open from May 4, 2023-June 15, 2023 at Noon Pacific. *Due to the number of submissions and the review process, no late submissions will be accepted; as such, nominators are encouraged to submit their nominations well in advance of this deadline.*
- Nominators and nominees will be informed of decisions in mid-September.
- An announcement of recipients will be sent to the ASHE membership in late September.
- The recipient(s) will be recognized during the ASHE Awards Ceremony during the Annual Conference.

## **TO SUBMIT A NOMINATION**

One nomination packet for the Dissertation of the Year Award must be submitted by the chair or co-chairs of the nominee's dissertation committee. The dissertation must have been successfully defended and officially deposited to the nominee's university between June 1, 2022 - May 31, 2023. Dissertations previously nominated will not be reconsidered.

Due to the increased number of nominations received in recent years, each nominee will be limited to one nomination. In the event multiple nominations are submitted, the committee chair will notify the coordinating nominators requesting they consolidate their nominations.

All nominations and corresponding materials must be submitted via online submission. E-mail and/or hard copy submissions will not be accepted.

- The chair of the nominee's dissertation committee must submit the nomination form, which includes the following: (Note: Each document should be uploaded as a separate PDF; this means you will need 4 PDF documents: (1) Nomination Letter; (2) Cover Letter; (3) Abstract; and (4) Full Dissertation.
  - Name, Title, Position, Institution, Email, and Phone Number of Coordinating Nominator (you will type in this information in the form)
  - Name, Title, Position, Institution, Email, and Phone Number of Nominee (you will type in this information in the form)

- A nomination letter in which extraordinary features of the dissertation are described (uploaded as a single PDF)
- A coversheet (uploaded as a single PDF) that includes: (1) full dissertation title; (2) nominee’s full name; and (3) the institution from which the dissertation was earned.
- A masked, 15 double-spaced page abstract of the dissertation, inclusive of necessary tables and/or figures (uploaded as a single PDF). Do not include any identifying information on the abstract. See below for information that should be included in the abstract. Also, up to 3 single-spaced pages of references in APA format can accompany the abstract and will not be included in the 15 page limit.
  - The abstract should include the:
    - (1) full dissertation title [please do not include any identifiers];
    - (2) statement of the study’s purpose;
    - (3) research questions, if applicable;
    - (4) significance of the study;
    - (5) theoretical or conceptual underpinnings, if applicable;
    - (6) methods – research design/approach, sampling, data collection procedures or data sources used, and data analysis;
    - (7) summary of key findings;
    - (8) implications for practice, policy, and/or future research; and
    - (9) up to 3 pages of references in APA format, single-spaced (does not count towards 15 page total).
  - Please save your document using an abbreviated title (preferably the first 4-5 words in the dissertation title). For example, a dissertation titled, “An Examination of Dissent and Dismay: The Rising Costs of College and Limited Access” should be condensed and the file should be saved as an examination rising costs.doc (or .docx, .pdf)
- A full masked dissertation (uploaded as a single PDF). To create a masked dissertation, nominees may need to omit dedications, acknowledgments, copyright information, etc. Nominees do not need to omit their positionality statements if their dissertation contains one. Full masked dissertations will be shared with the committee only for finalists.

The coordinating nominator, as well as the award nominee(s) (and subsequently recipient(s)), must be current members of ASHE.

## **Barbara K. Townsend Dissertation Award**

### **The National Institute for the Study of Transfer Students (NISTS)**

The National Institute for the Study of Transfer Students encourages the development and dissemination of knowledge that informs the academic and practitioner communities on transfer. The transfer field thrives when intentional, rigorous inquiry is conducted and applied to practice. NISTS celebrates emerging scholars who exemplify this philosophy through the Barbara K. Townsend Award.

Recognized as a top higher education scholar, Barbara K. Townsend studied and wrote prolifically about transfer, forcing the academy to recognize an often overlooked student population. Her work elevated the role of community colleges and emphasized the importance of shared responsibility across two- and four-year sectors for transfer student success. She influenced state policy and institutional practice and her mentorship inspired colleagues and students alike. Townsend's research and insights continue to serve as the foundation for contemporary transfer scholarship, and NISTS is honored to bestow this award to those continuing her legacy.

This award is granted biannually, and faculty are invited to nominate exceptional dissertations, regardless of methodological approach or academic discipline. For the next award cycle, the dissertation must have been successfully defended and filed with the nominee's graduate division or school between September 1, 2021, and September 30, 2023.

To recommend a dissertation for this award, please complete the Dissertation Award Nomination Form by September 30, 2022.

### **Award Package**

- Complimentary registration for and designated concurrent session slot during the NISTS annual conference.
- Recognition at the NISTS annual awards ceremony, including a brief summary of the project in the conference program
- Featured on the NISTS website and social media channels, with an opportunity to publish a brief article on the NISTS website

## Eligibility

The Barbara K. Townsend Dissertation Award is open to graduate students who are conducting research on any aspect of the transfer experience.\* All nominations will be reviewed and judged by a national panel, with exclusion of judges associated with the nominee's institution. The dissertation must have been successfully defended and filed with the nominee's graduate division or school between September 1, 2021, and September 30, 2023.

*\*NISTS Advisory Board members, staff members, sponsors, and vendors, as well as University of North Georgia faculty, staff, and students are not eligible for this award.*

## Application Guidelines

Faculty members are invited to nominate exceptional dissertations for award consideration.

The nomination deadline is September 30, 2023, at 11:59 pm PST.

The following information, along with the online nomination form, is required:

- Dissertation Chair's Nomination Letter
- Dissertation Summary (see below for details)

Additional Information:

- An electronic copy of the full dissertation will be requested from award finalists.
- A faculty member may nominate no more than two candidates.
- Winner will be asked to submit a high-quality head-shot (with minimum dimensions of 500px by 500px and 300ppi).

## Nomination Letter:

The chair of the dissertation committee is asked to write and sign a nomination letter, which should contain information relevant to the work of the award committee (e.g. importance of the topic, methodological highlights, etc.). In the event that the chair is unable to submit this letter, a nomination letter from another dissertation committee member will be accepted.

## **Dissertation Summary:**

- Must be double-spaced and saved in PDF format
- Remove all identifying information (college or institution, cities, towns, landmarks, etc.)
- May not exceed 10 pages

Required components of the dissertation summary:

- Research rationale and purpose of the study
- Brief literature review
- Research questions and/or hypotheses guiding the study
- Methodology used, including research design, data collection methods, data analysis methods, and rationale for each
- Significant findings and relevance to higher education transfer policy, practice, and research
- Bibliography of references (does not count toward the 10 page limit)

## **Dissertation of the Year**

### **National Council for Student Development (NCSD)**

This award bestows recognition on an individual whose doctoral dissertation excels in making a substantial contribution to the literature and/or practice of community college student development. A substantial contribution is defined as dissertation research that makes a major contribution to the literature on community college student development, revises understanding of a researchable problem associated with community college student development or looks at community college student development in a new way. The dissertation may also be an interdisciplinary effort that identifies a research problems new to the field. Dissertations utilizing a diversity of methodological approaches are encouraged. Only dissertations judged to be truly outstanding will be recognized regardless of the number of dissertation manuscripts submitted. Recipients need not be members of NCSD to be selected for this award.

## **SELECTION CRITERIA**

Nominations will be based on the following criteria:

- Timeliness of research
- Significance and/or originality of the problem and research questions pertaining to community college student development
- Relevant and appropriate use of theory/theories or a theoretical or conceptual framework
- Comprehensiveness and appropriateness of the literature review
- Detailed and creative use of qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods
- Quality or soundness of the data analysis
- Comprehensibility and meaningfulness of the results
- Significance of the study to theory and/or practice

## **NOMINATION PROCESS**

- Dissertation nominees should submit an online submission form providing the following information:
  - Dissertation author's name and contact information.
  - Title of the dissertation, date completed, and dissertation chair.
  - A brief description of the dissertation exceeding no more than 500 words. May be the dissertation abstract or a synopsis of such.
  - Provide a link to an online version of your study.
  - Submit a letter of support by the dissertation chair addressing the exemplary features of the study not to exceed 2 pages.
  - Awardees will be recognized at the NCSD National Conference.
  - Deadline for 2023 nominations is September 1, 2023.

## **Northeast Region Dissertations of the Year Award**

### **National Council for Black American Affairs (NCBAA)**

The NCBAA-Northeast Region Dissertation of the Year award will recognize an individual whose exemplary doctoral dissertation aligns with the mission of NCBAA, contributes to the literature on community colleges, and/or makes a substantial contribution to policy, procedures, and practice that has an impact on African American students, faculty, staff, or administrators. Exemplary research revises understanding of a researchable problem associated with African

Americans in the community college, identifies a research problem new to the field, and/or demonstrates sound interdisciplinary research. Only dissertations judged to be truly outstanding will be recognized.

### **Nomination Materials**

Nominations for the Dissertation of the Year award must include the following materials:

1. Letter of Nomination submitted by the dissertation author, committee member, or professional peer. Letter of Nomination must include the following:
  - Dissertation author's name, mailing address, email address, and telephone number.
  - Title of the dissertation, awarding institution, date conferred, and name of dissertation chair or advisor.
  - A statement outlining the reasons the nominee is deserving of consideration for this award.
  - Written confirmation of the nominee's availability to present his/her research at the NCBAANortheast Region Spring conference.
2. A brief description or abstract of the dissertation (not to exceed 750 words) that includes significance of the research, methodology, relevance of the results, and contribution to the literature.
3. A copy of the dissertation committee's signature page.
4. A copy of the final summary chapter of the dissertation or a maximum of 15-page double-spaced summary of the dissertation.
5. A letter of support (not to exceed 1 page) from the dissertation chair/advisor or committee member addressing the exemplary features of the study.
6. One-paragraph biography of the nominee.

### **Submission Process**

Send an electronic copy of the nomination materials to the NCBAA Northeast Executive Office via email at [executiveoffice@ncbaa-ne.org](mailto:executiveoffice@ncbaa-ne.org). **Incomplete** nomination materials will not be considered. Dissertations previously nominated will not be reconsidered. Each nominee may submit up to two nominations.

**Submission Deadline:** Electronic nomination materials must be submitted via email no later than Friday, February 14, 2023, at 11:59 p.m.

### **Eligibility Criteria**

To be eligible for the Dissertation of the Year award, the recipient must:

- Reside in the NCBAA-Northeast Region area or have earned the doctorate from a university located in the NCBAA-Northeast Region area. Both members and non-members of NCBAA-Northeast Region will be considered for this award.
- **NCBAA-Northeast Region areas:** Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Virgin Islands

### **Selection/Evaluation Criteria**

- Significance of the problem and research questions that align with the mission of NCBAA
- Relevance of the contribution to the literature
- Comprehensive use of research methodology
- Quality of the data analysis
- Meaningful application of the results
- Significance of the study to theory and/or practice

### **Award Given**

The recipient of the Dissertation of the Year Award will receive the following:



- Guaranteed workshop session to present dissertation research at the NCBAA-NE Spring Conference
- An award and recognition during the NCBAA-NE Spring Conference
- Complimentary conference registration and travel expenses to the NCBAA-NE Spring Conference
- One year membership to NCBAA-NE Region
- Recognition in the NCBAA-NE Region and NCBAA National newsletters