

AccessLex Institute / AIR Research and Dissertation Fellows Program Information

PROPOSAL DEADLINE
MARCH 2, 2020
11:59 PM (ET)



EMPOWERING THE NEXT GENERATION OF LAWYERS™



ASSOCIATION FOR INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH
Data and Decisions for Higher Education

Overview

The AccessLex Institute/AIR Research and Dissertation Fellows Program is a partnership between AccessLex Institute and the Association for Institutional Research (AIR), designed to promote scholarship on issues related to access, affordability and the value of graduate and professional education. Preference is given to proposals focusing on diversity in legal education or the profession; the bar exam; or graduate and professional school finance, student aid, or financial education. In addition, proposals utilizing regional, national, or multi-institutional datasets are encouraged. Single institution research proposals that are designed to yield findings that are scalable and replicable are also accepted. Researchers may analyze pre-existing data or include the construction of a new dataset in their proposal. Membership to AccessLex Institute or AIR is not required for grant eligibility.

Grant Opportunities

Two levels of grants are available to support year-long research projects for recipients affiliated with a non-profit U.S. postsecondary institution or relevant higher education organization.

- Research grants of up to \$50,000 are available to faculty, practitioners, and scholars.
- Dissertation grants of up to \$25,000 are available to doctoral students to support research and writing under the guidance of a faculty dissertation advisor.

This funding cannot duplicate or replace other funding from another source for the same project.

About the Partnership

Since 1983, [AccessLex Institute](#) has continually evolved to meet the ever-changing challenges and needs of the law students and institutions that we serve. We are steadfast in our commitment to inform students of the economic realities of law school without limiting their aspirations. We conduct and commission research to illuminate the latest data and evidence on the most critical issues facing legal education today. And we are resolute in our appeal to policymakers and influencers to take actions that make legal education work better for both students and society at large. As a nonprofit organization underpinned by nearly 200 American Bar Association-approved nonprofit and state-affiliated law schools, we are intently dedicated to the betterment of legal education. AccessLex Institute has offices in West Chester, PA, and Washington, D.C., with a team of accredited financial education counselors based throughout the United States. We currently have more than \$650 million in total net assets.

Based in Washington, D.C., the [AccessLex Center for Legal Education Excellence](#)[®] is committed to understanding the barriers that impede access to law school for historically underrepresented groups and improving access to law school for all; identifying actionable strategies and public policies to increase law school affordability; and strengthening the value of legal education.

The [Association for Institutional Research \(AIR\)](#) is a global association that empowers higher education professionals at all levels to utilize data, analytics, information, and evidence to make decisions and take actions that benefit students and institutions and improve higher education.

Application Process

Applications must be submitted online via the [AIR website](#) between January 21 and March 2, 2020.

A preview of the application is provided on page 5 and is followed by the evaluation used to review applications.

When an application is successfully submitted a confirmation email will be sent to the applicant. It is the applicant's responsibility to submit the final proposal and store the confirmation email as receipt of successful submission.

The application deadline is March 2, 2020 by 11:59 PM (ET).

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

For questions and assistance, please contact Tinsley Smith, AIR Director of Contracts, at grants@airweb.org or 850-391-7109.

Selection

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 applicants along with the final funding decision. The panel may recommend funding pending revisions to the research plan. If changes are requested, a revised research plan must be submitted before the award is finalized.

If any significant change in the research plan develops after the proposal is submitted, the applicant 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.

Decisions will be announced via email on May 4, 2020.

Funded Proposals

Grant recipient information, project titles, institutional affiliations, grant proposal, final reports, and presentation materials will be available from the AIR and AccessLex Institute Center for Research & Policy Analysis websites.

Disbursement of Funds: Grant recipients will receive funds to support research from June 1, 2020 through May 31, 2021. Grants are paid in three installments (June 1, 2020, November 1, 2020, and March 1, 2021). Checks are sent to the authorized institutional representative and made payable jointly to the institution and researcher.

Progress Reports: Progress reports are due by September 30, 2020 and January 31, 2021. Grant disbursement payments will not be processed until the progress report is received showing adequate progress. Progress report forms will be provided to grant recipients by August 31, 2020 and December

31, 2020. The progress report must be submitted via email to grants@airweb.org. Grant recipients should briefly describe (one to two pages) their progress to date on each deliverable and likelihood of successful completion of the proposed research by the close of the grant period.

AccessLex Institute Legal Education Research Symposium Presentation: Grant recipients must attend and be prepared to present preliminary findings (or discuss the status of their research) at the 2020 AccessLex Institute Legal Education Research Symposium being held November 16 – 17, 2020 in Nashville, TN. The proposed budget should include all costs associated for this presentation.

Note: The AccessLex Institute believes graduate student professional development and mentoring opportunities are important aspects of the Research Grant Program. Therefore, Research Grant recipients are strongly encouraged to designate funds for graduate student travel for the AccessLex Institute Legal Education Research Symposium Presentation.

Final Report: A Final Report, submitted via email to grants@airweb.org, is due July 31, 2021 (two months after the project period ends). The Final Report consists of the following four items:

- Scholarly paper (consistent with quality associated with peer-reviewed publications).
- 1-2-page executive summary of the scholarly paper.
- Brief report (1 page) detailing the achievement of each of the deliverables outlined in the original proposal.
- Financial statement (signed by the authorized financial representative) indicating that all grant funds have been exhausted.

No-Cost Extension: Additional time beyond the established expiration date (May 31, 2021) is available to assure adequate completion of the original scope of work within the original budget. Grantees may receive a one-time extension on the expiration date of the grant of up to four months with no additional funding. Requests for a no-cost extension should be made to grants@airweb.org prior to March 31, 2021 and should contain a revised completion date.

Withdrawal: Withdrawal of funded research projects must be coordinated with AIR. Requests should be sent to grants@airweb.org. Confirmations will be sent to the applicant and institutional financial representative.

Acknowledgement of Support and Disclaimer: An acknowledgment of support must appear in publications of any material, whether copyrighted or not, resulting from a funded project similar to the language below:

This material is based upon work supported by AccessLex Institute and the Association for Institutional Research.

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 AccessLex Institute or the Association for Institutional Research.

Legal Rights to Intellectual Property: Grantees retain legal rights to 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. Fellows will be asked to share their abstracts and their research papers on the AccessLex Institute Center for Research & Policy Analysis Research Paper Series on the [Social Science Research Network \(SSRN\)](#). SSRN is devoted to the rapid worldwide dissemination of social science research and is composed of a number of specialized research networks in each of the social sciences. Each of SSRN's networks encourages the early distribution of research results by distributing abstracts and by soliciting abstracts of top quality research papers around the world.

Preview of Grant Proposal Application

1. Contact Information

For Research Grant applicants, contact information is required for the:

- a. Principal Investigator(s)
- b. Authorized institutional financial representative (usually a staff member in the research grants office)

For Doctoral Grant applicants, contact information is required for the:

- a. Doctoral student
- b. Dissertation advisor
- c. Authorized institutional financial representative (usually a staff member in the research grants office)

2. Project Title and Description

2a. Statement of the research problem and national importance (limit 1,000 words):

What is the research problem this proposal intends to address?

How does this topic relate to the research priorities areas of access, affordability, and value of **graduate/professional or legal education**?

Why is this topic of national importance?

If single institution proposal, will proposed research yield findings that are scalable and replicable?

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

2b. Review the literature and establish the theoretical grounding for the research (limit 1,000 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 1,000 words):

What are the research questions to be addressed?

What is the proposed research methodology?

What is the statistical model to be used? (please include equations if appropriate)

2d. References cited (no word limit).

2e. List the datasets that will be used and explain why they best serve this research. Applicant should also 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 (limit 750 words).

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

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

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

3. 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 (limit 250 words).

4. Biographical Sketch

A biographical sketch should include prior degrees earned, relevant professional work experiences, skills necessary for completion of the proposed study, and prior research experiences with national datasets (limit 750 words).

5. 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 prior funding (past 10 years) from AIR to any of the PIs. Funding from other sources will not disqualify the application but may be considered in the funding decision (limit 250 words).

6. Budget

The budget may include salary replacement/stipend for the researcher, salary for graduate research assistants, research travel, and direct costs for research activities.

The budget must include or explain travel for mandatory attendance at the 2020 AccessLex Institute Legal Education Research Symposium. *Note: The AccessLex Institute believes graduate student professional development and mentoring opportunities are important aspects of the Research Grant Program. Therefore, Research Grant recipients are strongly encouraged to designate funds for graduate student travel for the AccessLex Institute Legal Education Research Symposium Presentation.*

Miscellaneous expenses such as software, books, and supplies may also be included.

Computer hardware, tuition, overhead or indirect costs, and living expenses are not allowable.

7. (Only for Doctoral Grant applicants) Letter of Support from Faculty Dissertation Advisor

A signed letter of support from the faculty dissertation advisor must be submitted in PDF format with the dissertation grant proposal.

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 Summer 2020
- Recommendation of the student's likelihood of successfully completing the dissertation in one year
- Statement of support if the dissertation will require restricted use license

Grant Proposal Evaluation

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.

Research topic addresses one or more of the research priorities	Check all that apply: <input type="checkbox"/> Access to/student diversity in graduate/professional education <input type="checkbox"/> Access to/student diversity in legal education <input type="checkbox"/> Affordability of graduate/professional education <input type="checkbox"/> Affordability of legal education <input type="checkbox"/> Value of graduate/professional degrees <input type="checkbox"/> Value of a legal degree <input type="checkbox"/> Unclear		
Overall, demonstrates a reasonable and defensible research methodology	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	
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
IRB plan is appropriate for the proposed research	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> Unclear/Missing	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Plan for use of restricted dataset(s) is appropriate	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> N/A	<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
Includes 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 and Timeliness:

Rate the proposed research on its national importance and timeliness. **(5 points)**

Low	Marginal	Acceptable	Strong	Exceptionally Strong	
1	2	3	4	5	

To what degree does this topic relate to the research priorities areas of access, affordability, and value of graduate/professional or legal education? **(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? **(5 points)**

Poor/Inappropriate	Adequate	Exceptionally Strong	
1	3	5	

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	

What type of dataset(s) does the proposed research utilize? **(5 points)**

Institutional Data	Regional Data	National Data	
1	3	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 AccessLex Institute/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.