

UW-Madison: New campus effort will support inequality research

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MADISON - A new initiative sponsored by the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research and Graduate Education will support efforts to better understand the factors and processes that cause or contribute to inequality based on characteristics such as race, ethnicity, gender, disability, economic standing, language, minority status, country of origin, and immigration status in the United States.

It will also promote research that looks at the effects of inequality on the opportunities and outcomes for diverse population groups, and of promising policies, programs, and interventions for improvement.

“As the nation continues to contend with racial and other inequalities, we need research to deepen and extend our understanding,” says Steve Ackerman, vice chancellor for research and graduate education. “Crucially, we also need to ask: How can we use this knowledge to build transformative pathways towards greater equality?”

From a research perspective, inequality refers to disparities in resources, opportunities, or outcomes between population groups.

Proposals may focus on documenting specific forms of inequality and the domains in which they occur, understanding core causes of inequality, identifying micro- and macro-level consequences of inequality, and on evaluating initiatives intended to reduce inequality or its effects. The OVCRGE strongly encourages interdisciplinary collaborations.

The initiative will offer funding in two categories: for projects less than \$100,000, and those \$100,000 up to a maximum of \$250,000 over a two-year period.

“Pervasive inequalities exist in all realms of contemporary society, manifesting in widespread disparities in social, educational, economic, health, wealth, and political opportunities and outcomes across population groups,” explains Lonnie Berger, associate vice chancellor for research in the social sciences.

These areas include differential access to and returns from modern technologies, educational institutions, labor markets, housing markets, neighborhoods, and financial markets, as well as exposure to stress, trauma and environmental toxins.

“We are particularly interested in research on how inequalities are socially constructed and perpetuated in America,” Berger says. “This includes looking at how historic and contemporary social structures, policies, systems, and institutions perpetuate racial and other inequalities.”

Research initiatives sponsored by the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research - including the recent Pandemic-Affected Research Continuation initiative and the UW2020 program that promotes innovative and groundbreaking research - support basic and applied research on a range of important and timely topics.

To apply, submit a cover sheet with a 300-word abstract by Nov. 13. A complete proposal is due Dec. 14. The online application form is available at: vcrge-uwmadison.smapply.io/. Select the “Understanding and Reducing Inequalities” program tile. Additional information is available at research.wisc.edu/.

A faculty committee of subject matter experts will review proposals to identify those that hold the most promise for meeting the goals of this initiative. The committee will then make recommendations to the OVCRGE, which will make final selections.

Awards will be announced in March 2021 and projects may begin in July.