

The National Conference of Bar Examiners (NCBE) Validity and Fairness Research Award Call for Proposals

The National Conference of Bar Examiners Validity and Fairness Research Award was conceived by the [Hon. Phyllis D. Thompson](#), a judge on the District of Columbia Court of Appeals since 2006. Judge Thompson is a former member of the NCBE Board of Trustees and of the Council of the ABA Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar. Her work in bar admissions and interest in licensure examinations served as the basis for her idea to provide research awards to students and faculty.

These awards are intended to provide support for graduate students and faculty in any discipline **doing research germane to testing and measurement, particularly in a high-stakes licensure setting**. The proposed research should identify aspects of validity evidence including, but not limited to, scoring, response processes, and the impact of use of licensure and certification testing.

The topics under consideration should focus on issues of validity and fairness in assessment including, but not restricted to, challenges, opportunities, and techniques for assessing individuals from a variety of different backgrounds. Proposals receiving the award would focus on studies that inform validity and fairness, including diversity and inclusion in professions. The proposed project need not focus on licensure testing, but relevance to licensure and certification will be a consideration in final selection.

Funding will be awarded on an objective and nondiscriminatory basis and will be given for proposals that:

- Address topics relevant to building a more diverse legal profession
- Are feasible in a 12-to-18-month period
- Will add to the literature on licensing and certification testing and accumulation of validity evidence

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This year we are especially interested in any of the following topics:

- Innovations in the collection of validity evidence that identify factors relating to performance differences on high stakes assessments. Analyses that overcome issues of small samples are welcome.
- The impact of licensure and certification testing on historically minoritized communities
- Factors associated with bar passage (e.g., curricular, geographic, and financial factors; family caretaker responsibilities; law journal and moot court participation)

The research proposed should advance knowledge about the role of high-stakes assessment in diversity, fairness, and inclusion efforts.

The brief proposal should contain:

- Title of Research
- Researcher Name
- Researcher Title
- Researcher Institution
- Contact phone number
- Contact email address
- Research proposal
 - o Background/context – summary of other research on the topic
 - o General purpose – aims for the current research
 - o Planned analysis – data to be collected and analyzed
 - o Research implications or importance
 - o Relation to validity and fairness in testing

Student award recipients

Each recipient is expected to work with a faculty advisor at their institution and with staff at NCBE to complete a project over a period of 12–18 months; the exact time frame is flexible and can include the summer (for students seeking summer support). The proposed project need not focus on licensure testing, but relevance to licensure and certification will be a consideration in final selection.

The student conducting the research must be enrolled in a graduate program and have completed a minimum of one year of study toward their graduate (e.g., master's, PhD) degree. Students who are just completing their PhD are also eligible. The faculty advisor must be willing to work with the student on the project and supervise the student's progress. Each student recipient will be awarded a stipend of \$6,000, and the advisor will be awarded a stipend of \$1,000.

The student award application should include (1) the student's curriculum vita; (2) a letter of intent from the student's project advisor; (3) a brief proposal of up to four pages (this may be very brief for those proposing a literature review); (4) a recent scholarly writing sample; and (5) a cover letter.

Faculty award recipients

Faculty recipients are also expected to complete a project over a period of about one year; the exact time frame is flexible and can include the summer. Faculty members need not be tenure-track to apply. Faculty conducting the research may work with students on the project, but the work should primarily be their own. Each faculty recipient will be awarded a stipend of \$7,000.

The application should include (1) the faculty member's curriculum vita; (2) a brief proposal of up to four pages (this may be very brief for those proposing a literature review); (3) a recent scholarly writing sample; and (4) a cover letter.

Submissions and questions should be addressed to:

Dr. Danette McKinley
Email: dmckinley@ncbex.org

Email submissions must be received by **Monday, November 13, 2023**. The award committee will review all applications and will make the award(s) by January 29, 2024.

NCBE reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to withhold the award for any year in which the Validity and Fairness Research Award Committee determines that no submission merits the award.

The National Conference of Bar Examiners is a not-for-profit corporation founded in 1931. The mission of the Conference is to work with other institutions to develop, maintain, and apply reasonable and uniform standards of education and character for eligibility for admission to the practice of law; and to assist bar admission authorities by providing standardized examinations of uniform and high quality for the testing of applicants for admission to the practice of law, disseminating relevant information concerning admission standards and practices, conducting

educational programs for the members and staffs of such authorities, and providing other services such as character and fitness investigations and research.

NCBE 8/28/2023