

MSU Post Doctoral Fellowship in Teaching

Strategic Plan Theme: Staff and Faculty Success

Funding Level: Below \$1 million

Facility Needs: No new facilities will be needed

Submitting Unit: Entomology

Collaborating colleges/departments/units involved with this proposal.

CANR

What is the proposal's big theme or idea?

We propose to develop a transformational post-doctoral training experience to provide professional development in teaching. This program, the MSU Post Doctoral Fellowship for Excellence in Teaching will provide post-doctoral scholars with the opportunity to gain experience in teaching classes within & outside their discipline and to work in an elite cohort of peers to explore the scholarship of teaching in higher education while continuing research activities. After completing this 1 to 3 year program, Fellows will have exceptionally well-rounded portfolios to compete for positions within and outside of MSU.

What is the proposal's goal?

We will develop a 1 to 3 year fellowship program to strategically recruit recent PhD graduates who have the potential to excel at teaching but who have been unable to gain first hand training and experience in teaching. Fellows will be recruited to align with course needs within a department and will be expected to teach 1 class per semester. In addition to teaching, they will be expected to align with a research group or laboratory within their home department to continue their scholarly activity. Fellows will also work with members of their cohort to conduct scholarship in higher education teaching. We expect that MSU Post Doctoral Fellowship for Excellence in teaching to strategically recruit Fellows from underrepresented groups in academia. This program has the potential to provide Fellows from diverse backgrounds with enhanced training which will increase their competitiveness for faculty positions. Because the fellows will be placed within departments and function as full department members, it will also allow current faculty to build collaborative relationships with these diverse Fellows. We expect that this will result in many fellows successfully competing for faculty positions at MSU and that we will retain these outstanding, well trained, diverse scholars.

Define the significance, or impact of your big idea.

Our proposal addresses three critical needs: 1. Graduate students lack meaningful opportunities to develop college and university teaching skills. Teaching Assistantships are highly variable in the degree of direct teaching experience provided. In the infrequent case when more in-depth opportunities are available, such as serving as a lead instructor for a course, it is often difficult to balance this with making adequate degree progress. This is particularly challenging for students in the sciences, where most assistantships are grant-funded. For those interested in teaching, the post doctoral period provides an excellent opportunity to gain these skills. Post docs have been able to establish a research niche and deep disciplinary expertise which can inform their teaching. 2. We will recruit Fellows from diverse backgrounds. Candidates from underrepresented groups still struggle to compete for faculty positions. By providing a unique opportunity to be lead instructors for classes, lead course development, and produce scholarship in teaching, Fellows from underrepresented groups will gain skills that will increase their competitive advantage in the academic job market. Fellows will also function as full members of departments, attending faculty meetings, contributing

to shared governance, and participating in graduate student mentorship. This provides further professional development opportunities and builds bonds with department members. Fellows will grow their professional network within their disciplines and through interdisciplinary connections with other Fellows. This program will also allow us to identify outstanding future faculty from underrepresented groups and to retain them at MSU. 3. As senior faculty retire and early & mid career faculty are more mobile than before the pandemic, there are increasing gaps in coverage of courses critical to degree programs. Even when resources are available to recruit faculty following departures, there is often several years lag before new faculty can teach courses—meaning entire cohorts of students will miss key instruction. We cannot continue to ask remaining faculty to do more with less, and existing post docs and grad students are also often overwhelmed. The MSU Post Doctoral Fellowship for Excellence program would address this chronic concern in academia while providing valuable professional development and a mechanism for diversifying the profession.

Who will be impacted?

Fellows will receive critical training for their future faculty careers, Departments will gain vibrant, diverse members of their community who will teach essential courses, and the University will develop a mechanism to recruit and retain excellent future faculty from diverse backgrounds.

Our proposed program would be available for all colleges to participate in. In the Department of Entomology and CANR, we are discussing a pilot run of this program during the upcoming academic year.

What does sustainability for your proposal look like?

This program is structured with shared unit & university support. We expect that this model will result in sustainable funding support over time. We also expect that this program can support training and professional development grants across many disciplines such that in the future, the program can either increase to meet greater training needs in specific areas or can reduce reliance on MSU funds.

We expect the initial investment in this proposal to be under \$1 million. Each Fellow will be paid a competitive salary, and we propose that the Provost's Office contribute half of the salary and colleges or departments contribute half. This shared funding model is important in ensuring the shared commitment to the professional development of Fellows across all units. A proposed initial cohort of 10 fellows across the university, with 50% of an administrative staff person to coordinate recruitment and professional development activities is expected to cost approximately \$750,000 in total annually, with the Provost contribution \$375,000. New fellows will be recruited as current fellows conclude their programs. Departments will develop requests for Fellows in January of each year which will be reviewed by the program steering committee consisting of a member from each participating college, the Provost's office, and the Office of Diversity & Inclusion. Requests will be evaluated based on: department need, mentorship plan, and professional development opportunities. Over time, department success in fellow mentorship will also be considered. Departments and the steering committee will work together to recruit fellows.