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Professional Doctoral Fellowship in Artificial Intelligence

Request for Applications (Academic Year 2024-25)

Eligibility: UF students, accepted or enrolled in a Professional Doctoral program offered by PHHP, whose primary research mentor is a graduate faculty member in PHHP.

Application Deadline: Proposals are accepted all year round.

Expected Notification of Review/Award: ~45 days after submission.

Anticipated Award Period: 3-6 months (depending on the project type, e.g., capstone or final project)

Award Funding: Up to $7,000 per individual project (out of a total budget of $20,000 per academic year), usable for tuition (with some restrictions, see **Award Expenditures and Utilization**), research and research-related expenses (e.g., conference travel, equipment, software) upon as allowed by UF and State policy.

Number of Awards: 2-3 (max 2 per Professional Doctoral program)

Purpose

The PHHP Professional Doctoral Fellowship in Artificial Intelligence (AI) aims at fostering students' training and applied research in AI, relative to topics in public health and health professions. The long-term goal is to build a legacy of excellence in AI for the PHHP Professional Doctoral programs with national and international recognition. In the short-term, the awards provide an opportunity for completing specific projects in line with the student's coursework and professional growth.

Theme Areas and Project Types

All areas of public health and health professions pertaining to the current PHHP Professional Doctorate program offerings, i.e., Doctor of Audiology (AuD), Doctor of Occupational Therapy (OTD), Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT). We look forward to innovative proposals that leverage AI to advance healthcare practices in these fields.

The fellowship can support projects of various types, relative to the professional doctorate program specifics regarding timing and implementation of projects by professional students, e.g., for the AuD program the funds can support capstone projects starting in the second year, or their completion over the third year, for the OTD program the fellowship can support capstone projects starting during Spring and Summer of the students' third year, for the DPT program the fellowship can be used to support projects that begin in the second year or the completion of those projects in the second year.

Each proposal should explicitly describe the implementation or use of AI, and the type of AI model to be used, e.g., reactive AI, generative AI, in an aspect of professional education, service, practice, or research.

Potential projects could include developing AI-driven diagnostic tools for hearing impairments, creating machine learning models to predict patient outcomes in physical therapy, or designing AI-assisted procedures to enhance occupational therapy interventions.

For instance, a student might propose a project on AI-driven diagnostic tools for hearing impairments including aspects such as: literature review and data collection; model development and training; testing and refinement; implementation and evaluation. Equipment needs could include high-performance computing resources, audiometric testing equipment, and software for data analysis and machine learning.

Another project could be proposed for creating machine learning models to predict patient outcomes in physical therapy, planned as: data gathering and preprocessing; model development and training; model validation; deployment and outcome analysis. Necessary equipment might include access to patient data, machine learning software, and computational resources for model training.

Similarly, a project on AI applications to enhance occupational therapy interventions could involve the following research activities: needs assessment and data collection; development of AI-driven procedures; integration with existing therapy tools; pilot testing and feedback collection. Equipment needs could include therapy tools and AI-enabled devices.

Qualitative and quantitative studies (e.g., Delphi surveys, focus groups, system usability scales) related to existing or emerging AI technology acceptance, accessibility, evaluation of potential unintended harm, comparisons with non-AI approaches, et cetera, are also welcome.

Eligibility Criteria and Application Instructions

Eligible applicants are UF students accepted or enrolled in a professional doctoral program offered by PHHP, whose primary research mentor is a UF faculty whose primary appointment is in PHHP. Applicants cannot be prior recipients of this award.

The application package consists of:

1. One letter/e-mail of eligibility and support from the student's Mentor, or the Program Director, or the Department Chair
2. Student's fellowship proposal, structured into
    a. Non-technical abstract with title (150 words max) —abstracts of funded proposals will be published on the PHHP AI webpages
    b. Project description (max 2 pages, single spaced, 11pt font, 1 inch margin) with bibliography (not in the word limit)

c. Budget/budget justification

3. Student's CV (1 page max)

The application package must be submitted, as a single PDF document, to the Associate Dean for Artificial Intelligence and Innovation via email to apriloneal3@ufl.edu. The application package must be submitted by the Program Director or on their behalf with their permission (cc'ed in the e-mail).

Review and Notification Process

All proposals will be evaluated by more than one reviewer under the oversight of the Associate Dean for AI and Innovation. Reviewers will score each proposal in a five-point liker scale and provide a brief narrative. Besides scoring, awards will be also dependent on the concurrence of applications and available funds. The review feedback will be sent back to all applicants along with the award decision.

Award Expenditures and Utilization

Awards will be disbursed to the student's department through a specific fund in support of research for the duration of the award period and managed by the department administrator.

Student's tuition can be supported as long as the funds are not tied to specific criteria. i.e., the fellowship is tied to a donor's intent (in which case it would be specified in the **Donors' fellowship** section). For regular fellowships that are funded by the College IDCs, the only restriction is that the student is engaged in research.

Should a student's research mentor change during the award period, the Program Director or Department Chair will work with the Associate Dean for AI and Innovation to transfer the award to another research mentor.

Any unused funds will be returned to the college at the end of the award period, i.e., there is no provision for carryforward of funds or award extensions. In addition, unreleased/uncommitted funds expire at the end of the academic year.

Donors' fellowships

None as of 12/11/2024.

Reporting requirements

The student is expected to present the project results at the PHHP Days or other major UF research showcase. Presentations/posters at national/international conferences, or paper publications are highly encouraged (in which case travel/publication funds can be used). The mentor is equally responsible for the reporting requirements and must provide written justification in case they were not met. All presentations / publications should acknowledge the receipt of support from the College of Public Health and Health Professions Professional Doctoral Fellowship in AI.