MARKET VALUE
OF ENDOBJMENT
as of October 1, 2018

$507,211

Distributes ~ $4,000 - $5,000 per quarter for a total of approximately $17,000 per year in fellowship funds. This is the amount currently available on an annual basis to award to graduate students.

THANK YOU FOR INVESTING IN UW GRADUATE STUDENTS

Since 2002

> Your involvement with the UWRA has helped support 23 graduate students in conducting research on a variety of aging related topics, from understanding the cellular processes involved in regulating lifespan to assessing risks of injury or illness; from using smart sensor technologies in the home to exploring how your public pension funds are invested.

> Established with initial gifts from the University of Washington Retirement Association and the Estate of Rheba De Tornyay, the UWRA Endowed Fellowship in Aging has received more than 300 gifts totaling over $250,000 from 132+ donors!

The University of Washington Retirement Association’s Endowed Fellowship in Aging drives excellence for the university’s collective research enterprise through the support of students in 85 graduate programs at the UW, including Medicine, Social Work and Informatics.

By partnering with and supporting the Graduate School, the UWRA Endowed Fellowship in Aging builds a path to the UW for the best and brightest graduate students across all disciplines.
As one of the 2017-18 recipients of the UWRA Fellowship in Aging, I am grateful for the opportunities this award has provided me. I relied on this generous fellowship last winter quarter to help finance my education as I conducted research in the field, working toward finishing my PhD.

I am a 4th year PhD candidate in the Biomedical and Health Informatics (BHI) program at UW. I am especially interested in designing and evaluating patient/consumer-focused health technologies that can empower older adults to better manage their health. I am interested in taking a user-centered and participatory approach to the technology design and evaluation process, engaging older adults in research activities to reflect their most important needs, perceptions, and values.

For my PhD dissertation, my research focus was to understand how the Internet of Things (IoT)-based smart home technologies can help older adults manage their health and wellness. I had these 3 goals:

1) Assess the feasibility of an IoT smart sensor system to monitor older adults in their residential setting;

2) Examine older adults' perceived level of obtrusiveness of an IoT smart sensor system and how this perception may change over time and after exposure to such a system;

3) Develop recommendations for the design of future user interfaces for older adults summarizing data obtained from an IoT smart sensor system.

Participants (37 older adult participants ages 65+) selected which devices they would like to have installed within their home as part of the study. The devices include door and window sensors, multisensory, smart speakers and IP cameras. I conducted interview sessions to gather participant perspectives on IoT device use within the home, addressing issues of intrusiveness, perceived value, and information needs from the data visualization.

Thanks to the generous support of the UWRA Fellowship in Aging, I was able to completely dedicate my time over winter quarter to conducting data analysis and manuscript development. I had freedom to focus solely on my dissertation research for a quarter and make meaningful progress on the data analysis. My goal is to finish the analysis and complete my dissertation and graduate by the end of this year.

My next step is to get a position in academia to continue research in designing and evaluating health technologies for older adults. Through my future research, I would like to help ensure that older adults’ perspectives are always respected when designing technology solutions for older adults.

I will always remember the generous support that the UWRA Fellowship in Aging provided me in completing my dissertation research.

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A MESSAGE FROM RIDDHI

I am a 4th year political science doctoral student. I spent 6 years working with labor unions across the United States and India before coming to the UW. Experiences within the labor movement demonstrated to me the importance of planning for retirement. Time and again, workers would forgo increases in wages to bargain more towards their defined benefit retirement plan – an endangered species. With the rising cost of living and the shrinking role of government benefits, I became aware of the precarious livelihoods many senior citizens face.

Much debate around public pension funds has legitimated the notion of pension reform. That often translates into pension cuts for beneficiaries, such as you. Thanks to my experiences within the labor movement, I knew there was more to the story: most of a state’s fiscal capacity to meet its benefit obligations comes from investment returns, not employee or state contributions. Yet the media and academia have largely ignored this fact. The decision-making processes on how billions of dollars in public pension funds are invested or governed has significant impacts on the retirement security of millions of Americans.

I came to the UW to investigate how different pension fund stakeholders, whether beneficiaries, politicians or finance professionals, decide to invest in private equity and hedge funds. Plagued by sub-par returns and a murky, expensive fee structure, these assets have privatized control over public sector funds. By investing in private assets, public pension funds have curtailed beneficiaries’ voices in managing their own retirement futures. The supportive faculty and colleagues within the UW political science department have provided immeasurable guidance for me to explore this pressing situation.

Thanks to your generous support, I am now able to embark on field work this quarter. I plan to attend public pension fund board meetings and interview board trustees and staff. I will also interview beneficiaries to understand their thoughts on retirement investing and governance.

What impact do these factors have on their lives? How do they engage in governing their own retirement? How do they challenge Wall Street’s campaign towards risky and expensive assets? This field work is coupled with an effort to hand-collect pension fund board composition data for 90 state-level pension funds across the country. This new dataset will be made publicly available in the hopes of spurring subsequent inquiries.

Your support emboldens and demonstrates the value of my efforts, because of you, that I do what I do.

It is because of public pension beneficiaries, because of you, that I do what I do.

Your support emboldens and demonstrates the value of my efforts.

Thank you for your investment in students like me who are working for the public good.

“Public sector employees have dedicated much of their lives to public service – a very important and noble cause. The least I can do is to show that government budgets do not need to be balanced on working people, when Wall Street’s financial professionals continue to become wealthier by charging massive fees and delivering only average returns form risky investments. Thank you for your investment in students like me who are working for the public good.”
“As researchers, artists, and scholars, our graduate students innovate, create and lead. As teachers, they inspire our undergrads to be curious and confident. As alumni in diverse careers, they invigorate our economy, civic life and serve as connectors to our multiple communities.”

– Dr. Rebecca Aanerud
Interim Dean, UW Graduate School
Principal Lecturer, UW Bothell
School of Interdisciplinary Arts & Sciences

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