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Missouri Data Fellows and Collaborative Research

Coordinating Board for Higher Education
March 6, 2019

BACKGROUND

MDHE leadership and staff have worked with the University of Missouri, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, and the Department of Economic Development to establish the Missouri Data Fellows program. In this program, with the support of the Kauffman Foundation, Data Fellows will be placed with participating agencies, while also pursuing a master's degree in economics or public affairs at the University of Missouri-Columbia.

CURRENT STATUS

The Missouri Data Fellows program arose from discussions among agency leadership, the University of Missouri Department of Economics, and the Kauffman Foundation over the course of fall 2018. The MDHE also established a Blueprint goal for 2019 to "partner with other state agencies and an external funder to establish a data fellowship program with a special focus on STEM degree production and workforce supply and demand. This program would extend the agencies' research capacity, focus additional energy on high-priority research questions, and create an impactful internship for high-achieving recent bachelor's graduates looking to continue their studies in fields with emphasis on public policy and data analysis.

The partners have agreed that two cohorts of fellows will work with the agencies while pursuing their master's degrees. The first cohort of fellows will arrive in August of 2019 and will be on-site 18-24 hours per week. Prior to working on-site, the fellows will receive intensive training at the University in data handling, statistical software, and basic research and data analysis.

The fellows will engage in projects mutually beneficial to the agencies and their studies, and will meet regularly with their University and agency advisers to discuss and evaluate their work. The first cohort will conclude with the agencies in December 2020. A second cohort will have begun in August 2020, and will briefly overlap to ensure continuity of ongoing projects.

As of mid-February, the University has been provisionally recruiting several qualified candidates who are currently finishing their undergraduate studies. Final approval from the Kauffman Foundation has also been received. The agencies and the University of Missouri have also signed a joint MOU which defines the program and establishes conditions for access to sensitive data under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

NEXT STEPS

An MOU has been signed, and final approval has been received from the Kauffman Foundation, the project's principal funder. The University is now free to seek final commitments from interested fellows. Agency research staff will meet the fellows, and all participants will discuss a tentative scope of work and work arrangements, in preparation for the fellows' formal arrival in August 2019.

RECOMMENDATION

This is an information item only.

NO ATTACHMENTS