



SMU CENTER ON RESEARCH AND EVALUATION RECEIVES GRANT FROM WALTON FAMILY FOUNDATION TO SUPPORT NEW FELLOWSHIP

Fellows will advance collaborations between evaluation and philanthropy

DALLAS – April 2022 – The Center on Research and Evaluation (CORE) at the Simmons School of Education and Human Development has been awarded a three-year, \$630,000 grant to support the launch of the new Advancing Evaluation in Philanthropy Fellowship program.

CORE provides a range of research and evaluation services related to education and human development. The center focuses on evaluation and applied research aimed at understanding and improving programs, policies, and practices to improve the health and well-being of individuals, schools, organizations and communities.

CORE and members of the Walton Family Foundation’s Strategy, Learning, and Evaluation Department (SLED) collaborated on a 2021 planning grant to identify needs for an emergent type of professional to bridge the worlds of philanthropy and grantmaking with research and evaluation. The work of a foundation evaluator is evolving, and now includes a wide array of skills in addition to those of a social scientist. Instead of focusing solely on accountability or outcome metrics, funders are working hand-in-hand with evaluators to use data at every step of the grantmaking process, and evaluators in the field need more training to do this work effectively.

Both CORE and SLED acknowledged the need to focus on collaborations that would leverage funding and evaluation to promote equity. This includes an explicit focus on developing professionals of color and utilizing more culturally responsive evaluation designs.

The Advancing Evaluation in Philanthropy Fellowship will last two years for each fellow. Fellows will collaborate closely with CORE evaluators and researchers as well as national funders to explore and further define these new spaces emerging between philanthropy and evaluation. Selected individuals will spend the bulk of their Fellowship at SMU in Dallas. In this inaugural cohort they will also visit WFF partners in Bentonville, Arkansas, and will travel for conferences. Fellows will be mentored by SMU and WFF SLED staff and complete a Capstone project.

The goal of CORE and WFF is to expand the program over time to include additional foundation partners and incorporate a wide array of opportunities for Fellows to gain practical experience in the field of foundation evaluation.

“Support from the Walton Family Foundation will equip SMU CORE to give Fellows rigorous and real-world experience that will help bring more research and evaluation into philanthropy practice. The ultimate goal is for evaluation and knowledge creation to be more equitable and impactful over

time,” says Annie Wright, CORE’s Executive Director.

“We’re excited to partner with the CORE team at SMU to launch this new Fellowship program and help support the next generation of evaluators working in philanthropy. The practical experience that Fellows will gain with WFF, combined with the mentorship and training provided by CORE, will prepare Fellows for a career in this field while also providing fresh voices and perspectives that will advance the foundation’s practice as well.” Matthew Carr – Director of Strategy, Learning, and Evaluation

Recruitment for Fellows has begun. Interested applicants can find more information here.

About The Walton Family Foundation

The Walton Family Foundation is, at its core, a family-led foundation. Three generations of the descendants of our founders, Sam and Helen Walton, and their spouses, work together to lead the foundation and create access to opportunity for people and communities. We work in three areas: improving K-12 education, protecting rivers and oceans and the communities they support, and investing in our home region of Northwest Arkansas and the Arkansas-Mississippi Delta. To learn more, visit waltonfamilyfoundation.org and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

About SMU’s Center on Research and Evaluation (CORE)

Housed within SMU’s [Simmons School of Education and Human Development](#), The [Center on Research and Evaluation](#) (CORE) provides a variety of research, evaluation, and consultation services. CORE staff have a wide range of skills, including evaluation planning, grant writing, community-based and multi-site interventions, quantitative and qualitative analysis, data collection and management of large and multi-year datasets. CORE values highly collaborative evaluation work with innovative programs and leverages multiple strategic partnerships. CORE brings rigorous evaluation science to study design that allows us to go beyond describing trends to testing the relationship between program participation and eventual outcomes.

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