



Dear Jade,

Thank you for submitting your proposal. A printable summary is below. Your confirmation number is 11592. A confirmation email will be sent to you within 24 hours.

Applicants will be notified of the status of the proposed project on February 2, 2016.

If you have questions or need assistance regarding your application please contact the AIR Grant staff at 850-385-4155 x109 or [grants@airweb.org](mailto:grants@airweb.org).

## SUMMARY

### Personal Information

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### Demographics

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Discipline of highest degree	
Position description	
Staff members in IR office	
Campus type	
Years of experience in IR	
IR Roles	
Year of birth	
Race/Ethnicity	
Gender	

### Grant Type

I am applying for a:

Research Grant

### Financial Representative

Name	Janet Wiens
Affiliation	University of Memphis
Department	Office of Sponsored Programs
Title	Senior Sponsored Programs Administrator
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City	Memphis
State or Province	Tennessee
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#### Additional Contacts

#### Project Description

##### Project title:

Diversity in Law Schools and Legal Profession: A Theoretically Guided Inquiry about Gender and Racial Differences in Persistence and Valuation

##### Statement of the research problem and national importance (limit 750 words):

- What is the research problem this proposal intends to address?
- How does this topic relate to the research priorities areas of access, affordability, and value of legal or graduate/professional education?
- Why is this topic of national importance?
- Why is it timely to conduct this research at this time?

The primary interest of this project is to examine diversity in law schools and study how the educational experiences of women and racial minorities contribute to their career progress in legal professions. According to the American Bar Association (ABA), diversity is one of the prominent values that law schools and profession embrace today (Lempert et al., 2000; Reynoso & Amron, 2002). Law schools have used a variety of strategies to recruit women and underrepresented minorities (URM - hereafter refers to African Americans, Latino/Hispanics, and Native Americans), and the efforts have resulted in observable gains in the number of women (47.8% vs. male 52.2%) and minorities (28.5% vs. White 71.5%) entering legal education.

However, diversity cannot be accomplished solely by changing law-school admissions practices. Women and minorities have substantially higher rates of leaving the law profession at all levels of the pipeline (Sterling & Reichman, 2013). Also, law school attrition is significantly higher among female and URM students (Reynoso & Amron, 2002). Meanwhile, neither group has successfully achieved a sufficient presence in the legal profession. Women and URM account for roughly 35% and 9%, respectively, of over 1,300,000 licensed lawyers nationally (ABA, 2015), which is a strong contrast to their presence of 50% and 32% in the U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014).

Unfortunately, very limited research has been done to better understand the factors underlying the severe attrition of women and minorities from law schools and the legal profession. To date, the majority of studies about gender inequity has focused on earning gaps in the law profession, whereas the concern about racial diversity has remained mostly anecdotal. The very few existent empirical studies are mainly concerned with race-conscious affirmative action in law school admission (e.g., Lempert et al., 2000). The lack of scholarly effort to address gender and racial disparities may be partly

explained by the lack of in-depth and structured data collection and interdisciplinary collaboration. Although some national associations (e.g., ABA, the National Association for Law Placement [NALP], and the Association of American Law Schools [AALS]) keep annual and historical data on law school application, enrollment, placement, and post-graduation employment, their statistics mostly remain as headcounts and percentages; the one exception is After JD, a longitudinal survey that collects comprehensive information from a national sample of lawyers. In contrast, well-structured in-depth data collection has been ongoing for decades in the non-legal side of the educational system and in a variety of occupations; empirical research on inequality has yielded well-established theories and systematic inquiry approaches in educational and sociological realms.

Within this context, the goal of this project is to breach the gap between legal education in law schools and the non-legal side of the higher education system. Upon completion, this project will make available: 1) an in-depth inquiry about the educational experience of a sample of law school students; 2) a theoretically- and empirically-guided survey instrument for systematic data collection on educational experience of law students; and 3) a theoretically grounded investigation about how cultural, social, and educational differences contribute to the career choices and professional development of women and minorities using a national data set.

The national importance of this project is supported by the critical role of diversity in ensuring sustainability of the legal system and economic development of the nation. First, it is predicted that by mid-century the present minorities will together become the majority in the U.S. (Reynoso & Amron, 2002). It is important that the legal profession sufficiently represents all groups of the American society because diversity is needed to sustain a judicial system that ensures democracy and equal right of all citizens (Robbins & Matthews, 2014). By investigating how a variety of factors in law education contributes to the career progress of law graduates, this project helps to identify potential interventions to improve diversity in legal profession.

Second, law schools play a pivotal role in shaping the demographics of the legal profession. The astonishing shortfall of research on student experience in legal education is one of the root causes for attrition, particularly regarding women and minority students. This project takes a critical step to unlock the problems of disparity in legal education by identifying and collecting previously neglected information. Finally, evidence suggests that minority law students are more likely to serve the same populations from which they come. The effort to increase diversity in law education and profession will help to "elevate historically underserved communities and thereby contribute to the strength of the nation's economic and social life" (Reynoso & Amron, 2002).

#### Review the literature and establish a theoretical grounding for the research (limit 1000 words):

- What has prior research found about this problem?
- What is the theoretical/conceptual grounding for this research?

Human capital theory (HCT) is the dominant framework in inequality studies of legal profession (e.g., Kay & Hagan, 2008; Payne-Pikus et al., 2010). HCT is a neoclassical economic theory that views individuals as rational actors who make educational and occupational decisions based upon a calculation of associated monetary costs and benefits (Melguizo, 2011; Xu, 2015). This theoretical perspective regards education choices (e.g., types of law school) and work experience (e.g., type of employer, full-time/part-time status) as investments, and explains differences in earnings and status attainment as rewards for productivity (Becker, 1964; Kay & Hagan, 2008).

Although education and skill investments are useful for predicting earning and professional status, HCT falls short in explaining inequity (Kay & Hagan, 1998). For instance, empirical research repeatedly showed that women obtain lower returns for the same investments in human capital than do men (Dinovizer et al., 2009; Xu, 2015). Moreover, HCT fails to take into consideration that individuals' decision making goes beyond the econometric formulation of material self-interest; rather, social, cultural, and structural norms also affect one's choices by providing incentives that can change their values and expectations (Huber, 1997). In fact, evidence is ample that gender and racial inequalities result from a combination of individual, structural, and organizational attributes (Kay & Hagan, 1998; Xu, 2015). Therefore, this project will use Bourdieu's theorization of cultural, social, and economic capitals to examine how measures of individual capital interact with the organizational and structural norms in legal education/profession to impact educational and professional outcomes of law students.

Cultural capital can be interpreted as an individual's cultural background and parent-related factors that define one's class status (Xu, 2013). It refers to the heritage, knowledge, and trait an individual possesses in order to compete in a society dominated by the values of the majority (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). According to Bourdieu (1986), individuals' cultural capital is converted into educational credentials, and ultimately occupational success. Empirical studies have found that cultural capital contributes to students' academic mastery (Goyette & Mullen, 2006), accumulation of social capital (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977), and career attainment (Stoecker & Pascarella, 1991).

The role of cultural capital in legal education has remained implicit but assertive. For instance, law schools place a high reliance on LSAT scores, turning down a disproportionately large percentage of URM applicants, even though studies have found that LSAT scores have little predictive power of later success in legal profession (Olivas, 2005; Reynoso & Amron, 2002). Simultaneously, the practice of affirmative action in law school admission leads to the stereotype that minority students have inferior academic achievement, and such perceptions negatively impact their academic and social development (Payne-Pikus et al., 2010).

Social capital is "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network" (Bourdieu, 1986). Social capital is essential to legal professions because the practice of law is organized around networks (Patton, 2005). Not only is "a capital of social connections" essential in attracting a legal clientele from outside the firm (Kay & Hagan, 1998), but relationships are also key to gaining support and opportunities inside the firm (Sterling & Reichman, 2013).

For law school students, social capital consists of the ability to draw on relationship networks for establishing or expanding support and increasing professional opportunities in the future. Studies have found that students' institutional experience and connections contribute to personal gains, persistence in academic program, and career attainment (Griffith, 2010; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). However, women and minority law students often report negative social encounters that lead to their academic and social disengagement. Even with women reaching parity in law school enrollment, they continue to experience a hostile social environment and have difficulties to integrate socially (Reynoso & Amron, 2002). Similar to the experience of minority students, the hostile environments are often created by peers, teachers, and administrators who cling to stereotypes (Payne-Pikus et al.,

2010).

Economic capital refers to the financial resource and physical materials that can be directly convertible into money. Economic capital is commonly measured by a family's wealth or income. It is critical to understand the role of economic capital in students' persistence and valuation of legal education given the drastic rise in law school tuition and the resultant student debts. During the period of 1990-2009, on average private law school tuition rose by 5-9% a year and public resident and nonresident law school tuition levels rose by 9.1% and 7.5% a year, respectively (Ehrenburg, 2013). About 90% of law students borrow to finance their education, which led to average debts rising from \$70,147 in 2001 to \$124,950 in 2011 for private law school graduates, and from \$46,499 to \$75,728 for those in public law schools over the same period (Tamanaha, 2013).

High tuition and the resulting debt in legal education have increased economic pressure and lowered opportunities for students from low-SES backgrounds, the vast majority being racial minority students (Morrissey, 2006). In addition, high debts may negatively impact women and minorities' valuation of law education and legal profession given the dismal outlook that they are distributed disproportionately in less prestigious positions and have lower earnings than their White male counterparts (Reynoso & Amron, 2002).

Cultural, social, and economic capitals are interconnected and their functions in individuals' educational and professional investments are conditioned by the residing structural environment and dominant organizational norms. Even though in Bourdieu's conception there are important connections between social structure and different forms of personal capital, little attention has been given to the failure of law schools to create an academic and social environment "in which diversity thrives, an environment conducive to the intellectual development of all law students" (Reynoso & Amron, 2002, p. 492). As such, this project will examine how the organizational experience and educational outcomes vary for law school students of different cultural, social, and economic backgrounds and identify possible interventions to improve diversity beyond simply pursuing admission statistics that is numerically reflective of the demographic makeup of the population.

#### Describe the research method that will be used (limit 1000 words):

- What are the research questions to be addressed?
- What is the proposed research methodology?
- What is the statistical model to be used?

This project is designed to fulfill two research objectives:

- 1) Using a national data set to investigate how the academic and social experiences in law school impact the career choices and professional development of students of different cultural, social, and economic backgrounds. Special attention will be given to the mechanisms leading to the attrition of women and minorities from the legal profession. And,
- 2) Using semi-structured focus-group interviews to gather in-depth information about the academic and social experience of a sample of law school students, and to develop a survey instrument based on retention theories and the interview findings. The survey will be used for large-scale data collection about the educational experience of law students in the future.

Objective 1:

Women and racial minorities leave the legal profession in greater numbers than their respective counterparts (Beckman & Phillips, 2005; Kay & Hagan, 1998). However, very few studies have investigated factors contributing to individuals' decisions to depart (Sterling & Reichman, 2013). Therefore, this project will address three specific research questions using a longitudinal national data set:

Question 1: Are there differences in the legal career development between men and women law school graduates? between White and URM?

Question 2: How do the social, cultural, and economic capitals influence the career outcomes of law school graduates? How do the influences differ for men and women? For White and URM?

Questions 3: How does the economic capital contribute to individuals' valuation of law education after controlling for individual differences in cultural, social, human capital?

To answer the research questions, the following variables will be examined using descriptive and inferential statistical methods:

- 1) Cultural capital is measured by race/ethnicity, parents born in the U.S., and highest educational attainment of parents.
- 2) Due to the lack of direct measures, social capital is captured by several proxies, including whether the respondent was a part-time law student, whether family members, friends, and/or alumni helped the individual find a job, and whether the respondent actively participated in organizational activities in law school.
- 3) Economic capital is quantified by family annual income, total law school education loan amount, and funding from grants/scholarships and from personal resources.
- 4) Since all respondents have a law school degree, their differences in human capital investment are measured by the type (private/public) and ranking of the law school attended, undergraduate GPA, law school GPA, and law degree year.
- 5) Limited by the data source, three variables are used as proxy measures of structural factors: percentage of women/minority at workplace, access to mentoring, and whether the respondent experienced discrimination at work.
- 6) Career outcome includes the number of job offers received by a respondent, annual income (total salary/bonus), employment status (part-time/full-time/not employed), and job satisfaction (recognition, opportunity, relationship, and compensation).
- 7) Demographic information includes gender, age, marital status, and number of children.

These variables are selected in accordance with the research objective to evaluate individual career outcomes using the theoretical framework that considers the interaction between social, cultural, and economic capital of individuals and the organizational and structural values of the legal profession.

In order to answer Question 1, descriptive analysis will be conducted to identify the differences in the professional development and the background factors for groups of law graduates (White vs. minorities; women vs. men). For Question 2, the dependent variable is whether an individual remains in the legal profession twelve years after entering the bar. Given the binary outcome, logistic regression will be used to examine how differences in individuals' social, cultural, and economic capital, as well as in structural experience in the legal profession, impact their persistence. Separate models

will be constructed for White women, minority women, White men, and minority men in order to further understand gender and racial differences. For Question 3, annual income will be used to quantify the valuation of legal career. For those remaining in the legal profession, block-entry multiple regression will be used to examine how economic capital contributes to the valuation of law education after controlling for demographic differences and cultural, social, and human capital measures. Similarly, comparisons will be made between genders and between racial groups.

#### Objective 2:

Despite the increase in women law students over recent years, not much progress has been witnessed for URM students (Payne-Pikus et al., 2010). Researchers have realized that it is critical to lower the attrition of minority students from law schools (Olivas, 2005; Reynoso & Amron, 2002). However, very little has been done due primarily to the lack of informative data sources that makes causal inquiries impossible. As such, the second objective of this project is to develop a survey instrument for in-depth inquiry about the academic and social experiences of law school students.

Focus group interviews will be utilized as the primary method of data collection. The PI and a graduate assistant (GA) will conduct four focus groups using a semi-structured interview protocol, with each group interview lasting approximately 90 minutes. Each group will have 4-5 law school students who have been in the program for at least one year. Group 1 will include only minority women, Group 2 only minority men, Group 3 White women, and Group 4 White male students. The semi-structured protocol will include questions about students' academic and social experiences in law school, and structural and organizational obstacles that may have negatively impacted their educational persistence and professional outlook. The protocol will create consistency across focus group interviews while permitting the interviewers to explore aspects of participants' subjective experiences with probes and follow-up questions when needed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Interviews will be recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed using a grounded theory approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). Themes emerging from the interviews will be interpreted in light of established theories and used to guide the development of the survey questions. Once the survey is developed, a pilot group will be invited to respond to the survey online at qualtrics.com and to comment on individual items. The survey instrument will then be finalized based on the feedback from the pilot group.

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## Project Description - Appendix

There are no files attached.

## Datasets

### List the datasets that will be used and explain why they best serve this research (limit 500 words)

To fulfill the first objective, the PI will use the restricted-use data, After JD (AJD) study, which is the first national longitudinal survey of law graduates in the United States. The AJD started with a representative sample of the national population of lawyers who were admitted to the bar in 2000 and graduated from law school during the time period from June 1998 to July 2000.

The sampling design used a two-stage process. The first stage was to divide the nation into eighteen strata by region and size of the new lawyer population, from each of which one primary sampling unit (PSU) was chosen. As a result, eighteen PSUs were selected that included all four major markets in which there were more than 2,000 new lawyers (Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, and Washington, DC); five of the nine large markets with 750-2,000 new lawyers (Boston, Atlanta, Houston, Minneapolis, and San Francisco); and nine of the remaining, smaller markets. During the second stage, 8,225 lawyers were sampled from the PSUs based on a design that would lead to a weighted sample representative of the national population. Additionally, the study included an "oversample of 1,465 new lawyers from minority groups (Black, Hispanic, and Asian).

The first wave (AJD1) data was collected using a mail questionnaire in May 2002. Nonrespondents were followed up with by mail and phone. The response rate was 71%, resulting in a total of 4,538 valid responses after meeting the criteria for inclusion. The data collection "provided a snapshot of the personal lives and careers of this cohort about three years after they began practicing law" (ICPSR, 2014). A second wave (AJD2) was designed to locate and survey the entire original sample constructed in AJD1 and to trace the career progression after approximately seven years in practice. A sample of 2,890 valid responses was generated at the end of this wave. The third and last wave of data collection (AJD3) took place in 2012 from individuals who had previously responded to either AJD1 or AJD2, and gathered 2,862 valid responses with essential information to assess their personal and career trajectories (ICPSR, 2014). The data of AJD3 has become available in November 2014.

The AJD data is appropriate for this project for the reasons that it was designed with a representative sampling frame, had an oversample of lawyers of color, and used longitudinal data collection. Also, a wide range of information was collected on individuals' demographic and family background, law

school performance, current and past professional employment, status of employment (and reasons), type of work, clients, mentors, and social, political, and community participation. In general, the dataset provides either proxy or direct measures of social, cultural, economic, human capital, and organizational experience that allow systematic examination of the career progress of law school graduates longitudinally using the proposed theory.

To accomplish the second objective, the PI will use qualitative data (focus-group interviews) collected from a single law school of national-level gender and racial diversity.

#### Statement of use of restricted datasets (limit 250 words):

Applicants should provide a statement indicating whether the proposed research will require use of restricted datasets. If restricted datasets will be used, the plan for acquiring the appropriate license should be described.

If restricted datasets will not be used, leave this text box blank and click *Save and Continue*.

As discussed above, the proposed research will use the restricted-use data of the AJD (Waves 1, 2, and 3) provided by the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) at the University of Michigan. The AJD is longitudinal national surveys initiated by the NALP and sponsored by Soros Foundation, the ABA, the Law School Admission Council, Access Group, and the National Science Foundation. In order to protect confidentiality and personal information of the respondents, researchers are required to apply for a restricted-use data license through the ABA with a nonrefundable fee of \$900 in order to access and use all three waves of raw data (AJD Data Access: Application Procedure, 2015). The PI will submit an application for accessing restricted-use AJD data to the ABA as soon as the funding decision for this proposed project is announced in February. The PI will make certain that all related research staff will fully understand and comply with the safety issues as set forth by the ICPSR and ABA regarding the use of restricted datasets. Additionally, the PI is fully aware of and will comply with the ABA requirement that all materials prepared for publication based on the restricted-use data must be submitted for review and approval prior to disclosure to non-licensed individuals and/or organizations.

#### Timeline and Deliverables

##### Timeline:

Provide a timeline of key project activities.

Feb 3 – Feb 28, 2016

Apply for the restricted-use AJD data (Waves 1-3) from the ABA

March 1 - April 30, 2016

Clean and prepare AJD data for analysis;  
Conduct in-depth review of literature;

May 1 – May 31, 2015

Perform preliminary data analysis (AJD, Research question 1)

June 1– June 30, 2016

Data analysis for Research question 2;  
Draft semi-structured focus-group protocol for interviewing the local law school students

July 1 – July 15, 2016

Prepare a paper proposal for the Association of American Law Schools (AALS) 2017 annual conference;

July 16 – August 31, 2016

Prepare a manuscript to submit the findings from AJD data for journal publication;

Sept 1 – Sept 30, 2016

Recruit sample from local law school for focus-group interviews;

Oct 1 – Oct 31, 2016

Prepare the AIR-grant mid-year progress report;  
Conduct focus group interviews;

Nov 1 – Nov 20

Prepare for a presentation and attend the 2016 Access Group Legal Education Research Symposium

Nov 21 – Dec 20, 2016

Data analysis for Research question 3;  
Transcribing interview data (GA)

Jan 1 – Jan 31, 2017

AALS Presentation;  
Prepare a 2nd manuscript to submit the findings for journal publication;  
Qualitative data analysis

Feb 1 – Feb 28

Prepare a proposal for the Association for Institutional Research (AIR) 2017 annual conference;  
Draft online survey questions

March 1 – March 31

Pilot testing of online survey;  
Prepare a 3rd manuscript to submit the findings for journal publication;

Apr 1 – Apr 15, 2017

Prepare the AIR Grant Final Report

Apr 16 – May 1, 2017

Finalize the online survey

#### Deliverables:

List deliverables such as research reports, books, and presentations that will be developed from this research initiative.

Deliverables from completing this project will include conference presentations, journal publications, and a ready-to-use survey instrument. The PI plans to have three conference presentations and three publications in peer-reviewed professional journals based on the conference papers. Specifically, the tentative titles of the three conference presentations are:

- 1) Minority experience: The role of cultural, social, and economic capital in the persistence and valuation of legal profession.
- 2) Parity in law schools and equality in legal profession: How far are women from equal opportunity?
- 3) The academic and social experiences of law school students: A qualitative inquiry.

Additionally, the PI will seek feedback and comments from educators and scholars in legal education to fine-tune the survey questions and finalize the instrument. The goal is to develop a ready-to-use online survey based on the focus-group interviews, which is intended to be used for large-scale data collection about the educational experiences of law school students in the future.

#### Disseminate results:

Describe how you will disseminate the results of this research.

(Note: Costs of travel to meetings should be calculated on the budget page.)

This project is proposed with administrators, educators, and policy makers in legal education and profession as the primary audience. Plans for dissemination are determined in order to reach these groups. As such, scholarly-oriented outlets will be the primary dissemination choices for findings based on the AJD longitudinal data, including presentations at three professional conferences:

- 1) The Access Group Legal Education Research Symposium, November 16-17, 2016, Chicago, IL;
- 2) The Association of American Law Schools (AALS) 2017 annual conference, January 4-7, 2017, San Francisco, CA;
- 3) The Association for Institutional Research (AIR) 2017 annual conference, May 29 - June 2, 2017, Washington, DC.

In addition, three manuscripts will be prepared based on the conference papers to report the findings in the format of journal publications. The possible journal outlets include, but are not limited to, Journal of Legal Education, Law & Society Review, and Law & Social Inquiry. The final report of this study may be shared online through professional social media, such as the ABA website and ResearchGate, to gain more attention from researchers, policymakers, and law professionals.

Finally, the survey developed based on the focus-group interviews will be deliverable in the format of an online survey. The PI will seek collaborations with NALP and/or AALS in order to establish partnership and initiate data collection from all students in private and public law schools.

#### IRB Statement

##### Statement of Institutional Review Board approval or exemption (limit 250 words):

As part of the proposal, a statement outlining a plan for Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval is required. The statement should outline the applicant's timeline and plan for submitting the proposal to an IRB or explain why IRB approval is not necessary. Final IRB action is not necessary prior to submitting the application.

An IRB application has been submitted for both the proposed objectives to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) within the Office of Research Support Services at the University of Memphis on December 11th, 2015. First, the PI plans to analyze an existing secondary data set, AJD, provided by the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) at the University of Michigan. According to IRB guidelines on human subject research by the University of Memphis, a project that uses existing data will require a "Request for Exemption." The PI has completed and submitted all required IRB documents for a "Request for Exemption."

Second, an IRB is required for the project component in which focus-group interviews are planned to collect qualitative data for survey development. Per IRB regulations, the PI has requested for an expedited review given that neither components of the project will be working with vulnerable populations, which will only take IRB office approximately one week to respond. Thus, the PI expects the IRB review to be completed in January 2016, which allows sufficient time to move forward with the project upon the award decision.

#### Biographical Sketch(es)



**Biographical sketch (limit 750 words):**

The PI, Dr. Yonghong Jade Xu, is an associate professor at the University of Memphis. She received her Ph.D. in Educational Psychology in 2003 from the University of Arizona. Since that time, Dr. Xu has been a full-time faculty member in the Educational Research program at the University of Memphis and teaches graduate courses on introductory and advanced statistical methods and research methodology.

Dr. Xu's academic expertise lies in educational statistics and quantitative research methodology. She also maintains an active line of research on gender and racial disparities in STEM education and occupations. The main focus of Dr. Xu's research is to identify the causes of and potential policy interventions to the underrepresentation of women and minorities in STEM disciplines at college and post-college levels. She has successfully completed STEM-related research projects supported by three external and two internal funding sources. In three of the projects she analyzed existing national data sets; in the other two projects she used a mixed-methods approach in which interview data were collected to cross-validate the quantitative data gathered through survey instruments developed by herself. For instance, in 2011, Dr. Xu secured an AIR research grant to study the career choices of college graduates whose degrees were in STEM majors and modeled women's attrition from and progress in STEM occupations over a ten-year period. During the 2014-15 academic year, Dr. Xu worked on a project funded by the Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR), in which she and a colleague examined the disadvantages of African American students in STEM majors by conducting focus-group interviews as well as collecting quantitative data using an online survey.

To date, Dr. Xu has twenty-three refereed journal publications, seven book chapters, one edited monograph, and twenty-seven presentations at peer-reviewed national conferences. Most of her studies are grounded in empirically tested educational, organizational, sociological, and economic theories and supported with rigorous designs and quantitative data analyses. The quality of her work is evidenced by her sole-authored articles that have been published in leading higher education journals, including *The Journal of Higher Education* (2015) and *Research in Higher Education* (2008a, 2008b, 2013). Since 2008, there have been more than 400 citations of her publications.

Dr. Xu's inquiry about gender and racial disparities in STEM fields made her realize that such inequalities are not isolated phenomena. Rather, they are common in many other disciplines, particularly in occupations in which organizational norms are "defined, conceptualized, and structured in ways that puts a premium on the value of majority" (e.g., male-dominated family-exclusive work culture; organizational structures that marginalize and stereotype minorities). The extant literature suggests that legal profession is a perfect example of such occupations. Thus, she has committed to extending her research into gender and racial inequality in legal education and profession. The proposed project is the first step to address two severe problems: first, the lack of systematic data collection and theory-guided research on legal education is deeply troublesome. And second, the limited research about law education seems to be a completely isolated realm from the non-legal part of the U.S. higher education system.

In addition to the skills and experiences in large-scale data analysis and survey development, Dr. Xu has another advantage for conducting the proposed project. The University of Memphis is home to an ABA-accredited law school, the Cecil C. Humphreys School of Law. It has roughly 340 students in total, 40% and 25% of which are women and minority students, respectively. Easy access to a law school for conducting focus-group interviews and pilot-testing the online survey is vital to the successful completion of the second objective of this study.

Having spent a tremendous amount of time on an extensive literature review on gender and racial disparities in legal profession, Dr. Xu presents her research plan and ideas in this proposal and is confident in its quality, importance, and feasibility.

**Budget**

- [Xu AIRAG grant budget](#)

**Funding History****Funding history (limit 250 words):**

A statement of prior, current, and pending funding for the proposed research from all sources is required. The statement should also include a history of all prior funding from AIR to any of the PIs for any activity. Funding from other sources will not disqualify the application but may be considered in the funding decision.

The PI has no prior, current, or pending external support for the proposed research. The PI has received research funding from AIR in 2011 and successfully completed the funded project with three publications:

Xu, Y. (2015). Focusing on women in STEM: A longitudinal examination of gender-based earning gap of college graduates. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 86(4), 489-523.

Xu, Y. (2014). Advance to and persistence in graduate school: Identifying the influential factors and major-based differences. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, 16, 391-417.

Xu, Y. (2013). Career outcomes of STEM and non-STEM college graduates: Persistence in majored-field and influential factors in career choices. *Research in Higher Education*. 54, 349-382.

**Dissertation Advisor Letter of Support**

There are no files attached.

# Research Grant Proposal Budget Form

## Personnel - Time on Project

(Enter percentage as a decimal)

### Principal Investigator

% (FTE) academic year  
 % (FTE) summer

### Second Principal Investigator

% (FTE) academic year  
 % (FTE) summer

### Third Principal Investigator

% (FTE) academic year  
 % (FTE) summer

### Graduate Research Assistant

% (FTE) academic year  
 % (FTE) summer

## Personnel - Salary & Benefits

academic year \$   
summer \$

academic year \$   
summer \$

academic year \$   
summer \$

academic year \$   
summer \$

## Personnel - Salary/Stipend

(Time on Project x Salary and Benefits)

academic year \$   
summer \$

academic year \$   
summer \$

academic year \$   
summer \$

academic year \$   
summer \$

Total Salary and Wages (calculated from above fields)

\$

## Travel

2016 Access Group Legal Education Research symposium:

\$

Other research related travel:

\$

(*Note:* Other planned travel should be listed in the "Timelines and Deliverables" section)

## Other research expenses

Please provide a breakdown of expenses below and add the total value in the box to the right. Allowable expenses include: materials, such as software, books, supplies, etc.; consultant services, such as transcription, analysis, external researchers, etc.; and costs for publishing articles in journals. The purchase of computer hardware, overhead or indirect costs, and living expenses are not allowable. If you have questions about specific expenditures please contact AIR.

\$

TOTAL REQUESTED

\$