

# AAPA-PAEA Research Fellowship Return on Investment Report

February 2022

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Brent Buesking, MPA

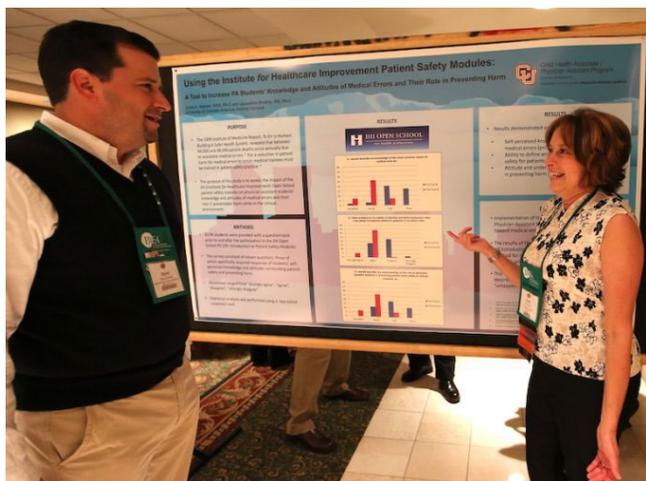




2018-2019 AAPA-PAEA Research Fellowship January Seminar at the PAEA Office in Washington DC (Credit: PAEA)

## Background

In 2017, PAEA and the American Academy of PAs (AAPA) founded the AAPA-PAEA Research Fellowship. The Fellowship offers three one-year research fellowships annually. It provides an opportunity for ambitious junior researchers to contribute to the growing body of PA literature, broaden their knowledge of PA education and the profession, expand their professional networks, and start down the fast-track to PA leadership. The following information provides insights gleaned from a retrospective study of the Fellowship using the Kirkpatrick Model.



## Fellowship Objectives

The Fellowship seeks to:

1. Fund protected time to allow fellows to conduct research and expand their research agendas.
2. Broaden the fellows' knowledge of the medical research community, data sources, and build professional networks with prominent medical research organizations.
3. Build a strong community of research leaders who mentor future PA researchers and become PA research experts who advance the profession.

## Fellowship Achievements

1. Since 2017, PAEA and AAPA have funded **13** Fellows.
2. PAEA has invested **\$205,186.88** in salary reimbursement and **\$56,284.57** in travel and meeting expenses for **seven** fellows. AAPA has invested **\$65,374.20** in salary reimbursement and **\$18,740.91** in travel and meeting expenses for **three** fellows.
3. Each year, fellows connected with around 10-15 national medical research organizations and engaged with prominent PA researchers.
4. **Three** fellows used the Fellowship to complete their doctoral dissertation, which helped to advance their academic careers.
5. **Two** former fellows served as fellowship mentors.
6. **Seven** manuscripts published and/ or under review in academic journals directly related to their projects.
7. **One** discussion paper published for the National Academy of Medicine.
8. **Three** presentations at academic or professional conferences.
9. **One** fellow is a reviewer for *Academic Medicine*.

## AAPA-PAEA Research Fellowship

PAEA funds two fellows and AAPA funds one fellow. As of February 2022, **27** PA faculty have applied to the Fellowship and **13** faculty members have become fellows.

2017: 8 applicants- 2 PAEA-funded fellows, 1 AAPA-funded fellow  
2018: 5 applicants- 2 PAEA-funded fellows, 1 AAPA-funded fellow  
2019: 2 applicants- 1 PAEA-funded fellow, 1 AAPA-funded fellow  
2020: 5 applicants- 2 PAEA-funded fellows  
2021: 7 applicants, 2 PAEA-funded fellows, 1 AAPA-funded fellow

There have been fluctuations in fellows' funding over the years, in 2019, because we only received 2 applications, causing each organization to fund one fellow. In 2020, AAPA was unable to fund a fellow due to COVID-19 budget constraints however, in 2021, we are pleased to report that AAPA funded a fellow and we have filled all three of the positions.

Demographic data was not collected in the first two Fellowship cohorts, the data is incomplete. In the last two years, we have a better understanding of the applicant and fellow demographics. In 2019, both applicants and subsequent fellows were white, female, and Not Hispanic, Latino or of Spanish origin. In 2020, all five applicants were female, three were white, one was Black, one was Hispanic, Latino, or of Spanish origin, and one applicant wished not to answer the race or ethnicity questions. The two fellows chosen in the 2020-2021 cycle were female, white, and Not Hispanic, Latino, or of Spanish origin. There is a need to continue to collect demographic information to aid in diversity and inclusion efforts. During the 2021-2022 Call for Proposals, five applicants identified as white, one applicant was Black, one was Asian American, one four applicants were female, three applicants were male, and all of them were Not Hispanic, Latino or of Spanish origin. After a rigorous proposal review, the 2021-2022 Fellowship cohort is the most diverse in its history. Yolanda Freeman Hildreth, PhD, PA-C, is our first female, African American fellow. In addition, AAPA's fellow, Alice Eggleston, MPH, PA-C, is our first female, Asian American and non-faculty fellow.

The PAEA Fellowship provides **20 percent** of the recipient's base salary **up to \$25,000** to each fellow's institution to secure protected time for research. This gives the fellow a 20 percent time release from teaching and other activities to allow them to focus on scholarly activity of interest to the PA profession and PA education. Travel expenses to Washington, DC, are covered in full.

Fellows are expected to use the release time to develop their research skills by completing and providing to PAEA a research project under the guidance of a mentor, engaging in educational activities, and broadening their knowledge of PA education and the PA profession. One year after completing the Fellowship, the fellows are expected to have completed their research and have prepared their findings for publication and presentation or complete their doctoral dissertation.

One of the obstacles that PA faculty face is the pressure to publish original research. PA education does not prepare physician assistants to conduct academic research and PA faculty must balance the priority to publish with educating students and their clinical practice. As a result, PAEA and AAPA created the AAPA-PAEA Research Fellowship to offer faculty the opportunity to focus on their research interests, tap into a wide range of data sources, build their professional networks, and develop into research leaders who advance the PA profession.

# Inspiring the next generation of PA Research Leaders



Left to Right: Bettie Coplan, PhD, MPAS, PA-C; Ryan White, MS, MPH, PA-C; Morgan Luck, MS, PA-C

## CONCLUSION

### Fellowship Evaluation

The Research Fellowship has evolved over its lifetime and the PAEA Research Team used the Kirkpatrick evaluation model to ensure that the Fellowship's achievements align with its objectives. The Research Fellowship is an opportunity that focuses on providing fellows with greater access to resources, knowledge, and professional networks. Therefore, it is important to follow the backwards design and be planned with the end in mind.

Ultimately, the goal is to develop ambitious junior researchers who contribute to the growing body of PA literature, elevate the PA profession, and become leaders in the medical research community. As a result, the objectives seek to change the fellows' behavior in respect to research by providing them protected time to conduct research, building their professional networks, and sharing their experience with their colleagues.

Throughout their projects, the fellows submit progress reports that inform PAEA about their achievements or challenges with their milestones, analysis, manuscript production, or delays in the timeline. These updates show how the fellows are changing their behavior and using their connections and resources to advance their research project.

The team plans to use surveys throughout the process. Incoming fellows will complete a pre-seminar survey that evaluate their knowledge of the different organizations that will be participating in the two seminars. Following the January and July seminars we will survey the fellows to measure their level of knowledge after attend the sessions. In addition, individual evaluations will assess their reactions to each session.

Kirkpatrick Model		
Level of Assessment	Objective	Data Collected
Level 1: Reaction	Broaden the fellows' knowledge of the medical research community, data sources, and build their professional networks with prominent medical research organizations.	After the research leadership panel, Stephanie Neary said, "It was great hearing there are so many different paths you can take in research and how researchers have been able to fit time into their schedules. The tips for journal submissions were very helpful as well. Above all, simply connecting with individuals at this level of research will prove helpful as we continue to develop and grow in our own careers."
Level 2: Learning	Broaden the fellows' knowledge of the medical research community, data sources, and build their professional networks with prominent medical research organizations.	Pre-seminar and post-seminar surveys measure the fellows' level of knowledge of different national research organizations.
Level 3: Behavior	Fund protected time to allow fellows to conduct research and expand their research agendas; Broaden the fellows' knowledge of the medical research community, data sources, and build their professional networks with prominent medical research organizations.	Through progress reports, we gauge the fellows' behavioral change, for example Ryan White had to adjust his model to accommodate for an incomplete dataset and acquired additional PAEA data to incorporate into his model.

<p>Level 4: Results</p>	<p>Build a strong cohort of research leaders who mentor future PA researchers and become PA research experts who advance the profession.</p>	<p>PAEA Research stays in regular contact with our fellows to see how the Fellowship impacts their career trajectory. For example, Dr. Bettie Coplan’s fellowship experience led her to join a group of researchers that wrote a discussion paper, “Burnout and Job and Career Satisfaction in the Physician Assistant Profession: A Review of the Literature,” for the National Academy of Medicine. This paper was one of the top Perspective publications for 2019 and 2020. Ryan White has provided expert guidance to the National Center on Health Statistics as they revised their National Ambulatory Medical Care Survey to include PAs.</p>
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### Fellowship Outcomes

PAEA has invested \$205,186.88 in salary reimbursement and \$56,284.57 in travel and meeting expenses for seven fellows. AAPA has invested \$65,374.20 in salary reimbursement and \$18,740.91 in travel and meeting expenses for three fellows. Seven of the 13 fellows have produced a measurable achievement related to their Fellowship such as successfully defending their doctoral dissertation, becoming a Fellowship mentor, submitting a manuscript to an academic journal, presenting their findings at an academic or professional conference, or becoming a manuscript reviewer for an academic journal.

This growing cohort of researchers is leading edge of PA education and workforce research. Current fellow, Stephanie Neary notes that the PA profession is still young, and it is important to build the research pipeline. **“The Fellowship has transformed the way I view my work and helped me prioritize my research efforts. I have a stronger understanding of my personal career aspirations, the steps I need to take to get there and the resources available to me along the way,”** she said.

Bettie Coplan, PhD, MPAS, PA-C, found that the funding of protected time for research and valuable educational sessions and networking opportunities were instrumental to her career. **“When I completed the Fellowship, I was nearing completion of a doctorate, and the support I received was crucial. I was able to broaden my skillset, finish my degree, and establish important connections with other researchers. I am fortunate now to be serving as a mentor to a current fellow,”** she said.

### Next Steps

As we will continue to improve the Fellowship, we are implementing the Kirkpatrick model, focusing on attracting more applicants and fellows from diverse backgrounds and providing more incentives to attract faculty such as CME credits for seminar sessions, and inviting potential applicants to remotely attend the seminars as a recruitment tool. During the 2021 AAPA-PAEA Summer Research Seminar, AAPA opened some of the informational sessions to non-fellows and offered CME credits, which has empowered PAs and PA faculty to conduct research. As a result, we received a positive response from AAPA and PAEA members and will continue the practice going forward. Both PAEA and AAPA are also interested in increasing the fellow salary reimbursement to up to \$30,000.00 for the upcoming 2022-2023 cycle. PAEA has already budgeted \$30,000.00 for each fellow in FY2023.



### GOAL ACHIEVEMENT

Since 2017, PAEA and AAPA have funded 13 Fellows. The fellows have leveraged their protected time, resources, and expanded professional networks to become research leaders who advance the profession. Seven of the 13 fellows have produced a measurable achievement related to their Fellowship.



### INVESTMENT

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### DIRECTION

As we will continue to improve the Fellowship using the Kirkpatrick model, we are attracting more applicants and fellows from diverse backgrounds, providing more incentives to attract faculty such as CME credits for seminar sessions, and inviting potential applicants to remotely attend the seminars as a recruitment tool. We are also interested in increasing the salary reimbursement to up to \$30,000.00 for the upcoming 2022-2023 cycle.