

Dennis R. Mertz Bridge Research Fellowship

Goal: To engage the interest of young engineering students in the precast concrete bridge industry while providing a research experience of value to both the student and PCI.

Rules:

Eligibility: The fellowship program is open to any university in North America with the facilities to conduct structural research. Students may be PhD candidates, but Masters students are preferred. Competition is restricted to North America to ensure interaction with one or more PCI Producer members in the development and execution of the project.

Grant: The amount of the fellowship will be established by the PCI Research and Development Council as part of the budgeting process. The funds will be provided to the advising professor with the stipulation that they are an unrestricted grant and, therefore, no university overhead may be taken from the funds. All funds are to be used in support of the student and the project.

Solicitation: A solicitation shall be distributed by PCI staff in July of each year with a due date for applications established to allow six weeks for council review prior to the fall meeting of the council. The solicitation shall include a listing of research topics identified as being high priority for the institute.

Applications: Applications shall be submitted electronically no later than the due date established in the solicitation. Applications submitted after the due date will not be considered. Application shall include the following minimum information:

1. Title page with the names of the university and the research team including all contact information and signatures of the advising professor and department chair.
2. Description of the proposed research program (3 pages maximum).
3. Time and cost schedule, including any additional support.
4. Brief résumé of the faculty advisor (2 pages maximum)
5. Brief statement by student candidate describing personal objectives and interest in the subject of the proposed research (1 page maximum).
6. Evidence of precast industry support.

Project: It is intended that the project would be relevant to design, materials, or construction of precast concrete bridges. Where the proposed project is part of a larger project, the work proposed for fellowship funding shall be clearly identified. Applications that are contingent on approval of other funding will be rejected.

Industry support: Applicants are encouraged to solicit support for the proposed project from members of PCI. Support requested could range from a letter endorsing the project to financial participation. Letters of support must address the merits of the proposal. Specifically, the letters must address why the problem is of interest to PCI or the precast concrete industry and how this proposal will address that problem. If possible, the industry support letters should state why the approach has a reasonable chance of success. Industry support letters which simply support the researcher, the student or the University and do not address the merits of the proposal will not be considered.

Evaluation: The PCI Transportation Activities Council and the PCI Research and Development Council will be expected to evaluate submitted applications. Evaluation criteria shall include relevancy, market impact, research capability, supplemental support, and overall quality. PCI Producer support is highly desirable. Evaluation criteria and scoring may be modified each year by the council, but evaluation criteria shall be distributed with the Mertz Research Fellowship solicitation.

Award: The Transportation Activities Council shall submit a recommendation to the Research and Development Council for award. A simple majority vote of attending Research and Development Council members (assuming a quorum is present) will be required to approve an award. Awarded funds shall be distributed approximately by December 1.

Advisory Committee: At the time of selection, an advisory committee shall be appointed to monitor and provide guidance to the project. The chair of the advisory committee shall be a research council member but the advisory committee can be composed of any PCI members with interest or expertise in the subject of the project and will especially include members representing transportation.

Deliverables: Because the fellowship funds are provided as an unrestricted grant, no deliverables can be required of the recipient. PCI shall request a copy of the final student report or thesis and shall encourage the student and professor to publish a summary paper in the PCI Journal. The professor and student will also be invited to present updates and final results at the education sessions at the annual PCI Convention.