



**2026 AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF HISPANICS IN HIGHER EDUCATION (AAHHE)  
OUTSTANDING DISSERTATIONS AWARDS GUIDELINES  
Submission Deadline: Friday, August 1, 2025**

The following guidelines and accompanying explanations are provided to ensure the highest possible standards for the AAHHE Outstanding Dissertation Awards Competition.

#### AWARD ELIGIBILITY

1. The award is open to any Hispanic graduate student who has completed a sole-authored dissertation as part of a doctoral degree program from an accredited postsecondary institution between December 2023 and August 1, 2025. Completion is defined as having received the doctoral degree between December 2023 and August 1, 2025, or having satisfactorily completed all the coursework and the dissertation between the dates specified above and the dissertation is acceptable to the candidate's committee, but the degree has not been conferred.
2. AAHHE accepts award applications from all academic disciplines.
3. Previous AAHHE dissertation award applicants are ineligible to reapply.

#### AWARD APPLICATION GUIDELINES & TIMELINE

The first phase of the application process requires award nominees to submit a complete nomination packet by **August 1, 2025**. The award submission must include a title page, the dissertation abstract, a dissertation summary that explains the research, and a nomination letter from the dissertation committee chair. Please review the detailed award submission guidelines at [www.aahhe.org](http://www.aahhe.org). In the second phase, the AAHHE dissertation awards committee will select the top seven to ten award semifinalists. If selected, the semifinalists will be asked to submit their unabridged dissertations. Three finalists will be selected.

#### AWARD EVALUATION CRITERIA

The award committee will evaluate the award finalist's dissertation based on the following criteria:

1. The overall quality of the research purpose and aims of the scholarship.
2. The creative and innovative approach to investigate or explore the research topic.
3. The strength of the research methodology or design to conduct the research study.
4. The quality of the discussion of the research dissertation findings
5. The overall significance of the impact of the research on Hispanic communities.
6. The importance of the dissertation research contributions to advancing knowledge in their respective field.

#### AWARD SELECTION & RECOGNITION

The awards committee will formally recognize the top three finalists at the 21<sup>st</sup> Annual AAHHE National Conference scheduled for March 27 - 29, 2026. The three finalists will also receive a monetary award (to be determined), an AAHHE Outstanding Dissertation Award Certificate, and financial support to attend the 2026 AAHHE Conference to present

their dissertation in an individual concurrent session. Complete details about the 2026 Outstanding Dissertations Award are available at [www.aahhe.org](http://www.aahhe.org).

## **Application Process:**

### Phase 1- Submit dissertation Summary

- Complete the ODC online application
- Upload a Dissertation Summary via the [AAHHE Submission Portal](#).

Submission portal will close on August 1, 2025 at 11:59 pm ET. Note: at the end of the application, upload the Dissertation Summary (PDF, see instructions below).

The Dissertation Summary must include and clearly label the following in this order:

- 1) Title page — A title page in the format provided for your use. Please provide all the information requested. One (1) page in length.
- 2) Letter — A letter on university letterhead signed by the applicant’s dissertation committee Chair indicating that the dissertation meets the eligibility criteria defined earlier in these guidelines — detail is essential. The letter must be submitted in PDF and must also state how the dissertation committee chair would rank the dissertation among previous dissertations chaired.
- 3) Abstract — On a separate page, include a clearly defined 250-word summary narrative stating, in non-technical terms, the purpose, research problem, the methods, and major findings of the study; the summary must also illustrate how their dissertation work captures the spirit of improving, honoring, and contributing to the Hispanic community. One (1) page in length, double-spaced.
- 4) Main report section — You should include: (a) the statement of the problem; (b) the purpose of the study; (c) conceptual model, theoretical framework, and/or orientation, as applicable, and literature review; (d) methodology including participants, instrumentation, hypotheses or research questions, and data analysis; (e) major findings; (f) conclusions; (g) implications; and (h) significance to the broader research community and to the Latinx community. Not to exceed eighteen (18) pages, double-spaced.
- 5) Appendix — List the references, tables, figures, diagrams, and pictures relevant to your summary. Not to exceed four (4) pages, double-spaced.

Compile all documents (1-5) into **ONE** PDF in the order above. During the application process via the [AAHHE Submission Portal](#), applicants will upload the PDF to the submission portal with the file name LastName\_FirstName.pdf.

### Semi-Finalist - Phase 2: Submit full dissertation

- Semi-finalists will be invited to submit a full dissertation via the AAHHE Submission Portal.
- Semi-finalists will be notified of their selection via email and further instructions will be provided at that time.

## **Selection process**

### Phase 1: Review of Dissertation Summaries

The first phase uses the Dissertation Summaries as a basis of selection. The Outstanding Dissertation Awards Committee (ODAC) Chair will send the Dissertation Summaries to a panel of judges who will evaluate them using the rubric attached to these guidelines (see p. 4). Each judge will be asked to submit a Dissertation Summary ranking score. Based on the judges’

rankings, the ODAC Chair will determine the top seven (7) to ten (10) Dissertation Summaries and these become the semifinalists.

For the first round of judging, the applicant's dissertation is rated SOLELY upon the Dissertation Summary submitted. These summaries must accurately, concisely, and precisely reflect the research of the full dissertation. ***Dissertation Summaries that do not adhere to page limits specified in these guidelines will not be considered for the competition.***

#### Selection process - Phase 2: Review of Dissertation

In the second phase, the ODAC chair contacts the semifinalists and requests a copy of the complete dissertation. The panel of judges will evaluate the complete dissertations using the rubric attached to these guidelines as a basis for the selection's second phase. The panel of judges will convene to discuss and rank the complete dissertations and will determine the top three (3) dissertations, and honorable mentions, if applicable. All decisions by the panel of judges are final.

#### **Important deadlines**

The schedule below, in addition to providing important dates and deadlines, provides additional information about the process.

|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| March 3, 2025      | Call for proposals opens via <a href="#">AAHHE Submission Portal</a> .  |
| August 1, 2025     | Call for proposals closes. By this date, applicants have submitted a Dissertation Summary (as one complete document; PDF) via the AAHHE submission portal. AAHHE will forward a copy of the summary to the Outstanding Dissertations Awards Committee Chair Dr. Maria Oropeza Fujimoto. |
| August 8, 2025     | Chair distributes dissertation summaries to judges.   |
| September 8, 2025  | Judges complete screening and advise the Chair of rankings.   |
| September 16, 2025 | Chair determines the top seven (7) to ten (10) Dissertation Summaries. AAHHE announces all semifinalists and requests that semifinalists submit a complete dissertation   |
| September 17, 2025 | AAHHE notifies all semifinalists  |
| September 24, 2025 | Semifinalists submit a copy of complete dissertation in PDF format via the AAHHE submission portal. A link to the portal will be provided to all semifinalists.   |
| October 3, 2025    | Panel of judges confers and selects the top three (3) dissertations and honorable mentions, if any.   |
| October 11, 2025   | Chair notifies results to winners and non-selected applicants. Winners are invited to present their dissertations at the AAHHE National Conference.   |

- October 25, 2025      Winners submit a color digital headshot photo (JPEG), a narrative bio (max. 200 words) and a 75 word dissertation summary via the AAHHE Submission Portal.
- March 2026            Winners present their dissertations at the AAHHE National Conference.

What recognition will be given to the finalists?

First place, second place and third place winners will receive a monetary award (to be determined) and AAHHE certificate. First place winner will also receive an AAHHE Award.

The three (3) finalists will be formally recognized at 2026 AAHHE National Conference in March 2026. If applicable, AAHHE will reimburse travel expenses within the continental U.S. for the three (3) finalists, to include hotel room at least one (1) night and per diem for two (2) days. All winners will receive complimentary conference registrations.

The three (3) finalists are given the opportunity to present their dissertations in individual concurrent sessions at the conference.

Occasionally, the committee also recognizes additional outstanding dissertations as Honorable Mention (out of the remaining semi-finalists). All finalists are required to be AAHHE members.

*Announcements will be posted on the website of both AAHHE and advertised in the Journal of Hispanic Higher Education, Hispanic Outlook of Higher Education and other journals.*

**AAHHE & ETS OUTSTANDING DISSERTATIONS COMPETITION  
COMPLETE DISSERTATION RUBRIC**

| Category  | Exemplary | Good | Satisfactory | Not Acceptable | Absent | Score |
|---|-----------|------|--------------|----------------|--------|-------|
| (1) Statement of the problem  | 5         | 3-4  | 2            | 1              | 0      |       |
| (2) Purpose of the study  | 5         | 3-4  | 2            | 1              | 0      |       |
| (3) Conceptual model, theoretical framework, and/or orientation   | 5         | 3-4  | 2            | 1              | 0      |       |
| (4) Literature review   | 9-10      | 6-8  | 3-5          | 1-2            | 0      |       |
| (5) Methodology: Participants/sample/dataset/case study   | 5         | 3-4  | 2            | 1              | 0      |       |
| (6) Methodology: Instrumentation/Protocol   | 5         | 3-4  | 2            | 1              | 0      |       |
| (7) Methodology: Research questions & hypotheses  | 5         | 3-4  | 2            | 1              | 0      |       |
| (8) Methodology: Data Analysis<br>Qualitative: coding, software used, rationale, triangulation, themes, interpretations, conclusions, if applicable; Quantitative: appropriate statistical analysis used and results interpreted correctly, validity and reliability of scores addressed. | 9-10      | 6-8  | 3-5          | 1-2            | 0      |       |
| (9) Major findings  | 9-10      | 6-8  | 3-5          | 1-2            | 0      |       |
| (10) Conclusions  | 5         | 3-4  | 2            | 1              | 0      |       |
| (11) Implications   | 9-10      | 6-8  | 3-5          | 1-2            | 0      |       |
| (12) Significance to the broader research community   | 9-10      | 6-8  | 3-5          | 1-2            | 0      |       |
| (13) Significance to the Hispanic community   | 9-10      | 6-8  | 3-5          | 1-2            | 0      |       |
| (14) Overall clarity, grammar, spelling and organization  | 5         | 3-4  | 2            | 1              | 0      |       |
| <b>Total Score</b>  |           |      |              |                |        | /100  |