

August 27, 2013

Dear MacArthur Fellows:

Thank you to those who participated in the Fellows Survey last fall. The response rate among Fellows was forty-three percent. The Fellows Survey was one of four components of the Foundation's review of the Fellows Program. Additional data included surveys of the engaged public and of intellectual leaders across disciplines; interviews with former nominators, selectors, foundation staff and board members; and an audit of internal operations and procedures. I have enclosed an executive summary of the findings for your information.

In brief, the review documents that the Program increases the capacity of individual recipients to pursue creative ideas and projects. And, the Fellows Program's impact extends beyond the individual recipients to much of the general public. It has captured the imagination of many and inspired some to pursue their own personal creative activities and ideas. The Fellows Program enjoys the respect of key opinion leaders and experts.

We will be making some small adjustments to the Program in response to the review. For example, we will explore ways to better support new Fellows as they cope with the sudden increase in visibility associated with the fellowship.

The essential features of the Fellowship, including the confidentiality and anonymity of the selection process and the "no strings" policy will remain intact; yet the review makes clear that many Fellows would welcome more interaction with each other and with the Foundation. We will be experimenting with a variety of Fellows events to create these opportunities. Stay tuned.

Although Fellows who responded to the survey judged the stipend to be adequate, other data sources suggest that an adjustment is needed. We plan an increase from \$100,000/year to \$125,000/year beginning with the class of 2013 that will bring the total stipend for new Fellows to \$625,000.

The review finding that excites me the most is evidence of the Program's impact on the broader public. Ten percent (representing 12.9 million people) of the engaged public surveyed reported that the Fellows Program inspired them to think about their own contribution to society; ten percent stated that the Program inspired them to pursue their own personal creative activities. These statistics provide an impetus to extend awareness of the Program to as broad and diverse an audience as possible.

The Fellows Program began as a radical experiment in philanthropy and its success owes much to the foresight, and leadership of my predecessors – Kenneth Hope (1982-1992), Catharine Stimpson (1993-1997), and Daniel Socolow (1997-2012), as well as to diligence and prescience of hundreds of anonymous nominators, selectors and evaluators. I am honored to join this remarkable community and to have the opportunity to sustain and strengthen this distinctive Program.

If you have questions or comments about the review, my email is [REDACTED] and office phone is [REDACTED].

Sincerely,

Cecilia A. Conrad
Vice President, MacArthur Fellows Program