Dr. Jodi Sandfort was selected by the committee to be the recipient of the Dugan Award on Philanthropic Impact for 2019.

In the project proposed by Dr. Sandfort, she is seeking to bring together two evaluation methodologies—human centered design and developmental evaluation—to examine whether they support evaluative thinking and innovation in nonprofit organizations.

Dr. Sandfort has proposed a comparative case study, where two nonprofits are exposed to these evaluation methodologies and two nonprofits function as non-equivalent control sites. Dr. Sandfort will then track the evolution of these organizations as they engage with implementing the same policy to see whether the two nonprofits employing these methodologies show noteworthy differences in evaluative thinking and innovation in program design and development compared to the two nonprofits that do not employ these methodologies.

The committee felt that this project was compelling for two important reasons. First, against the backdrop of an unceasing drive for simple metrics to judge and drive performance, human centered design and development evaluation are methodologies that foreground complexity and context and are well suited for the kinds of social change initiatives that many nonprofits undertake, not just social service nonprofits. Second, the project is part of a larger policy initiative engaging both practitioners and researchers, which the committee believed would support the translation of the research findings to nonprofit organizations, funders and policymakers.

Thus, without question, the research produced by Sandfort should be of interest to both academics and practitioners alike.

The committee congratulates Dr. Sandfort on an excellent proposal and we look forward to hearing about her findings next year.