

## **GRADUATE STUDENT SENATE TRAVEL AWARD REVIEW PROCESS**

The Graduate Student Senate (GSS) Travel Awards Committee comprises a group of 10-15 graduate students from a broad array of academic disciplines and is overseen by the President of the GSS and Travel Awards Committee Chair. At the beginning of each semester, the committee meets – often multiple times – to review applications for graduate travel funding. The Awards Committee makes every effort to complete the review process in a reasonable amount of time following each deadline, with initial recommendations to be achieved within two weeks of an application deadline. Once initial decisions are made, final approval is subject to the advice and consent of the Dean of the Graduate School and the Dean of Students. Applicants will be notified of funding decisions via email. Notifications are generally sent within four weeks of the application deadline.

In the Fall of 2012, the regular graduate travel budget was combined with the Chancellor’s Graduate Travel Fund, resulting in a budget of \$240,000 per academic year (Sept. 1 – Aug. 31). The awards are divided into three cycles, roughly coinciding with each academic semester, and only one award is allowed per graduate student per academic year. While this budget is substantial, so is the number of worthy applicants. We strive to make a determining difference for graduate students but must also balance this with the goal of funding as many travel requests as possible. Because of these considerations, the Awards Committee advises all applicants to consider where GSS travel funding will make the most meaningful difference before submitting an application.

In order to clarify the decision process, the senate has recommended that the Travel Awards Committee make available a summary of the procedures it uses to make its funding decisions.

### Automatic Rejection

- Failure to obtain any of the necessary signatures – applicant, academic adviser, department head, and college dean.
- Failure to submit by the GSS deadline the application and the following two documents:
  - An abstract/summary of the project
  - Proof of acceptance to the conference (i.e., if acceptance is known by the GSS deadline) or proof of submission to the conference (i.e., if acceptance is not known by the GSS deadline)
- The applicant’s demonstrated net financial need is a negative amount (see below).

### Criteria Used During Review

- Demonstrated net financial need
  - The committee begins with the total listed cost for travel, then subtracts from that the amount of supplementary assistance indicated by the applicant’s department and college, as well as any additional financial assistance from other sources (e.g., conference travel awards, grants, etc.).

- The Awards Committee also expects all applicants to cover at least 10% of their own expenses.
- An applicant's personal share of conference travel expenses, minus 10% and all supplementary assistance, determines the applicant's "demonstrated net financial need".

If exhibiting a positive demonstrated net financial need, applications are ranked on a 12-point scale, with higher values indicating greater award amounts.

- Applicant's role at conference (3 points)
  - Three points are assigned to applications of the presentation of a paper
  - Two points are assigned to applications of the presentation of a poster
  - One point is assigned to applications of the presentation via panel membership
  - ❖ Applications of the presentation of work not befitting the above categories are evaluated on a case-by-case basis. It is critical the applicant clearly defend his/her selection.
  - ❖ Applications will be rejected when the travel funding is merely for attendance without participation. The awards are reserved for those applicants who attend conferences to make an official contribution to their discipline. We **do not** fund travel simply because an applicant would like to "observe".
- Conference submission procedures (3 points)
  - Three points are assigned to applications for conferences which select presenters by invitation only
  - Two points are assigned to applications for conferences which select presenters by peer review
  - One point is assigned to applications for conferences which select presenters by open call (not peer-reviewed)
- Location of conference (2 points)
  - Two points are assigned to conferences being held at an international location. Alaska and Hawaii are considered "international" locations because of their typically higher travel costs.
  - One and a half points are assigned to conferences being held in a national location, defined as states not bordering Tennessee
  - One point is assigned to conferences being held at a regional location, defined as states bordering Tennessee
  - One half point is assigned to conferences being held at a local location, defined as within Tennessee
- Primary Presenter and Primary Author (4 points)
  - Four points are given to applicants who are the primary presenter/performer/artist and the primary author.
  - Three points are given to applicants who are the primary presenter but not the primary author.
  - Two points are given to applicants who are not the primary presenter but are the primary author.
  - One point is given to applicants who are neither the primary presenter nor the primary author.
  - ❖ The Awards Committee believes that being the primary presenter of a scholarly project/creative presentation is more important than being the primary author for the purposes of conference attendance.
  - ❖ Primary authors are listed first in the list of authors
  - ❖ Primary presenters do not have a co-presenter(s)

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **When can I submit an application for a Graduate Student Senate Travel Award?**

Deadlines for travel awards typically fall at the beginning of each academic semester. Specific dates for submitting an application and dates for each travel period may be found on the GSS website. Applicants from the College of Arts and Sciences and the College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences must submit their applications to their respective deans two weeks before applicants from all other colleges, as reflected in the deadlines posted on the website.

### **Why do some colleges set deadlines ahead of the Graduate Student Senate deadline?**

Early submission deadlines are set at the request of each college dean. This is typically because each application is reviewed individually by the dean to determine how much additional funding will be granted by the college.

### **Who can I contact for more information about the application or the review process?**

The GSS President may be reached by email at [gss@utk.edu](mailto:gss@utk.edu) or by telephone at 974-1015, and the Chair of the GSS Travel Awards Committee can be reached by email at [gsstravel@utk.edu](mailto:gsstravel@utk.edu).

### **I was granted an award. Am I guaranteed to receive the full amount indicated in my letter?**

No. The amount an applicant is awarded is the maximum that he or she may receive from GSS, but applicants are only guaranteed to receive the amount for which they present receipts for acceptable travel expenses.

### **What should I do if I receive an award but am subsequently not accepted to my targeted conference?**

Applicants should notify the Travel Awards Committee Chair via email at [gsstravel@utk.edu](mailto:gsstravel@utk.edu). Applicants who are offered awards – but do not use them – are eligible for awards in a subsequent travel cycle during the academic year provided they withdraw their applications.

### **Why am I only allowed to receive one award per academic year?**

The mission of the GSS Travel Awards Committee is to make a determining difference in as many students' travel needs as possible, both to give students the opportunity to participate in scholarly activity and to increase the University of Tennessee's presence at prestigious conferences. Given the large number of applications received for each travel cycle, and the budget within which the committee must operate, it is necessary to limit the travel awards to one per student per academic year.

### **How do I file for reimbursement?**

Applicants should submit their travel awards letter, as well as all receipts for acceptable travel expenses and proof of attendance, to their departmental secretary or other departmental representative responsible for travel claims. He or she will then submit the request to the Treasurer's Office using the Student Government Association account number.

**How long does it take to receive reimbursement?**

Reimbursement will generally be distributed via direct deposit approximately two weeks after the request is filed and approved through the Treasurer's Office.

**Whom should I contact for more information regarding the reimbursement filing process?**

Questions relating to reimbursement should be directed to your departmental staff that handles travel.

**I do not know if my college offered me any financial assistance. How do I find out if I was awarded partial funding from my college?**

Questions concerning college funding should be directed to the office of the dean of the applicant's college.

**I do not know if my conference proposal has been accepted. Will this affect my eligibility for a travel award?**

The GSS Travel Awards Committee does not give priority to applicants who have already been accepted to their target conference, so eligibility is not affected. Because there is only one deadline for each travel awards cycle, it is impossible for the committee to mandate that proposals be accepted by the target conference for funding consideration. Applicants whose conference proposals are **not** accepted, however, should contact the GSS President at their earliest convenience in order to preserve their future eligibility by withdrawing their applications.