



**GRADUATE STUDENT SENATE
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TRAVEL AWARDS REVIEW PROCESS**

The Graduate School, in conjunction with the Graduate Student Senate (GSS), is piloting a program to support students who need financial support for professional development opportunities. An ad hoc committee, the GSS Professional Development Travel Awards Committee, will work with the GSS President and Dean of the Graduate School to select awardees.

The GSS Professional Development Travel Awards allow graduate students to receive support to travel to workshops or other professional development opportunities. Throughout this document, the word “workshop” will be used generally to describe a variety of professional development opportunities including, but not limited to, workshops to develop skills not taught in courses at the university, field research experiments to collect data or observations, laboratory visits to learn how to use field-specific equipment not at the university, and trips to archives whose materials cannot be accessed remotely. These funds are only available for opportunities in which applicants are *active* participants, thus they are not available for students to passively attend conferences.

We strive to make a difference for graduate students but must also balance this with the goal of funding as many travel requests as possible. The applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis, but only one award is allowed per graduate student per academic year. Every effort shall be made to complete the review process in a reasonable amount of time following each submission, with initial recommendations to be achieved within two weeks of submission. Once initial decisions are made, final approval is subject to the advice and consent of the Dean of the Graduate School. Applicants will be notified of funding decisions via email. Notifications are generally sent within four weeks of submission.

****Due to the nature of the source of the funding, all travel must be completed
by May 31, 2019 in order to be considered.****

In order to clarify the decision process, outlined below is a summary of the procedures used to determine eligibility for an award and any funding decisions.

Automatic Rejection: The application will be automatically rejected if any of the following criteria are met.

- Failure to obtain any of the necessary signatures – applicant, academic advisor, and department head (or college dean if no department).
- Failure to submit a summary of the workshop including how attendance at this workshop will positively impact both the applicant and the university (see below).
- The applicant's demonstrated net financial need is a negative or zero amount (see below).

Criteria Used During Review

- Impact of workshop
 - Applicants are expected to write a summary of the workshop indicating its positive impact on both the applicant and the university.
 - Each summary should be limited to 250-1,000 words.
 - The summary must include the expected level of participation in the workshop, including a percentage or hourly estimate as to how much *active* participation will be required of attendees.
 - Summary must include why the workshop is relevant to the student, as well as how there are no similar opportunities at the university.
- Demonstrated net financial need
 - The amount of supplementary assistance indicated by the applicant's department and/or college, as well as any additional financial assistance from other sources (e.g., workshop travel awards, grants, advisor, etc.) is subtracted from the total listed cost for travel.

If exhibiting both a positive impact and a demonstrated net financial need, applications are considered for funding. If chosen for an award, support of up to \$1,000 can be provided through this program. This award can only be used to cover registration, travel, and lodging. Per diem for meals will **not** be covered.

****Due to the rolling nature of applications and a limited fixed budget, GSS Professional Development Travel Awards Applications will be accepted and awarded until all funds have been allocated. The GSS website will be updated when applications are no longer being accepted.****

Frequently Asked Questions

When can I submit an application for a Graduate Student Senate Professional Development Travel Award?

Applications are accepted on a rolling basis. They may be submitted at any time.

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

The GSS President may be reached by email at gsspdtravel@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, but applicants are only guaranteed to receive the amount for which they present receipts for acceptable travel expenses. All expenses must meet the requirement of UT Fiscal Policy. See administrative personnel in your department for more information on acceptable expenses.

What should I do if I receive an award but subsequently do not complete the professional development activity?

Applicants should notify the GSS President via email at gsspdtravel@utk.edu as soon as they become aware that the funds will not be spent. Applicants who are offered awards – but do not use them – are eligible for another award during the same academic year provided they withdraw their applications.

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

The goal is to make a difference in as many students' travel needs as possible, both to give students the opportunity to participate in professional development and to increase the University of Tennessee's presence at workshops and similar opportunities. Given the large number of anticipated applications and the allotted budget, 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 representative responsible for travel claims. He or she will then submit the request to the Treasurer's Office using the appropriate 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.

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

Questions relating to reimbursement should be directed to your departmental representative 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 application to attend the workshop has been accepted. Will this affect my eligibility for a GSS Professional Development Travel Award?

Priority is **not** given to applicants who have already applied and been accepted to their target workshop, so eligibility is not affected. Applicants whose workshop 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.