

Medical College of Wisconsin
Graduate Student Conference Education Fund
Award Policy
Revised: February 2024

Purpose: The Graduate Student Conference Education Fund (Travel Fund) is available to help defray the costs of degree-seeking students attending a regional, national, international, or virtual scientific meeting. The fund is intended to give students an opportunity to present their research before a scientific audience, obtain helpful feedback for future progress, and network with other scientists. The pool of money comes from yearly contributions from the Friends of MCW, the Graduate Student Association (GSA), and annual GSA fundraising. The Development Office assists the GSA with annual fundraising efforts and offers the Travel Fund as a targeted option in solicitation materials used for the Annual Faculty and Staff Fund Drive.

Governance: The Travel Fund procedures and student eligibility are determined by the GSA Representative Council (GRC) in consultation with departmental administrators, the Graduate School Business Manager, the Director of Enrollment, and other faculty advisors.

Award Amount: \$800

Application Deadline: No more than 20 business days after receiving notice of abstract acceptance for the conference for which the student is seeking the Travel Fund. If notice of abstract acceptance is received less than 20 business days before the start of the conference, the application must be submitted no later than the day before the conference begins.

Calendar: The Travel Fund operates on a calendar year (January 1st – December 31st). Any eligibility events completed after November 1st of the previous calendar year will satisfy the following year's requirements. Therefore, "eligibility year" will refer to November 1st of the previous year to October 31st of the following year.

Application Requirements:

1. The student is the **first and presenting author** for a poster/talk at one of the following:
 - a. An international meeting/conference.
 - b. A national meeting/conference.
 - c. A regional meeting/conference sponsored by a national society.
 - d. A virtual meeting/conference.
2. The student submits proof of abstract acceptance for the conference they wish to attend.
3. The application is signed by the applicant, their mentor, their program director, and their department administrator.
4. The student has volunteered at an approved Travel Fund volunteer event during the eligibility year **prior to submitting the application.**
5. The student has given a GRC-approved Travel Fund Presentation during the eligibility year **prior to submitting the application.**
6. The student submits a signed Travel Fund Volunteer Service Form and Letter of Travel Fund Presentation Completion.

Travel Fund Volunteer Service Guidelines:

The Travel Award Committee holds the responsibility for conscientiously choosing and

requirement: the growth and support of graduate student organizations

- e. After January 31st, the Travel Award Committee will decide whether to create more presentation dates on an as needed basis.

The following guidelines outline the process for conducting these talks:

- a. Each student will be allotted eight minutes (five-minute talk with up to three minutes for questions). The content of the presentation should summarize an aspect of the student's research (*e.g.*, methods used, results obtained, an overview of the student's poster). A brief research overview with limited jargon is recommended.
- b. A slide deck is required to be emailed to the designated moderator at least 24 hours before the event. The deck must not contain more than 5 content slides; title and acknowledgement slides do not count towards this limit. Any content slides above this limit will be removed by moderator. The file must be sent in PowerPoint format and follow the naming convention FirstInitialLastName_MM_DD_YYY.pptx with the date signifying the presentation date (*e.g.* JSmith_02_05_2024.pptx). The email must have the subject line "GSA Travel Fund Presentation".
- c. Presenters are required to stay for the whole event and will need to check in and check out with a GRC attendance tracker at the event. Failure to do so will result in not completing this requirement.
- d. These talks are open to all MCW students, faculty, and staff. Attending this talk without presenting does not satisfy the Travel Fund Presentation requirement.

Approved Travel Fund Presentation Events: *See [Approved GRC Travel Fund Events](#).

Important Annual Events Regarding the Travel Fund:

September-October

GSA Program Representatives meet with their Program Director(s) to discuss their program's current usage of the Travel Fund and future plans.

GSA will release the dates of Travel Fund eligibility events.

October-November

The Development Office communicates available funds to the Graduate School.

The Travel Award Committee meets with the GSA Treasurer, the Business Manager, and advisory faculty to discuss the award amount for the next calendar year.

November-December

The GRC reviews financial reports from the previous calendar year's award distribution.

Based on funds available and projected student travel, the Travel Award Committee presents its recommendation for the year's Travel Fund Award Policy and award cap to the GRC.

The GRC votes on their contribution to the following year's Travel Fund.

The Travel Award Committee and GRC Treasurer update the Travel Award Policy to reflect the GRC vote. The new policy is communicated to Department Administrators and to the graduate students via email.

January

A list of the previous year's awardees is shared with the GRC and posted in the *Graduate Student Association* module on Brightspace in "Module 3.4 Awards" or under "Travel Awards" on the GSA website.

Application Process:

- a. Students apply for the award by completing an application located in the *Graduate Student Association* module on Brightspace in “Module 3.4 Awards” or under “Travel Awards” on the GSA website. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure all portions of the application, including the faculty sponsor’s comment and signatures, are complete.
- b. **Each eligible student may apply once in a calendar year for the Travel Fund to be used at one conference. Any unused funds must be returned to the GSA.**
- c. Completed applications must be submitted to the Graduate School office (gradschool@mcw.edu) before the application deadline as described above.
- d. Should the application be incomplete, the Graduate School will communicate this to the student. The student will have no more than seven days to amend their application and resubmit it to the Graduate School for committee approval. Failure to return a completed application within this time window will constitute a rejection of said application.
- e. If a conference occurs early in the calendar year, students can submit completed applications during the previous calendar year to prepay flights/registration. However, the award amount for the year in which the conference occurs is to be used. If prepaid expenses initially charged to the Travel Award Cost Center exceed the new award amount (*i.e.*, the previous year’s award amount was higher than the award amount for the conference’s year), the Department Administrator, or the student (if the Department Administrator did not approve funding in excess of the Travel Fund), must reimburse the difference to the Travel Award Cost Center from alternative funds.

Awards Committee Review Process:

- a. Only completed applications submitted prior to the deadline will be forwarded to the Awards Committee of the Graduate Studies Council (GSC) who will review the application to determine whether all criteria have been met.
- b. The Awards Committee members will communicate via email their decision to the Graduate School (gradschool@mcw.edu) who will in turn email the decision to the applicant, their Program Director, and the Department Administrator.

Disbursement Process:

- a. Departments are encouraged to prepay airfare and/or conference registration fees when applicable. Department Administrators can access funds from the Travel Award Cost Center for prepaid fees. If these expenses exceed the award amount, the student must coordinate with their mentor and Department Administrator to determine alternative payment methods for the amount exceeding the award amount. If these expenses are less than the award amount, the funds left from the student’s award will be available for reimbursement of other expenses accrued to attend the conference. Departments may use funds from the Travel Award Cost Center prior to Travel Fund application acceptance to prepay airfare and registration fees. If the application is subsequently not accepted or the student does not travel, the Business Manager will contact the Department Administrator and the student to determine who is responsible for refunding the Travel Award Cost Center.
- b. Department Administrators may use the Travel Award Cost Center funds to prepay airfare and registration fees for students who do not have accepted abstracts. These students must complete and submit the completed Travel Fund application to their Department Administrator and the Graduate School. If, upon review, funds have been

used without a submitted application, the Business Manager will contact the Department