



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

**Purpose:** The Graduate Student Conference Education Fund (Travel Fund) was created to help defray the costs of students attending a regional, national, or international 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 Graduate Student Association (GSA) and annual GSA fundraising.

**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 and staff advisors.

**Award Amount (2025 calendar year):** \$700

**Calendar:** The Travel Fund operates on a calendar year (January 1<sup>st</sup> – December 31<sup>st</sup>) and is broken down into quarters.

<u>Quarter 1</u> (Jan 1 <sup>st</sup> – Mar 31 <sup>st</sup> )	<u>Quarter 2</u> (Apr 1 <sup>st</sup> – Jun 30 <sup>th</sup> )	<u>Quarter 3</u> (Jul 1 <sup>st</sup> – Sep 30 <sup>th</sup> )	<u>Quarter 4</u> (Oct 1 <sup>st</sup> – Dec 31 <sup>st</sup> )
Complete eligibility requirements and submit proof of eligibility for anticipated travel during Quarter 2	Complete eligibility requirements and submit proof of eligibility for anticipated travel during Quarter 3	Complete eligibility requirements and submit proof of eligibility for anticipated travel during Quarter 4	Complete eligibility requirements and submit proof of eligibility for anticipated travel during Quarter 1
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Submit application (with eligibility receipt) for known travel during Quarter 1	Submit application (with eligibility receipt) for known travel during Quarter 2	Submit application (with eligibility receipt) for known travel during Quarter 3	Submit application (with eligibility receipt) for known travel during Quarter 4
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15 awards become available	25 more awards become available	15 more awards become available	25 more awards become available
*See exception below for travel during Q1			

**Quarter Award Limit:** Each year, the GRC will determine the number of Travel Fund awards available and determine how to distribute these awards throughout the calendar year (quarter award limit). During each quarter, the Travel Fund is awarded on a first-come, first-serve basis until the

quarter award limit is reached. Any unused awards from one quarter will roll over to the next quarter award limit. This does not occur between calendar years.

<b>Q1 2025 Limit: 15</b>	<b>Q2 2025 Limit: 25</b>	<b>Q3 2025 Limit: 15</b>	<b>Q4 2025 Limit: 25</b>
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**Eligibility Deadline:** Students must complete the required volunteer hours and submit their signed Volunteer Service Form(s) as proof of completion. Proof must be submitted to the GRC within the quarter prior to travel (eligibility period). Eligibility requirements must be completed within 12 months of the eligibility deadline (*i.e.*, if your eligibility documents are due in Q2, you have from the beginning of Q2 the year prior to complete those requirements).

**Application Deadline:** A completed and signed application with proof of conference acceptance is due prior to traveling to the conference.

**Eligibility Requirements:**

1. The student is a current student within the MCW School of Graduate Studies or is presenting at a conference within two quarters of graduation from the MCW School of Graduate Studies.
2. The student volunteered for **at least 3 hours** during the 12-month period prior to the conference. Volunteer events do not need prior approval from the GRC. Hours can be accumulated across multiple events.
3. The student submits a signed Volunteer Service Form during the eligibility period prior to the conference.

\*Exception for students traveling during Quarter 1 (January 1, 2025, to March 31, 2025):

Students traveling during the dates above (*i.e.*, Quarter 1) must only complete 1 hour of volunteering and may complete this requirement during the quarter of travel. The signed Volunteer Service Form must be submitted prior to conference travel.

**Application Requirements:**

1. Students must submit proof of eligibility requirements the quarter prior to travel.
2. 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.
    - o While the Travel Fund does not typically support virtual attendance, requests to attend a conference virtually can be emailed to [gsa@mcw.edu](mailto:gsa@mcw.edu). Considerations will be made for conferences that become virtual due to unforeseen circumstances or instances where in-person attendance at a conference is not viable.
3. The student submits an application prior to traveling for the conference including:
  - a. The application document is signed by the applicant, their graduate studies mentor, their program director, and their department administrator.
  - b. The submitted abstract/paper to the conference.
  - c. Proof of abstract/paper acceptance for the conference they wish to attend.

**Application Process:**

- a. Students complete and submit proof of eligibility during the eligibility period.
- b. Students complete and submit the award application during the quarter of travel. It is the

student's responsibility to ensure all portions of the application, including the faculty sponsor's comment and signatures, are complete.

- c. **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.**
- d. Completed applications must be submitted via the Qualtrics link located under "Travel Awards" on the GSA website before the application deadline as described above. If there are still awards available that quarter, the application will be reviewed.

#### **Award Review Process:**

- a. The Travel Award Policy Committee and the Graduate School will track the students who complete and submit the eligibility requirements during the eligibility period.
- b. Only completed applications will be reviewed by the Graduate School. Application order will not be maintained for incomplete applications.
- c. The Graduate School will email the decision to the applicant, their Program Director, and the Department Administrator.

#### **Annual Events Regarding the Travel Fund:**

##### September-October

The Development Office communicates available funds to the Graduate School.

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

##### October-November

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

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

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

##### November-December

The Travel Award Policy 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 may be posted under "Travel Awards" on the GSA website.

#### **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 Administrator and the student to submit an application immediately. To access funds prior to abstract acceptance, Department Administrators must verify the accuracy of the Travel Fund application, particularly the type of meeting attended (regional, national, international). Funds can only be used up to the cap assigned; use of funds exceeding the cap must be refunded to the Travel Award Cost Center. Student noncompliance may result in fund reimbursement to the Travel Award Cost Center from the student.
- c. Any student using funds without a completed application submission (Travel Fund application, first-author abstract, proof of abstract acceptance, volunteer service, and presentation) as well as their Department Administrator will be contacted by the Business Manager to submit any missing application elements. If the student fails to submit the necessary documents, the student and/or Department Administrator must refund the Travel Award Cost Center from alternative sources for the funds used.
- d. For reimbursement of expenses (hotel, taxis, meals, etc.), students must submit proper documentation to their Department Administrator. If living arrangements are shared, separate bills should be obtained for each person. Shared transportation costs should be divided equally, and rental cars should be avoided. Travel Award Cost Center funds may be used to reimburse students for qualifying expenses, but funds used are not to exceed the award amount for all prepaid and reimbursed expenses.
- e. For reimbursement of expenses, students must apply for the Travel Fund by the aforementioned deadline. **Late applications will be denied.**

**Award Amount:**

- a. The award amount for the Travel Fund will be assessed annually and modified at the end of each calendar year if necessary for the next calendar year. The GSA Travel Award Policy Committee, in collaboration with the Business Manager and relevant advisors, will determine an appropriate award amount based on the funds available and the number of awardees from the previous year. The committee will make a recommendation to the GRC, which will vote on the award amount for the next calendar year.

**Accountability:**

- a. At the end of each calendar year, the Business Manager will determine the amount of unused funds. Unused funds will be retained for the Graduate Student Conference Education Fund for the following calendar year.
- b. The Graduate School Business Manager will audit the reports described above to be certain all expenditures were appropriate and will prepare a summary report for the Graduate School Dean, GSA President, GSA Treasurer, and GSA Travel Award Policy Committee detailing who received funds, what meeting was attended, and what funds, if any, went unspent.
- c. Any GSA travel funds disbursed outside of the guidelines provided here must be reimbursed from other funds (*e.g.*, departmental or mentor's funds).
- d. Travel Fund summary statements for the prior calendar year will be reviewed with GRC at the subsequent regularly scheduled GSA meeting each year.