



UTRGV Student Government Association

2023 – 2024 Student Travel Funds Guidelines

Purpose

The Student Travel Funds (STF) are available to support students traveling to conferences and competitions in order to enhance their college and professional experience.

A. Definitions

1. "Attendee:" a student attending a conference solely as a non-competitor, presenter or participant.
2. "Direct Bill:" receiving registration via direct payment towards the conference registration as opposed to being reimbursed.
3. "Domestic Travel:" traveling to a conference/competition that is within the U.S.
4. "Fiscal Year:" pertaining to dates that fall between September 1, 2023 and August 31, 2024.
5. "Group:" two or more students attending the same conference or competition.
6. "Hotel Folio:" record of the guest's purchases, including the room. Similar to a receipt.
7. "International Travel:" traveling to a conference/competition that is not within the U.S.
8. "Institutional GPA:" the GPA achieved at UTRGV only.
9. "Lodging:" a hotel room or university residential facility used by an applicant for the duration of a conference/competition. AIRBNB, VRBO, and hostels and/or any other rental home/apartment are not allowed for lodging.
10. "Participant:" a student taking part in an academic conference or academic competition by competing, presenting, or performing.
11. "Paymentworks:" reimbursement registration method used by UTRGV.
12. "Point of Contact:" individual (student, faculty, or staff member) who submits the V Link application.
13. "Registration:" the act of paying a monetary amount to attend an academic conference or academic competition.
14. "Reimbursement:" the act of repaying expenses associated with the conference or competition after the student's return.
15. "Transportation Expenses:" expenses associated with traveling to and from a conference via flight or bus excluding intercity travel. Examples include: airfare, gas mileage only on personal vehicle, bus ticket, etc. (No car rental)
16. "Travel Coordinator:" university faculty or staff member that is helping to coordinate the trip.

B. Eligibility

1. Any student interested in receiving travel funds must meet the following conditions when applying for the semester of travel:
 - i. Must be enrolled at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley for the current semester (exception for Summer semesters).



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- ii. Undergraduate students must have a minimum 2.5 institutional GPA and graduate students must have a minimum 3.0 institutional GPA.
 - iii. Must be in good standing with the university.
 - iv. Must not be enrolled in Brownsville Early College High School, Mathematics and Science Academy, or other Dual Enrollment program.
2. Any interested student organization must be in good standing with the Center for Student Involvement. For contact information, click [here](#).
 3. The purpose for the applicant's travel should be to explicitly enhance their academic and/or professional experience gained while attending UTRGV.
 4. Internships, fellowships, research opportunities and residencies are not eligible for the SGA student travel funds.
 5. The conference or competition must be held at least eighty (80) miles away from the Brownsville or Edinburg campus.
 6. Students applying for Student Travel Funds are not allowed to receive academic credit for any registered courses as a result of the conference or competition.
 7. Any student or student organization receiving partial funding from another department or program at UTRGV must specify which travel area will be funded.
 8. Any student or student organization being funded **fully** by another department or program at UTRGV to attend an academic conference or academic competition is automatically ineligible to receive funds from SGA Student Travel Funds.
 9. Student travel must abide by [STU 01-300: Student Travel Policy](#) located in the [UTRGV Handbook of Operating Procedures](#).

C. Application and Award Process

1. Select a point of contact that will complete the application process and serve as the direct point of contact between SGA and the application members.
 - i. The point of contact may be contacted various times by email during the application process and should be available to respond to any inquiries or request for an interview.
2. Prepare the following documents as they will be needed on the application. If the



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documents are unavailable at the time of application, email them to sgafunds@utrgv.edu **within 5 calendar days** of the stated return date on the application.

- i. Authorization for Student Travel Form & Release and Indemnification Agreement Form for each petitioner. These travel forms must be submitted to and approved by the Office of the Dean of Students located at BCAVL 204 or EUTCR 323 or emailed at dos@utrgv.edu. For more information regarding travel forms, [click here](#). If funding is granted, forms must be signed by Dean of Students in order to proceed with reimbursement processed. Obtaining signature is sole responsibilities of student(s) traveling.
 - ii. Proof of charges for all expenses on the application such as itemized receipts and/or the Hotel Folio. Reservation confirmations are not receipts; you must petition for your hotel folio at checkout. Receipts must show payment method.
 - iii. Documentation of payment for all expenses on the application such as a bank statement. Bank statements should only have the expenses associated with the conference/competition visible (i.e. redacted). We need to be able to view name of payee and name of bank or CC; not a screen shot of transaction line with amount listed only.
3. In order for an individual attendee or participant to receive reimbursement, each applicant must have set up with UTRGV through PaymentWorks via invitation sent by SGA support staff.
 4. In order for an organization to receive reimbursement, the student organization must setup via PaymentWorks invitation sent by our SGA support staff, by providing the organization's email address. If your organization is already a supplier/vendor, it is the organizations responsibility to make updates or verification of orgs bank account with Accounts Payable office.
 5. Apply online using the "2023–2024 Student Travel Funds Request" form located on our [Link page](#). Submit the application before the deadline for the semester that the conference or competition is. The deadlines are as stated below:

Semester	Travel Period	Application Deadline
Fall	September 1 – December 31, 2023	November 30, 2023
Spring	January 1 – May 31, 2024	March 30, 2024
Summer	June 1 – August 31, 2024	June 30, 2024

- i. Once an application has been submitted, the total of funding requested **cannot be increased**. Amounts cannot be transferred to another term or another conference.



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Amounts must remain for the established area, they cannot be transferred to other category within the award notification; registration, lodging and/or transportation categories.

- ii. Once an application has been submitted, the number of students on the request **cannot be increased**. If the number of students attending decreases, an email notification must be sent to sgafunds@utrgv.edu. Immediately report to sgafunds@utrgv.edu if eligible students will not be attending.
 - iii. **Late applications will not be accepted.**
6. The point of contact must complete the “Online Program Evaluation” form located at our [V Link page](#) **within five (5) calendar days** after returning from the conference or competition.
 7. Applicants shall have the option to receive their award via reimbursement or direct bill depending on the timing of the application approval.
 - i. Eligible expenses that can be reimbursed by this program are strictly only lodging expenses, registration fees, and transportation expenses as defined in section A. **NON-ELIGIBLE** expenses includes incidentals, service fees, parking/toll fees, membership dues and meals.
 - ii. Eligible expenses that can be direct billed by this program are restricted only to registration fees. Applicants requesting direct bill will be contacted to set up a meeting with SGA Support Staff upon approval of their application. Must be with two weeks prior to conference or travel date. Date of submission does not constitute the two-week period, as the application needs to be reviewed and awarded.
 - iii. **Airbnb, VRBO, hostels and/or any other rental home/apartment, cannot be reimbursed by our institution.**
 - iv. SGA will not provide funding for incidental fees incurred; this includes parking fees. **** Texas hotel tax exempt form available upon request****
 - v. In order to receive reimbursement for lodging, a hotel folio and a list of all students per room or proof of payment for a university residential facility must be submitted. Booking confirmation emails are NOT receipts. Must request hotel folio during checkout.
 - vi. If the student opts to take his/her personal vehicle, only gas mileage can be refunded. (At their own risk, the university will not be responsible for any damages incurred).
 8. **Failure to meet any deadline or submit any documentation stated in this section will lead to the application being denied.**
 9. **Failure to submit documentation/receipts with at least two weeks after travel date, will lead to funds being revoked. Receipts must be submitted via electronic form to**



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sgafunds@utrgv.edu

10. The students listed on the application submitted will be checked for eligibility as outlined in section B(1).
11. A student or Student Organization can only be funded for one trip per fiscal year. (September - August)
12. International students are subject to foreign tax withholding. Payments or reimbursements for travel expenses, including registration fees, are subject to 30% foreign tax withholding. The [Tax Compliance office](#) can assist with questions.

D. Review Process

1. If there is any missing or unclear information, the point of contact will be contacted to clarify or possibly schedule an interview.
2. The application will then be sent to the Student Government Association Financial Affairs Standing Committee to determine whether an application is viable.
 - i. The committee will prioritize Student Travel Funds that are submitted in a timely manner along with all required documents for each individual student in the group.
 - ii. The committee shall only be able to award amounts for eligible expenses as stated in section C(6)(i)
 - iii. Individuals who are recognized as **participants**, as defined in section A, may only be allocated up to \$700 for registration, lodging and/or transportation expenses associated with a conference/competition. Does not guarantee max allocated award amounts.
 - iv. Individuals who are recognized as **attendees**, as defined in section A, may only be allocated up to \$400 for lodging and/or registration expenses associated with a conference/competition. Does not guarantee max allocated award amounts.
 - v. SGA may provide funding for up to twenty (20) students attending the same conference and/or competition. **If two or more applications list the same conference and/or competition, they will be grouped together.** SGA does not guarantee max allocated award amounts.

Number of Students	Award Funds Max
2 – 5 Students	Up to \$2,000
6 – 10 Students	Up to \$3,500
11 - 15 Students	Up to \$4,000



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16 - 20 Students	Up to \$5,000
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- vi. The committee will calculate reasonable lodging expenses associated with the trip using per diem rates as determined by US General Services Administration (GSA).
 - vii. For organizations or groups, the hotel room maximum capacity should be booked with a minimum of four students per room. Due to other circumstances, this rule may be changed at the discretion of the Internal Affairs Committee (may be subject to change to adhere to university campus guidelines). Reasonable accommodations can be provided with documentation and input from Student Accessibility Services.
 - viii. Opposite gender students and students involved in dating and/or romantic relationship with other participants at this travel time will not be allowed to room together, please disclose any relationships in an email to sgafunds@utrgv.edu or during the interview with the Financial Affairs Standing Committee, if applicable.
 - a. If opposite gender students or students that are involved in a dating/romantic do room together, the application will be invalid.
3. An official notice of award email will be sent to the point of contact if and once the Financial Affairs Standing Committee has reviewed and approved the application.
4. The committee shall be limited to the following budget for each semester cycle:

Semester	Travel Period	Budget
Fall	September 1 – December 31, 2023	\$35,000
Spring	January 1 – May 31, 2024	\$30,000
Summer	June 1 – August 31, 2024	\$15,000

For more information about the semester budgets, please email sgafunds@utrgv.edu.

E. Disclaimers

- 1. The Student Government Association reserves the right to decline funding if any paperwork is incomplete, incorrect, late, or if criteria or requirements to be met are deemed unacceptable.
- 2. The Student Government Association reserves all rights and discretion for approval and amount awarded of funding.
- 3. The Student Government Association may decline reimbursement for students who fail to submit receipts and other relevant documents by designated deadlines.



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F. Special Powers

1. **Emergency Override Power:** This emergency power, which is only to be used during a valid emergency situation (as described below), may override any of the Financial Affairs' Guideline rules and regulations.
 - i. This power must require a $\frac{2}{3}$ vote from the Financial Affairs Committee and must be passed forward to the Internal Affairs Committee for review and approval of a simple majority.
 - ii. Every single override must be voted on (Vote for Override is only valid for one individual rule or regulation at a time).
 - iii. A valid emergency situation includes any unusual circumstance (local, state, or national disaster, etc.) as provided by the Financial Affairs Committee and approved by the Internal Affairs Committee.
 - iv. All decisions made with this power must comply with university policies.
 - v. All override power decisions must be disclosed to the senate at the earliest senate meeting.

G. Approval Date

1. Approved on August 4, 2023.

For any questions or concerns, please contact sgafunds@utrgv.edu.