



# UTRGV Student Government Association

## 2024 – 2025 Student Travel Funds Guidelines

### Purpose

The Student Travel Funds (STF) are available to support students traveling to conferences and competitions to enhance their college and professional experience. The funding is available first come, first served while funds are available.

### A. Definitions

1. "Attendee:" a student attending a conference solely as a non-competitor, presenter, or participant.
2. "Direct Payment:" 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, 2024 and August 31, 2025.
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



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- semester (exception for summer semesters).
- 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 academic and disciplinary standing with the university.
  - iv. Must not be enrolled in Brownsville Early College High School, Mathematics and Science Academy, or another 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, residencies, and study abroad are not eligible for the SGA student travel funds.
  5. The conference or competition must be held outside the four RGV counties: Cameron, Hidalgo, Starr, and Willacy.
  6. Students applying for Student Travel Funds are not allowed to receive academic credit for any registered courses due to 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](mailto: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 BSTUN 1.20 or EUTCR 323 or emailed to [dos@utrgv.edu](mailto: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. A student or Student Organization can only be funded for one trip per fiscal year.  
(September - August)
4. Apply online using the “2024–2025 Student Travel Funds Request” form located on our [V Link page](#). Submit the application before the deadline for the semester that the conference or competition is. Below are the deadlines for each semester based on the travel period. Be aware that funds may be exhausted before the deadline.

| Semester | Travel Period                   | Application Deadline |
|----------|---------------------------------|----------------------|
| Fall     | September 1 – December 31, 2024 | November 30, 2024    |
| Spring   | January 1 – May 31, 2025        | March 30, 2025       |
| Summer   | June 1 – August 31, 2025        | June 30, 2025        |

- 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. 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](mailto:sgafunds@utrgv.edu). Immediately report to



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[sgafunds@utrgv.edu](mailto:sgafunds@utrgv.edu) if eligible students will not be attending.

- iii. Late applications will not be accepted.
  - iv. **Once an award letter has been provided the total amount of the award cannot be increased.**
5. Applicants shall have the option to receive their award via reimbursement (registration, lodging, and/or transportation) or direct bill (registration only) 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 an individual shares a room with a person who is not awarded, only a portion of the room cost will be reimbursed. The reimbursement will be proportional to the number of awarded individuals compared to the number of non-awarded individuals sharing the room.
  - vii. 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). For more information regarding travel policy, [click here](#).
6. Applications are reviewed throughout the fiscal year during UTRGV's operating hours, Monday-Friday, 8 AM-5 PM. We appreciate your patience during high peak times.
7. The students listed on the application submitted will be checked for eligibility as outlined in section B(1).
8. Failure to meet any deadline or submit any documentation stated in this section will lead to the application being denied.



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9. **Failure to submit documentation/receipts with at least one weeks after travel date or deadline provided, will lead to funds being revoked. Receipts must be submitted via electronic form to [sgafunds@utrgv.edu](mailto:sgafunds@utrgv.edu)**
10. Reimbursement is based on the provided receipts. Any unused portion of the award will be retained by the SGA for other applicants.
11. 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.
12. 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.
13. 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.
14. 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.

### D. Review Process

1. If there is any missing or unclear information, the point of contact will be contacted to clarify or 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 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 recognized as **attendees**, as defined in section A, may only be



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allocated up to \$500 for registration, 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.** Once a conference or competition has been awarded up to 20 students or has reached the maximum amount of \$4,000, whichever comes first, any additional applications will be denied. 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 \$3,000   |
| 11 - 15 Students   | Up to \$3,500   |
| 16 - 20 Students   | Up to \$4,000   |

- vi. The committee will calculate reasonable lodging expenses associated with the trip using per diem rates as determined by the US General Services Administration (GSA).
  - vii. For organizations or groups, the hotel room maximum capacity should be booked with at least 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](mailto: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 award email will be sent to the point of contact once the Financial Affairs Standing Committee reviews and approves the application. V Link applications will be updated regardless of award status.

4. The committee shall be limited to the following budget for each semester cycle:

Brownsville  
BMAIN 1.312

Edinburg  
EUCTR 215

UTRGV.edu/SGA  
[sgafunds@utrgv.edu](mailto:sgafunds@utrgv.edu)



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| Semester | Travel Period                   | Budget   |
|----------|---------------------------------|----------|
| Fall     | September 1 – December 31, 2024 | \$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](mailto: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 the amount awarded funding.
3. The Student Government Association may decline reimbursement for students who fail to submit receipts and other relevant documents by designated deadlines.

### 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 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 8, 2024.

For any questions or concerns, please contact [sgafunds@utrgv.edu](mailto:sgafunds@utrgv.edu).