

Bill: Resolution 11.19.2024

Resolution: To Establish a GSS Conference Grant Funded by Student Senate Fees To be Overseen Exclusively by the GSS

Sponsors: Taylor Kocian (Chemistry), Vighnesh Pai (Engineering), Daniel Peipert (CMB), Neil Traft (Complex Systems), Emily Whalen (CDAE)

Whereas conference and professional development workshop attendance is an essential requisite for the success and advancement of graduate student scholars across the University of Vermont, and;

Whereas current funding opportunities provided by the Graduate College have requirements, including but not limited to the requirement of first authorship on work to be presented at the conference associated with the funding request, that act as prohibitive barriers to many students, and;

Whereas workshops and other invaluable professional development opportunities are excluded from eligibility to receive funding through the current avenues provided by the Graduate College;

Be it resolved that the graduate student senate instate a *GSS Conference Grant* to be funded by Graduate Student Senate Fees and to be overseen and administered by the GSS unless at any point members of the GSS determine that external expertise could increase the benefits imparted by this grant framework to the graduate student body and;

Be it further resolved administration of the *GSS Conference Grant* shall follow the framework provided herein under the section “Appendix: *GSS Conference Grant Guidelines and Requirements 11/2024*”.

Adopted by the Graduate Student Senate on December 5th, 2024.

Signature:

Taylor Kocian , Vighnesh Pai Daniel Peipert, Neil Traft, Emily Whalen

Appendix: GSS Conference Grant Guidelines and Requirements 11/2024

Note: For the remainder of this document, ‘conference’ refers to any professional development opportunity that fulfills the requirements listed herein with an emphasis on “Application Requirements #1”.

Note: In any instance that the term “application” is in this document used, it will be qualified: “conference application” shall refer to any document(s) or information used to request access to an eligible professional development opportunity while “grant application” refers to the document(s) or information used to request fund from the *GSS Conference Grant*.

Note: The term “funders” will be used to refer to the subset of GSS members that have been chosen as stewards of a given *GSS Conference Grant* cycle.

Eligibility:

1. You must be a graduate student at the University of Vermont both at the time of grant application as well as conference attendance.
2. You must not have accepted funds for conference attendance from either the Graduate College Conference Grant Program or the *GSS Conference Grant* in the past 12 months.
3. You must not accept funds from multiple *GSS Conference Grant* cycles for the same conference.
4. March grant applications must be for conferences starting between April 1st and the subsequent October 31st. September grant applications must be for conferences starting between October 1st and the subsequent April 30t.
5. The conference in question must occur between April 1 – October 31 for the March grant application and between October 1 – April 30 for the September grant application.

*There is no requirement to attend or present at the UVM Student Research Conference.

*Applicants are recommended to contact the funders in advance if they have questions about their eligibility.

Application Requirements:

1. Attestation from your advisor or department faculty member indicating that either:
 - a. GSS grant funds used to attend this conference will be supplemented by funds from your supporting advisor or department.OR

- b. Your advisor or supporting department faculty member believes the conference is an important professional development opportunity but they are unable to contribute funds.
- 2. Submission of proof of conference acceptance and/or proof of conference application. Proof of conference acceptance must be submitted no less than 1 month before the conference in question.
 - a. In the event that proof of conference acceptance is not available at the time of grant application, it must be submitted as soon as it is available and no less than 1 month before the conference in question.
 - b. If the grant applicant has not received confirmation of conference acceptance, the applicant should submit proof of conference application in the interim until the notification of conference acceptance is available at which point that should be submitted.
 - c. In the event that proof of conference application is not available, for reasons such as conference application window not being open at the time of grant application, this reason must be stated in the grant application. Proof of conference application must be submitted as soon as it is available followed by proof of conference acceptance once it is available.
 - d. If at any point the grant applicant finds they are unable to attend the planned conference OR that they have been rejected from the conference, the grant applicant must notify the *GSS Conference Grant* point of contact as soon as possible.
- 3. The grant applicant must indicate whether they intend to present at the conference or participate as a non-presenting attendee.
 - a. If applicable, include the abstract or statement used to apply for the conference.
 - b. If you plan to present but have not yet been chosen by the conference to do so, select “I intend to present”. If you receive notification that you will NOT be presenting, notify the *GSS Conference Grant* point of contact as soon as possible.
- 4. A budget estimate, with links and/or references, outlining how the funds will be used and total amount requested. The total request must not exceed \$700.
 - a. Provide a short explanation of how other costs will be shared or covered if total costs exceed \$700. (ie: departmental funds, self provided funds, etc.)
 - b. Eligible expenses include: fees associated with conference registration, travel, lodging, and meals purchased during travel and conference attendance.
 - c. Ineligible expenses include but are not limited to: alcohol, marijuana, and expenses associated with anyone other than the grant awardee. Ineligible expenses will not be reimbursed.

Awardee Requirements for Disbursement of Funds (reimbursement):

1. Proof of conference attendance such as a certificate of participation or confirmation of conference registration.
2. Itemized receipts documenting all expenses for which reimbursement is being requested should be sent at one time. The receipts should be submitted as soon as possible and no later than November 15th for the March – October grant cycle and May 15th for the September – April grant cycle.
 - a. Any expenses that do not fall under ‘eligible expenses’ or for which documentation is not provided will not be reimbursed.
 - i. Eligible expenses include: fees associated with conference registration, travel, lodging, and meals purchased during travel and conference attendance.
 - ii. Ineligible expenses include but are not limited to: alcohol, marijuana, and expenses associated with anyone other than the grant awardee.
 - iii. Ineligible expenses will not be reimbursed.
 - b. Original, scanned, or digital receipts are acceptable. If traveling in a developing country where itemized receipts may not be readily available, maintain a log during the trip to record all expenses. Provide documentation to verify destination and dates of trip (airline receipts, for example).
 - c. Reimbursement cannot exceed the amount requested in the grant application.
 - d. If GSS grant funds were to be supplemented by an advisor or departmental source as indicated in the grant application, provide a short explanation of how those matching funds contributed to the overall expenses.
3. A reflection (200 words max.) about the professional development and/or career advancement gained from attending the conference.
 - a. Failure to submit this reflection will not only cause the awardee to forfeit reimbursement, but may also result in the grant awardee being disqualified from all future GSS funding opportunities.

Logistics of Application Window and Choice of Grant Awardees:

- *GSS Conference Grant* application periods (2) will be March 1 - 31 and September 1 - 30. Grant applications will not be accepted at other times.

- March grant applications must be for conferences between April 1st and the subsequent October 31st. September grant applications must be for conferences between October 1st and the subsequent April 30th.
- Grant applicants cannot accept funds from the *GSS Conference Grant* in multiple grant application periods for the same conference.
- Grant applicants cannot apply for funds after the start date of the conference.
- The GSS funders will deem grant applications as eligible or ineligible based on requirements listed in this document. For grant applications where it is not overtly clear that the requirements are met, it is at the discretion of the funders to deem grant applications as eligible, ineligible, or to reach out to grant applicants for further details.
- *GSS Conference Grant* awardees will be chosen at random from the pool of grant applicants deemed eligible and the decisions will be made need-blind. In general, no more than 25% of awards can be granted to students that are attending conferences as non-presenting participants.
 - It will be at the discretion of the funders to implement this 25% in the best way they see fit depending on the circumstances set by the pool of eligible applicants.
 - If excess funds are available, it will be at the discretion of the funders to allocate awards to additional “presenters”, “non-presenters”, roll over the funds to the next grant application period, or return the funds to GSS, even if this leads to greater than 25% of awardees being “non-presenters”.
 - Grant applicants that are not awarded funding may be kept on a ‘wait-list’ in the event that chosen awardees’ plans change. Wait-listed grant applicants are asked to keep the funders informed if plans change.
- A maximum of \$700 may be requested by each grant applicant.
 - The grant cycle starting in March will be funded by the previous fall budget, and the grant cycle starting in September will be funded by the previous spring budget.
 - The total budget available for each *GSS Conference Grant* cycle will be decided by the GSS upon adoption of the respective GSS budget listed above. For the inaugural grant cycle (March 2025 – October 2025), the *GSS Conference Grant* budget will be \$11,900.
 - Efforts will be made to utilize the available funds to support as many requests as possible. There is no guarantee that the full amount of funds requested by an applicant will be awarded.

GSS Guidelines for Disbursement of Funds:

- *Funds will not be dispersed until all requirements are met, even if the grant applicant was chosen to be an awardee.*
- In the event that a grant is awarded and the conference application is subsequently rejected, the award will not be dispersed to the chosen awardee and the funder will apply the funds to the next eligible applicant on the grant “wait list”.
- Reimbursement processing dates will be no later than November 15th for the March – October grant cycle and no later than May 15th for the September – April grant cycle.

Examples:

- Oscar the Grouch, a Waste Management PhD student, would like to attend the National Garage Science Conference in October of 2024. His advisor is supportive, and can contribute some funds, but nonetheless would like Oscar to pursue grant funding. Although Oscar is eligible to apply to the GSS conference grant during the 2024 March grant application period, he missed that window but can still apply during the September 2024 period. He is notified in October, after the conference, that he is awarded the grant, and that funds will disburse following his completion of the remaining requirements.
 - If Oscar’s attendance at the conference was contingent upon grant funding, it would have been wise of him to apply in the March funding period. Even if the conference costs were not available by then, Oscar could explain the circumstances and provide an estimate of costs and the funders could determine if the requirements are met.