

4.2 Travel Funding

The Department encourages students to attend and participate in statistics and data science conferences. These conferences give students a chance to meet other researchers and learn of their work. They also provide students the opportunity to present their own work and to make contacts that could lead to employment and future research collaborations.

To this end, faculty are expected to budget for conference travel in their grant proposals, and students are encouraged to apply for travel awards and fellowships. Because such funding is not always available, the Department can, in some cases, provide funding to enable a student to attend a conference. There are three prerequisites to getting this funding. Students considering attending a conference should:

1. Request funding from one or more supervising faculty members who have available funding from grants or discretionary funds
2. Apply for funding through the lottery administered by the Graduate Student Assembly
3. Apply for funding sponsored by the organization hosting the conference, if any.

These steps can happen in parallel.

If additional funding is required, students can request Department funding through an online form. The form requests a short description of the reasons for traveling, including information about the student's professional role in the event (e.g., invited speaker, awardee, participant); a brief budget outlining the costs the student will face; a confirmation that the student fulfilled the prerequisites listed above; and a description of how this conference is relevant to the student's professional goals.

The Business Manager will determine the student's travel funding level, in consultation with the student, Graduate Directors, any supervising faculty, and the Department Head. Requests will be prioritized based on several criteria:

- **The availability of Departmental funds to support the student. The Department may not have funds to meet all requests for conference funding.**
- **The availability of other funds to support the student. Departmental funds cannot be combined with GSA funding.**
- **The seniority of the student. Fourth- and fifth-year students will receive higher priority, as conferences may benefit their job search and professional standing. Conference funding for students past their fifth year, or who have not met the deadline to make their thesis proposal, will be at the Department's discretion.**
- **The nature of the trip as it relates to the students' professional development. Higher-priority conferences have the student in a central role and are opportunities that are exclusive: giving an invited presentation on one's research, receiving an award, being an invited participant at a limited-attendance conference or workshop that is central to the student's research, or an invitation-only networking or related event. Presentations of the student's work at selective conferences or workshops are also considered relevant for professional development. Presentations at poster sessions, less selective conferences, or conferences not directly relevant to the student's work receive lower priority.**

The request form must be completed in advance of the conference to be attended, but can be completed before the student knows their proposed presentation will be accepted by the conference. **The Department will follow the same request deadlines used by the Graduate Student Assembly's conference funding program** (see <https://www.cmu.edu/graduate/professional-development/conference-funding/>). These deadlines are *several months in advance* of the conference travel to be funded, so students and advisors must plan ahead. The Department will not be able to fund travel if the request was not made in a timely manner.

Students are expected to apply for both GSA and Departmental funding simultaneously (as well as other relevant funding sources, as described above). After the Graduate Student Assembly has decided whether to award funds, the Department will review funding applications, prioritize them based on the above criteria, and notify students of the funding they will receive, if any. High-priority requests, based on the criteria above, will receive a maximum of \$750; other requests will receive a maximum of \$500.

Students are advised not to purchase tickets or pay registration fees until they know they will receive funding to cover the costs.

