

VICE PRESIDENT FOR GRANTS

Kaitlin Johnson

Sunday, October 25, 2009

Distinguished Assembly Members,

For the October cycle of grants we had 5 groups apply for social or academic grants, 26 people applied for the scholarly travel grant and 11 students apply for the professional travel grant. A very successful month and it looks as though word about the professional travel grant is spreading.

At the September General Assembly meeting, I gave an oral report regarding changes that have been made and are being made to the grants process. I would like to include those in writing in this report. The following are the two major goals I had for improving the grants process, along with the steps that have been taken so far as well as my plans for future work.

Goal: Increased transparency

Steps Taken:

1) Scholarly travel applicants may now only apply for a maximum of \$165/\$200. In the past, applicants were allowed to budget up to \$400 or \$500. However, to the best of my knowledge, grants of this size have never been awarded. This allows applicants to construct realistic budget proposal based on an amount they can actually expect to receive.

2) Social and Academic Grant applicants do not have a good idea of how award decisions are made. A judging matrix was developed and posted on the website so that applicants will be able to see the dimensions along which their proposal will be evaluated.

Future Work:

1) Continue to refine the judging matrix such that it gives the best possible representation of factors taken into consideration when awarding Social and Academic grants.

2) Develop a similar judging matrix for Professional Travel grant essays

Goal: Increased efficiency/ease

Steps Taken:

1) Removed the requirement of an advisor consent form. Advisor's are often difficult to get a signature from on short notice due to travel, sabbaticals, etc. Moreover, having this requirement represented a mistrust of applicants' intentions. Applicants may still optionally submit a letter of support from their advisor if they wish.

2) All application materials are now required to be submitted by email at the same time. This will eliminate some of the "paper chase" done by the grants assistant. Less time devoted to gathering the application parts together should mean that grant evaluations for completed travel can be processed more quickly so that recipients can get their checks faster.

3) Text on both the Scholarly and Professional Travel Grant webpages has been revised, reordered and clarified so that applicants new to the application process and policy requirements can more easily determine their eligibility and the application requirements.

Future Work:

1) I would eventually like to have the application integrated directly into the GAPSA website so that applicants apply on the website and not via email. Our current website does not have this capability, but research into revising our current setup is underway.

This is an ongoing process and I am open to feedback. Please come to me with your constructive criticism or suggestions!

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

The GAPSA grant committee is seeking one or two more committee members from the Assembly. There is very minimum commitment (one meeting per month). Serving on committee can be a rewarding experience for you. If you want to be more directly involved in how grant funding is awarded, please consider this opportunity. All those interested please talk to me or email me.

Thank You,

Kaitlin Johnson
651-307-2864
john2921@umn.edu