

**Differential Fees**  
**Graduate Students Travel**  
**Award Policy**

**Howard R. Hughes College of Engineering**

UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, LAS VEGAS

**September 2024**

# Contents

SECTION I. GRADUATE STUDENTS TRAVEL AWARD OVERVIEW .....	1
A. DIFFERENTIAL FEES GRADUATE STUDENT TRAVEL AWARD PROGRAM .....	1
B. TRAVEL AWARD BUDGET ALLOCATION .....	1
SECTION II. ELIGIBILITY, DEADLINES, AND LIMITATIONS.....	2
A. ELIGIBILITY FOR SPONSORSHIP.....	2
B. APPLICATION DEADLINES .....	2
C. APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED PAST THE DEADLINE.....	2
D. FUNDING LIMITATIONS – INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP APPLICATIONS.....	3
SECTION III. APPLICATION GUIDELINES & PROCEDURES.....	3
A. APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS & STRUCTURE .....	3
B. FUNDING PRIORITY .....	3
C. APPLICATION MATERIALS AND FORMATTING REQUIREMENTS .....	4
SECTION IV. SPONSORSHIP AWARD SELECTION AND DISBURSEMENT .....	5
A. REVIEW CRITERIA AND SCORING.....	5
B. DECISION NOTIFICATION .....	5
C. AWARD MODIFICATION PROCESS .....	5
D. MODIFICATION PROCEDURE .....	5
E. ADDITIONAL NOTES.....	6
F. DISBURSAL OF GPSA SPONSORSHIP GRANTS .....	6
G. TRAVEL FUNDING NOTES.....	6
H. TIMELINE FOR DISBURSAL OF FUNDS.....	6
I. FUNDS FOR AUTOMOBILE USE .....	6
J. TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF ACCEPTANCE.....	7
K. HOWARD R. HUGHES COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING RESEARCH FORUM ATTENDANCE .....	7
L. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	7
M. NON-COVERED ITEMS.....	7
SECTION V. THE GPSA SPONSORSHIP COMMITTEE.....	7
A. MISSION STATEMENT .....	7
B. COMMITTEE SCOPE OF PRACTICE .....	7
C. COMMITTEE COMPOSITION AND STRUCTURE.....	8
D. CHAIR DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES.....	8
E. COMMITTEE MEMBER DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES.....	8
SECTION VI. PROGRAM QUESTIONS & CONTACT INFORMATION .....	9
APPENDIX A.....	10
FILLABLE APPLICATION FORM .....	10
APPENDIX B.....	13
SELECTION CRITERIA FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS TRAVEL AWARD APPLICATIONS .....	13

## **SECTION I. GRADUATE STUDENTS TRAVEL AWARD OVERVIEW**

This section will provide the goal, objectives, and the number of graduate student travel awards provided by Howard R. Hughes College of Engineering to our engineering graduate students.

### **A. DIFFERENTIAL FEES GRADUATE STUDENT TRAVEL AWARD PROGRAM**

The Howard R. Hughes College of Engineering has been charging undergraduate and graduate engineering, construction management, and computer science students differential fees at the 300-, 400-, 600-, and 700-level courses. Some parts of the differential fees are budgeted to provide travel grants to the graduate students who are participating in regional, national, and international conferences and annual research meetings. The college has formed a committee to assist in distributing these funds to enrolled graduate students to purchase research materials, present their work at national/international conferences, and partake in professional development opportunities that support completion of requirements for their degree program or enrich their educational tenure. The ad hoc committee is formed by the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs every year with the representatives from each of the four departments and their graduate students' representatives. Generally, the committee is composed of two faculty and two graduate students representing each department (if possible). The committee will be chaired by one of the faculty nominated in this committee. The main goal of this document is to let the chairs, graduate coordinators, faculty, and graduate students of all four departments (CEEC, CS, ECE, and ME) know about this travel award policy. Therefore, this document consists of the process of awarding these funds as well as the application deadline and application process.

### **B. TRAVEL AWARD BUDGET ALLOCATION**

The Howard R. Hughes College of Engineering, Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs distribute the funds from differential fees to this committee. Depending upon the total differential fees accumulated from the students, about \$30,000 is allocated to this committee to distribute to the students for their travel to conferences, research locations, and professional meetings. After consultations with department chairs, the Associate Dean has decided to provide \$5,000 to each department so that they can select the students and send it to the committee for approval. The department must select the students for this grant based on the policy developed by the committee. Once the application materials and the recommendations from the department are received, the committee will allocate a total of \$20,000 to the graduate students (not exceeding \$5,000 for each department). As the revenues from the differential fees change every year, the money allocated to the committee will vary every year, and based on this amount, the money provided to each department will also change. The committee will select the graduate students based on their application materials submitted directly to the committee for the disbursement of the rest of the \$10,000 funds. While selecting the students, the committee will adhere to the policy developed by the committee. The selection criteria are provided in Section IV.

## SECTION II. ELIGIBILITY, DEADLINES, AND LIMITATIONS

### A. ELIGIBILITY FOR SPONSORSHIP

To qualify for the Differential Fees Graduate Student Travel Award Program, students must be officially admitted to and currently enrolled in a Howard R. Hughes College of Engineering graduate degree program at the time of the award. Students must have completed (or have in progress) at least six graduate credit hours and maintain enrollment and a 3.0-GPA minimum upon application submission. The applicant must show at least 50% matching travel funds from their supervisor, research project, department, or GPSA funding to apply for this award.

### B. APPLICATION DEADLINES

The deadline for submission of all application materials is sixty (60) days prior to the activity start date. The Differential Fees Graduate Student Travel Award Committee encourages applicants to submit applications early and recommends students submit their complete applications based on the timeline proposed below:

Activity Starts in Month of		Recommended Application Deadline
November	→	August 31
December	→	September 30
January	→	October 31
February	→	November 30
March	→	December 31
April	→	January 31
May	→	February 28
June	→	March 31
July	→	April 30
August	→	May 31
September	→	June 30
October	→	July 31

Note: Students are encouraged to submit applications early. For example, students should submit their application the moment they receive their conference acceptance. Applications should be submitted at least sixty (60) days prior to their activity start date (i.e., first day of conference, first day of professional meetings, etc.).

### C. APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED PAST THE DEADLINE

Late applications will require a brief explanation of the conditions that delayed or prevented the application from being submitted before the deadline. While students are encouraged to submit their applications as early as possible, funds are available to accommodate applications that demonstrate extenuating circumstances outside of the applicant's control. All the applications for the travel awards are not guaranteed to be funded. The funding will be

prioritized based on the application submission date; the earlier the applications are submitted, the higher the chances of funding. Once the funds are expended, any remaining applications will not be processed. The committee has developed a fillable application form that needs to be filled out by the applicants. All applications are subject to eligibility requirements and funding limitations. The committee cannot award activities already in progress or past activities. Late applications are approved at the discretion of the Committee Chair. As with all applications, preference is given to students that are taking part in conference or professional meetings that will be applied to their final thesis/dissertation manuscript/culminating experience projects. Also, the applicant must show matching travel funds from their supervisor, research project, or GPSA funding to apply for the travel fund. Once a late application has been denied, there are no further appeal opportunities.

#### **D. FUNDING LIMITATIONS – INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP APPLICATIONS**

Individual students are eligible for funding at limits corresponding to their degree. The funding limitations are as follows:

- Master's students will be eligible to receive up to a maximum \$1,000 annually.
  - If a master's student were to later enroll as a doctoral student at UNLV, they would be eligible to apply for \$1,500 in award funding annually.
- Doctoral-level students will be eligible to receive up to a maximum of \$1,500 annually.
- Non-degree seeking students are not eligible for Differential Fees Graduate Student Travel Award funding.
- Group applications will not be entertained.

### **SECTION III. APPLICATION GUIDELINES & PROCEDURES**

#### **A. APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS & STRUCTURE**

The applicant must complete the fillable application form (provided in the Appendix A and available on the website), consisting of identifying information and attachments, in its entirety. This application form should be attached with the conference paper submission and acceptance email or letter, the supervisor's recommendation with matching funds provided to the student(s) from the advisor's overhead or from the research project, and any funding secured from GPSA or other sponsors. If the travel fund is applied for conference presentation, the abstract of the conference paper should be attached. Completed applications must be submitted to the email [DIFF-FEES-COE@UNLV.EDU](mailto:DIFF-FEES-COE@UNLV.EDU) with all the required documents as one pdf file on or before the application deadline. Incomplete applications will be disqualified and late applications will not be accepted without an approval from the Committee Chair.

#### **B. FUNDING PRIORITY**

Owing to the competitive nature of the funding program and to augment project support, applications are considered based on the following priority levels:

- *Tier 1 Activities.* Any research, project, creative activity, and/or academic travel expense (i.e., research or conference presentation purposes) that is required for the completion of a PhD degree program. Program requirements must be demonstrated, such as a screen capture from the degree handbook or a written statement from your advisor stating that graduation depends on this specific activity.
- *Tier 2 Activities.* Any research, project, creative activity, and/or academic travel expense that is for the completion of a master's degree program. Program requirements must be demonstrated, such as a screen capture from the degree handbook or a written statement from the student's advisor stating that graduation depends on this specific activity.
- *Tier 3 Activities.* Networking or attendance at a conference/performance or professional development event without a presentation.

### **C. APPLICATION MATERIALS AND FORMATTING REQUIREMENTS**

All submitted application materials must adhere to the following format requirements. Each of the three required, student-provided application materials (request and justification of activities, budget, and supporting documentations) will be evaluated for formatting requirements. Failure to adhere to the requirements will result in rejection. The formatting requirements for all materials are as follows:

- The application must be filled out in the fillable form provided, and the form will have limitations of font type, font size, spacing, margins. The word limitations should not exceed the provided limit.
- If the student is attending to present a paper in the conference, the conference must have accepted the paper and the student must provide verification (conference paper acceptance email from the organizer). Letter of recommendation from the student's advisor is also required.
- If the student is attending a conference to network, then a letter from their advisor must be provided that states why it is important for the student to attend the conference to receive their academic degree. This should be stated by the advisor in the letter of recommendations provided.
- Letter of recommendation from a student advisor stating the matching fund provided.
- Confirmation letter from another sponsor who provides partial funds for the student's travel.
- Detailed budget breakdown of the student travel with multiple price comparisons showing due diligence at finding the lowest travel costs.
- Any other documents that are pertinent for the committee to make a decision.
- Combine all these documents in one file and provide in PDF format with the following file names: "Student's last name\_Degree level (MS or PhD)\_Differential Fee Travel Award.pdf"

## **SECTION IV. SPONSORSHIP AWARD SELECTION AND DISBURSEMENT**

### **A. REVIEW CRITERIA AND SCORING**

Award recipients will be determined based on completed applications from qualified applicants. The selection procedure will be guided by the Differential Fees application selection criteria. The committee members will review the application and provide a comments and vote for each application. Based on the aggregate votes, the application will be ranked and funded based on the available budget. If funding is not available, the applications will not be reviewed, and the committee will inform the applicant about the budget situation. The application funding criteria may be found in the Appendix B of this document.

### **B. DECISION NOTIFICATION**

The Differential Fees Graduate Students Travel Award Committee will make a decision within 4 weeks after the application deadline.

### **C. AWARD MODIFICATION PROCESS**

The purpose of a modification is to request that a sponsorship award be applied to a different scholarly activity and/or to modify the research/travel itemized budget. A one-time amendment to an approved award when travels or research plans have changed due to force majeure (an event or effect that cannot be reasonably anticipated or controlled) affecting the funded activity (e.g., research materials needed for the proposed activity were modified, conference/research location or dates changed, pandemic, problems with visas or project approvals, access to population for research, etc.) may be permitted. New projects, changes in location and dates, changes to budget and requested funded amounts may require a new application. Requests for modification are reviewed and decided by the Committee Chair.

### **D. MODIFICATION PROCEDURE**

Upon knowledge of the change to the original activity, the travel award recipient may request an amendment, in writing, to the Committee Chair by submitting an electronic modification request as soon as possible explaining the alterations in the activity. The following items are mandatory for consideration of modification requests:

- *Explanation of Modification.* Applicant must present a statement describing the proposed activity and/or budget modifications. Explanation should outline the reason(s) for the proposed changes.
- *Explanation of Activities (Revised).* Applicant must submit a revised explanation of activities for consideration.
- *Budget (Revised).* Applicant must submit a revised budget with revised justifications and supporting documentation (and cost comparisons) for consideration.
- *Conference Acceptance.* If applicable, it is mandatory that a conference registration and acceptance be included for consideration.

## **E. ADDITIONAL NOTES**

Failure to notify the Associate Dean or Committee Chair of a needed amendment to a funded application may result in the negation or repayment of the entire award. Award recipients are responsible for informing the College of changes to their funded activity. Sponsorship modification applications shall be reviewed monthly on a case-by-case basis and at the discretion of the Committee Chair. Incomplete modification requests will not be considered. If changes to the award amount are made, a new award letter must be provided to the applicant. Modifications shall not increase the initially approved award amount (a funding increase will require a new application reviewed by the Committee) nor fund previously denied items.

## **F. DISBURSAL OF GPSA SPONSORSHIP GRANTS**

Travel award recipients must be enrolled in the semester for which they are receiving the award. Disbursement of funds is dependent on eligibility requirements. Travel awards not claimed by the end of the semester will be forfeited and funds will be returned to the general College Differential Fees account.

## **G. TRAVEL FUNDING NOTES**

Departments should not purchase student travel. Conference travel is not considered university business, and departments cannot therefore purchase travel on behalf of students per Accounts Payable. Additionally, this award cannot be applied to an expense report. Travel expenses should be incurred using a personal card and “reimbursed” to the student through students’ department. The remaining awarded amount will be disbursed directly to the student so they can make other purchases as they see fit in pursuit of the funded activity. Students are responsible for booking their own travel activities.

## **H. TIMELINE FOR DISBURSAL OF FUNDS**

Grants are processed through the department following the Committee’s decision. The account number will be provided to the department so that the paperwork can be processed to reimburse the travel. Applicants should seek to apply early to avoid any issues that come from the disbursement timeframe.

## **I. FUNDS FOR AUTOMOBILE USE**

In accordance with the policy of the UNLV Office of the Controller, travel award funds personal and rental automobile use by estimated mileage at 50% of the current standard mileage reimbursement rate determined by the IRS. These rates change every January and can be found on the IRS website. Budgets should provide documentation estimating the number of miles driven during the activity and use the current standard mileage reimbursement rates to calculate requested funds.



## **J. TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF ACCEPTANCE**

Travel grant recipients agree to complete award requirements upon award letter notification. The recipient shall be responsible for ensuring that funds are used according to the accepted budget. Slight budget adjustments are expected and do not need to be approved by the Committee. Major adjustments should be directed to the Associate Dean. Failure to comply with any eligibility requirement or expectation of this award shall result in suspension of current funding and/or the forfeiture of any future travel award funding.

## **K. HOWARD R. HUGHES COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING RESEARCH FORUM ATTENDANCE**

As a stipulation to accepting a travel award, the student is required to participate (through a poster presentation) in the next Graduate Students Research Forum conducted by the Howard R. Hughes College every semester. Recipients are responsible for ensuring they register for this event. If the grant recipient does not attend this event, the committee will not provide further grants to that individual.

## **L. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

All presentations, reports, papers, articles, and books resulting from the applicant's funded project should include an acknowledgement to the Howard R. Hughes College of Engineering.

## **M. NON-COVERED ITEMS**

Compensation (salaries, wages, honorarium, tuition, etc.), routine supplies, professional organization membership, per diem, conference presentation posters, research participants (the college cannot fund cash incentives or gift cards, but it can fund material incentives such as phone cards or swag) are considered non-covered items.

## **SECTION V. THE GPSA SPONSORSHIP COMMITTEE**

### **A. MISSION STATEMENT**

The Howard R. Hughes Differential Fees Graduate Students Travel Award Committee shall support travel that directly affects a student's degree program and makes a considerable contribution to their field of study.

### **B. COMMITTEE SCOPE OF PRACTICE**

The Howard R. Hughes College of Engineering Differential Fees Graduate Students Travel Award Committee shall be responsible for the disbursement of the Differential Fees graduate students travel budget. The Committee shall be tasked with, not inclusive, of the following:

- Review all graduate student travel funding applications submitted to the committee and recommend approval or rejection of funds according to the merit of the proposed

fundable activities.

- Maintain an updated report on requests for graduate student travel funding for presentation to the Howard R. Hughes College of Engineering Differential Fees Committee. Submit a zero-deficit annual report to the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Program no later than seven days prior to June 30, fiscal year ending (August meeting).
- Make recommendations on operating procedures and guidelines to the Differential Fees Graduate Students Travel Awards for further review and action.

### **C. COMMITTEE COMPOSITION AND STRUCTURE**

The graduate travel fund budget shall be managed by the Differential Fees Graduate Students Travel Award Committee. The chair the graduate travel fund committee should be nominated by the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Programs from one of the department faculty every year. The Committee shall be comprised of at least one faculty member and two students from departments (from different department than the faculty representing if possible). All four members vote on the Committee. The opportunity to join the Committee must be made public through the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Program to all the faculty and students members nominated from each department. The Graduate Students Travel Award Committee, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Programs, the Committee chair, and/or members of the Committee shall have the power to recommend and adopt policy changes to this operating policy as necessary. All chair and member expectations and responsibilities are subject to modification to reflect Committee development.

### **D. CHAIR DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

The duties of the Committee Chair include presiding over official meetings, maintaining Committee meeting agendas and minutes, recording attendance of Committee members, organizing and reviewing all submitted applications, delegating roles within the Committee as necessary, submitting decision letters to the applicants, and maintaining a running total of Committee approved awards.

### **E. COMMITTEE MEMBER DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

The duties of the Graduate Students Travel Award Committee members include:

- Attending all scheduled meetings; providing notice if absence is necessary.
- Reviewing applications prior to committee meetings.
- Providing the rankings of the applications based on the rubric developed by the Committee.
- Completing assigned tasks in a timely manner.

## **SECTION VI. PROGRAM QUESTIONS & CONTACT INFORMATION**

Questions about the Howard R. Hughes College of Engineering Differential Fees Graduate Students Travel Award Program may be directed to the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Programs ([yingtao.jiang@unlv.edu](mailto:yingtao.jiang@unlv.edu)), and any questions regarding application materials, requirements, and award decisions should be directed to the Committee chair ([Pramen.shrestha@unlv.edu](mailto:Pramen.shrestha@unlv.edu)).

# **APPENDIX A**

## **FILLABLE APPLICATION FORM**

## Differential Fees Funding Application – Graduate Students Travel Award

Differential Fees funds may be requested by Graduate Students who are enrolled full-time in College of Engineering for activities that enhance graduate students’ research experiences, promote professional development, or otherwise assist their dissertation or thesis or culminating experience project topics. All awards are competitive and are subject to the availability of funds. Please **do not apply** if you do not meet **Required Criteria** stated below for this travel grant fund. Fill out the highlighted parts of fillable application form. Only fully completed applications submitted to [DIFF-FEES-COE@UNLV.EDU](mailto:DIFF-FEES-COE@UNLV.EDU) will be considered. Visit Differential Fees Graduate Students Travel Award Policy document provided in this link to know about funding criteria.

### Requirements:

- 1) The applicant must be a graduate student and admitted to MS or PhD level in one of the four departments under Howard R. Hughes College of Engineering. Non-degree seeking students are not eligible for travel award.
- 2) The applicant must have completed (or have in progress) at least six graduate credit hours and maintain enrollment and a 3.0-GPA minimum upon application submission.
- 3) The applicant must show matching travel funds from their supervisor, research project, department, or GPSA funding to apply for this award.

### Date of Submission:

### Title of Paper:

### Conference or Meeting Name:

### Primary Contact Name:

### Email:

### Completed or Enrolled Credits:

### Telephone:

### Admitted Degree:

### Current GPA:

**Travel Funding Request and Justification.** Provide description of proposed activity and justification. Please include in the description:

- (a) Presentation in conference or research or professional meetings/ Attendance in conference or research or professional meetings.
- (b) What are the activities? (e.g., paper presentation, abstract presentation, professional meetings presentation, attendance in the conference or meetings)
- (c) If conference presentation, please attach the abstract and the conference organization’s confirmation of the acceptance).
- (d) Where the activity will take place?
- (e) How the activity will enhance your PhD or thesis or culminating experience project or promote professional development, or accelerate graduation?
- (f) Any benefit to departments or university top-tier initiative.
- (g) Submit advisor’s recommendation letter.

The quality of this description summary and justification could significantly influence your chances for funding?

**Funding Request and Justification.** Why should your funding request be selected? Explain the Impact of the activity. (Limit to 500 words)

**Budget.** Summarize your budget with sufficient detail so the committee can evaluate all cost elements (e.g., lodging, transportation, registration fees, materials, etc.). Attach additional sheets if necessary. You must provide at least two quotations for each item in your budget, except for items with single source for purchase. (Limit to 300 words).

- i. Estimated Total Project Costs:*
- ii. Amount Requested from Differential Fees Funds:*
- iii. Other Funding Amount Available to Support your Project (50% cost share by your research advisor, department, GPSA, or other sources are required to apply for this award)*
- iv. Other Funding Status:*

**Note: Attach the confirmation letter from other funding agencies**

Differential Fees Graduate Students Travel Awards are competitive. The College of Engineering Differential Fees Committee makes all funding decisions. *The committee typically awards a maximum of \$1,000 and \$1,500 to MS and PhD student, respectively. However, the students are eligible to apply travel award annually. Awards can only be used for the specific purpose identified in the original application unless prior approval is obtained from the committee. Only expenses incurred prior to August 15 and submitted for reimbursement must be completed by August 31 are eligible. The committee will not fund the previous fiscal year's activities. Original receipts for all expenses are required. Unexpended funds as of August 31 are forfeited.*

# APPENDIX B

## SELECTION CRITERIA FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS TRAVEL AWARD APPLICATIONS

There are two major criteria for funding the graduate students travel award applications. They are required criteria and preferred criteria. If the students do not meet the required criteria, their application will not be forwarded to committee for voting. Once the required criteria are fulfilled, then the committee will vote and rank the applications based on the preferred criteria. The detailed of required and preferred criteria are provided below.

### Required Criteria:

1. The applicant must be a graduate student and admitted to MS or PhD level in one of the four departments under Howard R. Hughes College of Engineering. However, non-degree seeking students are not eligible for travel award.
2. The applicant must have completed (or have in progress) at least six graduate credit hours and maintain enrollment and a 3.0-GPA minimum upon application submission.
3. The applicant must show at least 50% matching travel funds from their supervisor, research project, department, or GPSA funding to apply for this award.

### Preferred Criteria:

1. PhD student will be given a high priority than MS student during selection of travel awardees.
2. The conference paper presentation will be provided first preference over the conference or research or professional meeting attendance.
3. The paper related to PhD dissertation topics will be provided first preference over the MS thesis or culminating experience project topics.
4. The paper related to MS thesis topics will be prioritized more than MS culminating experience project topics.
5. The students who have not received the travel grant before from Differential Fees Graduate Students Travel Award will be provided a high priority.