2020 -2021
Student Opportunity and Success (S.O.S)
Funding Guide

University of California, Berkeley
Graduate Assembly
ga.berkeley.edu

Welcome

The Graduate Assembly's Vice President for Equity and Inclusion (VPEI) has prepared this guide to help students understand and apply for Graduate Assembly (GA) Student Opportunity and Success (S.O.S.) Fund. The guide details application requirements, the process under which applications are reviewed, and lays out the responsibilities expected of individuals who receive funding. Read it, review it, and use it as a reference tool. Most importantly, share it with other graduate and professional students.

What is the Graduate Assembly?

The Graduate Assembly (GA) is the official representative body of the graduate and professional students at the University of California, Berkeley. The fundamental principles of the GA are the promotion of a vibrant student social life, inclusiveness, activism, community service, educational improvement, and professional development. In service to these principles the GA advocates for students, funds student groups on campus, and directly manages a variety of projects.

What is the S.O.S. Fund?

The S.O.S. Fund was created through [GA Resolution 1903A](), in recognition of the various circumstances that may come to impact a student's term as a student on campus and in recognition of how existing forms of campus financial support were: (1) insufficient in capturing need, (2) often restrictive of circumstances that graduate and professional students may face, and (3) had significant institutional and relational barriers to access. Therefore, the S.O.S. Fund was created through the commitment of GA commercial revenues, as well as funds from the Chancellor's Advisory Committee on Student Services and Fees (CACSSF) and the 2019 Big Give campaign.

The vision for this fund is:

1. That it remain a fund for graduate and professional students at UC Berkeley, run by UC Berkeley graduate and professional students.
2. That the fund continue to evolve alongside the advocacy of the GA and the complex needs of UC Berkeley's graduate and professional students. Thus, while some circumstances, scenarios, events, and the like may not be enumerated in this guide this does not mean that they cannot be reflected in the future.
3. That this fund be seen as a supplement to the efforts of UC Berkeley's administration, not a replacement for the much needed invested and graduate and professional student support.

Graduate Assembly Contact Information

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S.O.S. Funding Committee

The S.O.S. Funding Committee consists of the Vice President for Equity and Inclusion (VP E+I), the Campus Affairs Vice President (CAVP), the Vice President of Finance (VPoF), the GA Case Manager(s)

(GA CM), and the VP E+I Chief of Staff (CoS). Each committee member upon joining the committee signs an agreement that states they will: (1) disclose any potential conflict of interest to other committee members and (2) agree to keep all applicant names, as well as personal and case information confidential.[1]

Committee Roles

CoS: Anonymizes S.O.S. Fund applications so as to minimize potential bias that may arise in the application review process. Offers support and advises prospective S.O.S. Fund applicants.

GA CM(s):   Serves as the main point of contact for the S.O.S. Fund for current applicants. Conducts the initial review of S.O.S. Fund applications and proposes an award amount. Also offers connection to wrap-around services through GA affiliates with such as the Basic Needs Center, the GA Wellness Center, DSP, and PATH to Care.

VP E+I: Reviews GA CM(s) recommendations, has the authority to veto a grant recommendation, has the S.O.S. Fund budget line item under their office, submits paperwork for processing.

CAVP: Reviews GA CM(s) recommendations and has the authority to veto a grant Recommendation.

VPoF: Approves grant allocations and advises on grant funding as well as fundraising.

Disclaimer

In accordance with applicable Federal and State law and University policy, the GA prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, physical or mental disability, age, medical condition (cancer-related or genetic characteristics), ancestry, marital status, age, sexual

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[1] Unless there is reason to suspect that an applicant may be a harm to others or themselves.

orientation, or status as a covered veteran (special disabled veteran, Vietnam-era veteran or any other veteran who served on active duty during a war or in a campaign or expedition for which a campaign badge has been authorized).

The cap for S.O.S. Fund grants for 2020-2021 stands at $1,000.00. In addition, applying to this fund does not guarantee funding. Further, having been previously awarded funding--in any way--from the GA, the Student Advocate's Office (SAO), or other campus entity does not guarantee S.O.S. funding. In the event that an individual is granted an S.O.S. Fund grant, there is no guarantee that they will be awarded $1,000 (as is the current cap). While the GA has worked diligently to craft metrics for assessing applications, application review is ultimately subjective and left to the discretion of those involved with the S.O.S. Fund review process. Amount awarded is also subjective and left to the discretion of those involved with the S.O.S. Fund review process. Students can apply to the S.O.S. once per semester, and are capped at receiving S.O.S. grants to once per academic year.

While the process of the S.O.S. Fund is designed to streamline the review of applications and issuing of grants, there are several factors that are outside the GA's control which may create delays in funds being received. For example, the fact that the GA's finances are ultimately housed with the Business and Finance Office of the LEAD Center. The GA Case Manager will communicate expected timeline with applicants and remain in-contact until funds are received by the applicant.

While committed to providing support to graduate and professional students, given the limitations that exist with finances managed out of ASUC Student Union Business and Finance, we are limited in our ability to provide financial support. Therefore, we prefer to process 'S.O.S. grants' through reimbursements. We are not able to pay a third party directly. We are unable to assure that a cash advance, if sought, will be issued given ASUC SU Business and Finance policy and the complexities it introduces. Should a cash advance be the only course of remedy for an 'S.O.S. Grant' the GA Case Manager will communicate what the options are moving forward.

Application Process Break Down

The Graduate Assembly commits to reviewing applications as soon as possible. All efforts will be made to review applications and have a decision rendered within three business days--though this is not guaranteed.

1. An application is received to the S.O.S Fund email: sos-ga@berkeley.edu
2. The CoS emails the applicant that their application has been received and that a decision will be rendered as soon as possible.
3. The CoS anonymizes application materials removing any identifiers and then sends the application to the GA CM, VP E+I, CAVP, and VPoF from the S.O.S. email.
   a. The subject line of the email should be written in the following format:
      [S.O.S.--Month/Day--Application No. X] Funding Category
   b. Month/Day refers to the month/day in which the application was received. Application number allows for an ongoing tally of applications sent to the S.O.S. Fund, as well as provides a reference name for applications--as opposed to case details and so forth.
4. The GA CM reviews the anonymized S.O.S. application and renders a preliminary decision on whether a grant should be awarded and for how much, which is communicated via the email thread initiated by the CoS.
5. The VP E+I and CAVP then review the preliminary decision made by the GA CM; they have twenty-four hours to veto the decision if they feel it is appropriate.
   a. Should either VP E+I or CAVP veto the decision, they must document their rationale as a response to the email thread.
   b. Vetoing may take the form of:
      i. Vetoing the decision to issue or not issue a grant altogether.
      ii. Vetoing the proposed grant amount (in which case they are responsible for providing an alternative amount).
   c. Should no response be received by the VP E+I or CAVP within twenty-four hours of the GA CM's suggested decision, the GA CM's decision is final.
   d. For the decision to be vetoed entirely both VP E+I and CAVP must veto; in the event of only one party vetoing an additional 48 hours is provided for the committee to attempt to arrive at a consensus (consensus being majority decision on course of action).
6. A funding decision is arrived at.
   a. If approved, the VPoF authorizes the funds to be dispersed via the email thread that they are copied on.
   b. If authorized by the VPoF, the GA CM drafts and submits the appropriate paperwork to the Business Office and LEAD Center for payment to be processed.
7. GA CM(s) communicates the decision arrived at by the S.O.S. Fund Committee to the applicant.
   a. If approved, the GA CM(s) also communicates a general timeline until funds are received.

*Through the Case Manager the S.O.S. Committee may reach out to request more information for the application.

Categories

1. Emergency

The primary purpose of this fund is to offer financial assistance to graduate and professional students who are in or have recently experienced a personal emergency. For the purposes of this Fund, emergency categories are defined as follows:

 (1) Incurred costs due to death,

 (2) Outstanding medical expenses that hinder the ability of an individual to be a student,

 (3) In the event of a graduate or professional student needing to relocate themselves (either in securing alternative accommodations or travel returning to the Bay Area) while conducting fieldwork outside the Bay Area or at an academic conference due to an instance of sexual violence or sexual harassment,

 (4) In the event a student is found to be housing insecure,

 (5) In the event a student is found food insecure,

 (6) Instances in which a delay or lapse in funding causes financial stress to a professional or graduate student, or

 (7) Dependent care

2. Opportunity

A secondary use of this fund is to offer financial assistance for graduate and professional students in financial need who would benefit from certain educational and professional development opportunities. For the purposes of this Fund, examples of 'opportunities' are:

 (a) Research materials e.g. software not available on <software.berkeley.edu>, books, or manuscripts unavailable from the UC library system

 (b) Research related travel when departmental/ PI support is insufficient,

 (c) Courses/Bootcamps,

 (d) Professional or laboratory safety attire (when not already provided)

 (e) Course materials

General Approval Process for S.O.S. Grants

Stage 1. A Purchase Request (PR) is generated in CalLink by the GA CM.

Stage 2. The PR is Stage 2 by any members of the S.O.S. Committee

Stage 3. This stage is only used should there be an error found on a PR or more information needed.

Stage 4. The PR is Stage 4 by the Graduate Assembly Business Office

Stage 5. The PR is approved by the GA's LEAD Center coordinator or director and transferred to ASUC Student Union Business and Finance (SU B&F) for a check to be issued. (Note: SU B&F is not under the control of the GA and moves on an independent timeline.) Typically at least one week passes until the check can be issued.

Deadlines

The S.O.S. Funding Committee will accept applications year round and will review the applications at the end of every month according to the process outlined above. However, the ASUC SU B&F Office, who is responsible for the final steps of the payment process, does not conduct business during Winter Break, Spring Break, Campus Holidays, Emergency Shutdowns, and during the fiscal year switchover in August. Be aware that any payment requests submitted during these times that the office is closed, will be delayed.

Application Grading Rubric

The following will serve as a rubric for the review of application for the S.O.S. Fund. Each criteria will be ranked by those reviewing applications as either "High" "Medium" or "Low"

Assessment of Long-Standing Impact

- Does receiving or not receiving S.O.S. Funds hinder their ability to be a student?
- What is the potential impact on the applicants' dependents or the like? (if not dependents or others listed in application, this category is marked as "Low")
- How far along in their program is the applicant? Understanding students that have been on campus longer, generally those perhaps over normative time, have less resources for financial assistance. In addition, those facing graduation with precarity in job prospects are also high-risk.
- Does the student have outstanding debts and/or loans?

Assessment of Alternative Funding Availability

- Has the applicant applied for other funds that they also qualify for?
- Are they competitive for those funds/what is the likelihood they will be awarded other funds?

● Has the applicant received any other form of financial assistance?

Assessment Criteria		
Long-Standing Impact	**Score**	**Comments**
Impact on ability to be a student		
Impact on dependents		
Time on campus		
Alternative Funding Availability		
Alt. Funding Applications		
Alt. Award Likelihood		
Alt. Award Timeline		
Urgency of Need		
Accessibility to other resources		