



## GSO Senate Resolution 24.12

### **A Resolution Redistributing the GSO PAC Grant Program in Response to the Expressed Financial Needs of SU Graduate Students**

**Author(s):** Daniel J. Kimmel (GSO President & Chief Executive Officer); Abiodun Adeoye (General Secretary of the Senate & Chair of the PAC Grant Committee); Roger Rosena (President Pro Tempore of the Senate)

**Sponsor(s):** CJ Arnell (Vice President of Internal Affairs & Chair of the Senate); Becca Vinciguerra (Director of External Affairs); Melissa Alvisi (Comptroller); Aditee Malviya (Finance Secretary)

**Date(s):** 3 April 2024 (Introduced)

**Action(s):** Passed (25 Yes, 3 No, 1 Abstention)

**Chair of the Senate:** CJ Arnell

**President Pro Tempore of the Senate:** Roger Rosena

**Parliamentarian:** R. Luke VanderSchaaff

**President of the Student Body:** Daniel J. Kimmel

**Whereas**, Syracuse University is an R1 institution dedicated to research and innovation; and,

**Whereas**, the GSO Professional, Academic, and Creative Work (PAC) Grant program, funded entirely through the graduate student activity fee, is designed to help defray the cost of attending academic and professional conferences<sup>1</sup> for the purpose of promoting SU graduate student research and creative work and for contributing to students' professional development via subsidizing opportunities to present their research and creative work; and,

---

<sup>1</sup> The GSO PAC Grant is a cost-sharing resource that partially defrays the costs of travel to academic and professional conferences. It is meant to be used alongside other funding resources (i.e., department funding, specific conference grants, *et cetera*). On principle, the GSO expects departments and programs to do their part in supporting their graduate students' research travel. However, it is recognized that funding resources are not equally available across departments and programs, posing a real inequity.

**Whereas**, the PAC Grant amount awarded ought not to be determined by “merit”<sup>2</sup> alone but by the *raison d’être* of the PAC Grant (described above) and by the clear demonstration of financial need; and,

**Whereas**, the survey conducted by the General Secretary<sup>3</sup> & PAC Grant Committee in the Spring semester of the 2022-2023 Academic Year revealed that the current \$500 award maximum no longer meets graduate student financial needs in light of inflation and rising conference travel costs; and,

**Whereas**, budgets are statements of an organization’s values, and the GSO ought to respond if possible to the expressed financial needs of the graduate student body regarding conference travel while also, necessarily, maintaining the ability to meet its various financial obligations;<sup>4</sup> and,

**Whereas**, the 56<sup>th</sup> GSO Senate and Executive Board have committed to pursuing reasonable cuts and regulations that promote fiscal responsibility and the effective distribution of the graduate student activity fee,<sup>5</sup> including PAC Grant policies;<sup>6</sup> therefore be it,

**Resolved**, that the PAC Grant program be redistributed and regulated in the following manner:<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Presently, the PAC Grant award ranges from a \$50 minimum to a \$500 maximum. Amounts within that range are assigned by the PAC Grant Committee based on a Grading Rubric and the perceived merits of an applicant’s materials and demonstrated efforts.

<sup>3</sup> General Secretary of the Senate Abiodun Adeoye; terms: 2022-2023; 2023-2024. Prior to Senate Resolution 24.05 passed on 6 March 2024, the position’s title was Recording Secretary.

<sup>4</sup> E.g., to campus-wide Service Providers, registered graduate student organizations (RGSOs), labor compensation, basic administrative costs, *et cetera*.

<sup>5</sup> **SR 24.04**, *A Resolution to Increase the Graduate Student Activity Fee to Correct for Inflation*, final resolved clause: “Resolved, that the current GSO Executive Board and Senate will pursue other reasonable fiscal cuts and regulations, as forecast in (though not limited to) the GSO President’s legislative agenda delivered on 4 October 2023, to ensure that another fee increase is not required for at least the next five years.”

<sup>6</sup> **President’s Report (4 October 2023)**, under Legislative Agenda, Fiscal Reform: “Professional, Academic, and Creative Work (PAC) Grant: The PAC Grant is the most popular funding resource that the GSO offers and routinely requires significant budget allocations. The policies governing PAC Grant need to be updated to ensure that the GSO can continue to bear the financial commitment to the grant program. I will work with the Recording Secretary, the Comptroller, and their committees to formulate needed updates to grant policy... [and] to determine if an increase in grant awards, in the face of clear graduate student demand and the increasing cost of professional and academic travel, is feasible.”

<sup>7</sup> Otherwise, the application components and criteria explicit in the current PAC Grant Application and Grading Rubric (i.e., student identification information, conference information, type(s) of participation and reasons for attending, projected costs, non-GSO sources of funding, evidence of activities to defray, proof of attendance) remain unchanged.

- (1) PAC Grant awards shall be set at a tiered rate of \$600, \$300, and \$100. There shall be no gradation of award amounts above, below, or between these.<sup>8</sup>
- (2) Eligible applicants presenting their research or creative work at academic and professional conferences shall be awarded at the \$600 tier.
- (3) Eligible applicants not presenting their research or creative work but wishing to attend an academic or professional conference for other approved reasons (i.e., familiarization, chairing a panel, volunteering, networking, job searching) shall be awarded at the \$100 tier.
- (4) Eligible applicants who are presenting may be awarded at the \$300 tier if (a) the applicant opts for the \$300 tier award in their application, or (b) the applicant fails to clearly demonstrate need in the application,<sup>9</sup> or (c) the applicant demonstrates significant access to additional funding without clearly demonstrated need for the full \$600 tier award.<sup>10</sup> Recognizing that additional funding resources are not equally available across departments and disciplines, applicants should pursue additional funding whenever available, and should opt for the \$300 tier whenever possible, to ensure that the GSO PAC Grant is distributed to as many graduates as possible and especially to those with greatest need.
- (5) The General Secretary (Chair of the PAC Grant Committee) may suspend the consideration of a PAC Grant application, and request further information or resubmission, if they feel an applicant (a) has not sufficiently provided the required components of the application and/or (b) has inadequately addressed the application criteria explicit in the PAC Grant Application Form and Grading Rubric. Additionally, members of the PAC Grant Committee (i.e., evaluators) may petition the General Secretary to suspend the consideration of an application for the same reasons by majority vote. The General Secretary must report all suspensions to the Executive Board.
- (6) A minimum of \$90,000 or 20% of the GSO's total operating budget, whichever is lower, shall be allocated to the PAC Grant program in the GSO Annual Budget Resolution.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> See **Appendix to the Resolution: Adjusted Cost Projections.**

<sup>9</sup> **Recommended guidance to the PAC Grant Committee on this condition:** if the applicant does not demonstrate sufficient information (a) on budget costs and (b) on actions taken to defray costs. In this case, the measure to suspend consideration of the application pending further information may also be taken.

<sup>10</sup> **Recommended guidance to the PAC Grant Committee on this condition:** if an applicant (a) demonstrates access to \$1000+ in additional funding or (b) 70% of the total approved costs are covered by additional funding.

<sup>11</sup> Rationale: \$90,000 is sufficient guarantee to fund at least 150 full \$600 tier awards, with the opportunity of allocating more funds if possible. However, in the event of a dip in the projected budget for any given

- (7) PAC Grant funding shall be limited to the amount specified in the GSO Annual Budget Resolution for the Fiscal Year, after which the PAC Grant Committee may issue no further PAC Grant awards unless the General Secretary (Chair of the PAC Grant Committee), in coordination with the President and Comptroller, petition the GSO Senate via motion for additional funding from Special Programming or the initiation of GSO Carry Forward processes.

***And be it further, Resolved***, that:

- (1) This Resolution shall be effective beginning Fiscal Year 2025 (i.e., on 1 July 2024).
- (2) The President and Executive Board shall assess the sustainability of the changes enacted by this Resolution and report on the matter to the GSO Senate at the February or March Regular Meeting next year.
- (3) The President and Executive Board shall advocate at the university, college, and department levels for (a) funds to support graduate students in their academic and professional conference travel and (b) equitable cost-sharing arrangements with the GSO to support graduates in their academic and professional conference travel.
- (4) The Rules & Administration Committee shall consolidate all standing PAC Grant policies,<sup>12</sup> including those enacted by this Resolution, into an official GSO PAC Grant Policy document to be distributed internally and posted publicly on the GSO Website before the PAC Grant process reopens for Fiscal Year 2025 on 1 September 2024.<sup>13</sup>

---

Fiscal Year, \$90,000 may not be possible without significant strain on the total operating budget, in which case 20% ensures that the PAC Grant program is funded to at minimum the same level as RGSO & Special Programming.

<sup>12</sup> For example, those outlined in GSO Fiscal Policy and GSO Senate Resolution 24.02.

<sup>13</sup> **SR 24.02, Section (4)**, *A Resolution to Amend and Enforce GSO PAC Grant Policy*: "The PAC Grant Application Process shall shut down after the final application deadline of the Fiscal Year (April 15th); no new applications shall be received after this date and over the summer months when the GSO Senate (and PAC Grant Committee) is out of session. The PAC Grant Application Process shall open on September 1st, fifteen (15) days prior to the first application deadline of the Fiscal Year."

## Appendix to the Resolution: Adjusted Cost Projections

The table below, prepared by General Secretary Abiodun Adeoye and President Pro Tempore Roger Rosena, demonstrates the PAC Grant requests and allocations for Fiscal Year 2024 to date along with the projected expense differential between the present system (i.e., merit-based allocation of awards ranging between \$50-\$500) and the tiered system (i.e., awards set at \$100/\$600 depending on the condition of presenting/not-presenting) proposed in this Resolution. The grid does not account for the possibility of the \$300-tier award, in which case projected expense differentials would potentially lower.

|                            | September 2023            | October 2023              | November 2023              |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>Total Applications</b>  | 29                        | 38                        | 43                         |
| <b>Presenting</b>          | 18                        | 25                        | 35                         |
| <b>Not-Presenting</b>      | 11                        | 13                        | 8                          |
| <b>Requested</b>           | \$13,994.00               | \$17,678.50               | \$22,225.95                |
| <b>Allocated</b>           | \$11,444.00               | \$14,929.50               | \$17,875.95                |
| <b>SR 24.## Projection</b> | \$11,900.00 <b>(3.9%)</b> | \$16,300.00 <b>(9.1%)</b> | \$21,800.00 <b>(21.9%)</b> |

|                            | January 2024              | February 2024              | March 2024  |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|-------------|
| <b>Total Applications</b>  | 14                        | 71                         | 30*         |
| <b>Presenting</b>          | 12                        | 51                         | 23*         |
| <b>Not Presenting</b>      | 2                         | 20                         | 7           |
| <b>Requested</b>           | \$6,855.79                | \$34,022.92                | \$13,578.39 |
| <b>Allocated</b>           | \$5,055.79                | \$29,168.40                | N/A         |
| <b>SR 24.## Projection</b> | \$7,400.00 <b>(46.3%)</b> | \$32,600.00 <b>(11.7%)</b> | \$14,500.00 |

**Total Allocation (\*Excluding March):** \$78,473.64

**SR 24.12 Projected Allocation (\*Excluding March):** \$90,000 **(14.7%)**

Paired with the additional revenue generated by the fee adjustment for inflation (SR 24.04) and additional regulations proposed in this Resolution, we believe this redistribution of the PAC Grant award is both directly beneficial to the graduate student body and feasible without endangering the GSO's fiscal future. The Executive Board study of the effects of these changes over the next year is to ensure that this is the case and to promote informed adjustments if necessary.