GPSC Professional Opportunities Development (POD) Funding Grant for Graduate and Professional Students

How the GPSC POD Funding Grant program supports the Student Affairs and Enrollment Management Mission

The Graduate and Professional Student Council (GPSC) is the representative body for 9,249 graduate and professional students on campus. The organization is comprised of elected student leaders and support staff. The mission of the GPSC is to promote the academic, economic, and social aims of graduate and professional students of the University of Arizona (UA) and advocate on their behalf. The GPSC recognizes that graduate and professional student education is advanced by events promoting the development of skills necessary to succeed in their fields of study. Therefore, the GPSC strives to support professional development initiatives of graduate and professional students through Professional Opportunity Development (POD) funding.

The GPSC and Student Affairs and Enrollment Management share the mission to support exemplary programs and services that have a measurable and positive impact on the development of students and contribute to the well-being and advancement of our community. GPSC’s POD uniqueness makes it one of GPSC’s most successful programs as it provides students with common interests to create events that may not fall under a club structure. Club funding is designed for groups of students who want to formally conduct various activities whereas POD can be seen as an ad-hoc way to accomplish what a club may do without forming a club. POD events include, but are not necessarily limited to academic seminars, conferences, and meetings with industry representatives. All of these are consistent with several of the top initiative identified by graduate students in the 2014 student services fee survey. Initiative 1) Funding for graduate student academic travel, presentations, and professional development (86%), initiative 3) Expanded career-related opportunities (76%) and initiative 5) Academic support services (including tutoring, supplemental instruction, and educational planning) that teach the skills needed to be a successful student (74%). Any group of at least three graduate and/or professional students can apply to the GPSC for funding to support a POD event in which they are directly involved in planning. Having a minimum of three graduate students means that graduates and undergraduates sometimes come together for common purpose goals. There is a maximum award of $1,500 allowed for any given event or project.

Student Services Fee funding for this program broadens the number of graduate and professional student initiatives that benefits the University community and ensures that the University’s mission of professional development of students continues. Initiatives made possible by the GPSC POD funding bring prestige to the University and strengthen the bond within the academic and Tucson communities -- a bond that is necessary to establish a culture of education. Many resources from Student Affairs and others are distributed for quality teaching facilities, learning support, and other investments in education. This program provides a great avenue to showcase the results of those investments. Therefore, the GPSC requests $22,000 per year for a one-year period in support of this funding opportunity for graduate and professional students. Approximately $10,000 per year will be provided by the GPSC to supplement the program. If funded, the GPSC will continue to support graduate and/or professional student initiatives that advance the development of skills necessary to succeed in their fields of study.

Importance of Creating and Maintaining GPSC’s POD Funding Grant Program

The GPSC recognizes that graduate and professional student education is advanced by events promoting the development of skills necessary to succeed in their fields of study. Events and applications are evaluated on how well the initiative educates, enhances, or enriches UA graduate and/or professional students, and the University community; the extent to which the event advances the academic or professional development of graduate and/or professional students; and the quality of the application and faculty letter of recommendation. In the Fall 2014 semester alone, the GPSC awarded nine POD grants totaling $8,623.83. This allowed/will allow a diverse range of events that benefit graduate and/or professional student development to be possible (Appendix A).
GPSC POD Funding Grant Program Student Impact

The GPSC POD funding is unique in that applicants do not have to be part of a recognized ASUA club in order to apply. Only recognized ASUA clubs and organizations may apply for the GPSC club funding. Club funding is important for groups of students with a consistent mission, however for students who want to accomplish short-term, exciting projects in a given year forming a club doesn’t fit their purposes. For POD funding, any group of three dedicated graduate and/or professional students directly involved in the planning of a POD initiative is eligible to apply. This allows this source of funding to be open to any graduate and/or professional student that is in good academic standing. Given the $1,500 maximum per POD application, at least 20 graduate and/or professional initiatives will receive support from the SSF and the GPSC per year. One event, the Arizona Linguistics Circle 8, which is a three-day conference on language and the brain, hosted over 20 speakers, including three distinguished keynote speakers, was attended by at least 70 students. Another event, Emerging Conversations, where students, artists, teachers, and faculty members discussed the practice of art teaching in the classroom and research in the community had 30 attendees. These are only two of the nine events that were funded. We expect that at least 300 students, faculty, staff, and community members will have attended these Fall events.

GPSC POD Funding Grant Assessment

The success of this program is directly assessed by the success of the individual events and the number of attendees, as well as the variety of disciplines that apply and the strength of student involvement in planning. Successfully funded applicants are required to submit an post-event report detailing the amount of funds allocated and used, number of attendees, affiliation of attendees, program schedule, etc. that allow the GPSC to assess the success of individual events and overall POD funding. This information is compiled and submitted to the SSFAB in the form of mid-year reports. Several of the funding programs from the Fall 2014 semester were returning programs, but several events were new events. One new event was the Sandrizona VIII symposium, where students from the UofA and University of California-San Diego will complete an informational and university exchange of students, knowledge, and ideas on the topics of linguistic anthropology. Through events like these, GPSC will be able to promote the continue work research, knowledge, and education of graduate and professional student through a variety of professional development events and conferences.

GPSC POD Funding Grant and Ensuring Longevity

The potential positive impact of the event on the professional development of the graduate and/or professional students involved, the benefit to the University community, the range of appeal of the event, and the originality of the event are key factors in evaluating all applications for POD funding. The GPSC uses its own funds to hire a Club and POD Funding Administrator to administer these funding programs. The hiring of this administrator has allowed the GPSC to make sure that applications meet the mission of the GPSC and Student Services, but also ensure that more graduate and professional students are made aware of this funding opportunity through outreach initiatives. Student Services Fee funding for this program broadens the number of graduate and/or professional student initiatives that will benefit and ensure that this aspect of the University’s academic mission successfully continues. Furthermore, the GPSC will continue to use its own funds to support the POD program. We will also seek alternative funding sources (i.e. Graduate College). Finally, GPSC is examining the potential to hire an additional full-time staff member to ensure that these programs receive sufficient attention as well as continue to promote and market these program to graduate and professional student clubs.

We hope that the SSFAB will agree to continue to fund this grant proposal over a one-year period for a total amount of $22,000.