

USC Office of Academic Programs

Norman Topping Student Aid Fund

2025-2026 Exceptional Funding Overview

Purpose

In keeping with the spirit of the Norman Topping Student Aid Fund (NTSAF) to offer educational equity opportunities to Scholars and Fellows, the Exceptional Funding Program provides additional/supplemental financial assistance to Scholars and Fellows as they advance in their chosen field of study. Exceptional Funding encourages Scholars and Fellows to take full advantage of University-sponsored opportunities to enhance their higher education experience.

Eligibility

Topping Scholars and Fellows in **good standing** with the Fund may be approved for Exceptional Funding. (For more information regarding good standing, please consult your 2025-2026 NTSAF Agreement.)

Scholars must have completed 30 units over the past two semesters at USC prior to applying for Exceptional Funding. Fellows must have completed 8 units over the past semester before applying for Exceptional Funding (units may vary for Fellows).

**Please note: Summer Tuition Exceptional Funding is only available to Scholars.*

Types of Exceptional Funding Available

The following types of Exceptional Funding are available through the NTSAF (**The minimum request amount for all Exceptional Funding is \$500.**):

- Academic Travel (available to Scholars & Fellows)

Academic Travel can include transportation and lodging related to the following:

 - Academic programs, service-learning opportunities, leadership conferences, academic conferences, and short-term programs (i.e., ASB, GLP, LINC, Maymesters, etc.).
 - Maximum travel allowances: **\$2,000 for domestic & \$2,500 for international**
 - Scholars may be awarded up to two (2) requests for Academic Travel.
 - Fellows may be awarded up to one (1) request for Academic Travel.
- Examination Fees (available to Scholars & Fellows)
- Preparatory Courses (available to Scholars & Fellows)
- Progressive Degree Program Grant (available to Scholars)
 - Scholars who complete their Bachelor's degree in four (4) years and have been accepted into a Progressive Degree Program that will allow them to earn their Master's degree in their fifth year are eligible for this funding.
 - Students must submit an approved course plan from their Academic Advisor.
 - If approved, students will automatically be moved to Fellow status for their fifth year and receive up to \$10,000 for their NTSAF award.
- Summer Tuition (available to Scholars)

Summer Tuition funding is intended for Scholars who need one (1) USC course to complete their undergraduate degree. Students pursuing multiple programs of study (including a minor) do not qualify for Summer Tuition funding.

Process for Application & Approval

Exceptional Funding approval will follow the following process:

1. Students must submit proof via Scholarship Universe that there is space in their Financial Aid package.
 - a. Upload screenshot of your Financial Aid Summary from your FAST Portal
 - b. If no space is available, students must submit a budget increase through the FAST Portal and submit confirmation that their budget increase has been approved.
2. Students must apply for NTSAF Exceptional Funding online through Scholarship Universe.
 - a. Applications are typically due on the first Sunday of the month (September through April), unless noted below.

September 7th	October 5th	November 2nd	December 7th
January 18th *	February 8th **	March 1st ***	April 5th

* January 18th is the first Sunday after Winter Recess

** February 8th is pushed back due to the late start of the semester

*** March 3rd is the deadline for Summer Tuition Grants

- b. All requests for Academic Travel must be submitted at least six (6) weeks prior to the date of travel.
 - c. All requests for Preparatory Courses must be submitted at least six (6) weeks prior to the start of the course.
3. Exceptional Funding applications will be reviewed by the appropriate NSTAF Governing Board Committee within two (2) weeks of the submission deadline.
 - a. The NTSAF Programming Committee reviews requests for Academic Travel, Examination Fees, and Preparatory Courses.
 - b. The NSTAF Executive Committee reviews requests for the Progressive Degree Program Grant and Summer Tuition.
4. If approved for Exceptional Funding, funds will be added directly to the student's Financial Aid account. Financial Aid will disperse funds according to their normal process.

Notes

- Students requesting Exceptional Funding in their final semester at USC must have all expenses settled by June 30, 2026.

For questions regarding the Exceptional Funding Process, please email ntsaf@usc.edu or schedule a meeting with Dr. Rick Trevino, NTSAF Director.