

2021-2022
EXCEPTIONAL FUNDING
HANDBOOK

Topping Scholars & Fellows

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I. POLICY

Exceptional Funding Policy for Norman Topping Scholars/Fellows

General Eligibility Criteria:

- All Exceptional Funding applicants must be in good standing with the Fund.¹
- Exceptional Funding opportunities are available from September thru April or until the annual Exceptional Funding budget is maximized, whichever comes first.
- Scholars/Fellows **must be at USC at least one semester, complete 16 units in the previous term***, and have a GPA over 2.5 to apply for Exceptional Funding grants. (*Fellows may have different units for fulltime enrollment.)
- Scholars/Fellows on scholarship probation are not eligible for Exceptional Funding.**
(**Scholarship probation occurs when a student's cumulative grade point average drops below a 2.5² or 3.0³ depending on the status of the student, or when the student fails to complete the minimum of 24 units in an academic year.)
- Failure to complete one (1) of the NTSAF program requirements during the academic year will render the student ineligible for Exceptional Funding for that academic year (see Topping Scholar/Fellow Contract).
- A Scholar/Fellow is no longer eligible for Exceptional Funding once their degree has officially posted, or they have met their applicable Exceptional Funding term maximum (whichever comes first). The Exceptional Funding term maximum is based on the status of the student upon entering USC:

Exceptional Funding Maximum Eligibility Period

(based on class standing upon entrance to USC)

Freshman: Seven (7) semesters (after the first semester)

Transfer: 30-47 transferable units—Six (6) semesters (after the first semester)

48-64 transferable units—Five (5) semesters (after the first semester)

Graduate: Five (5) semesters

Application/Request Procedures:

- Submit completed application or request form via the online database to the NTSAF Staff by the applicable deadline.
- Applicants will be notified of the funding decision via USC e-mail account or application portal.
- If approved, the Scholar/Fellow is responsible for contacting the NTSAF office for an appointment to discuss all necessary payments for funding.
- Approval and payment is pending the completion of all scholarship program and academic requirements as stated in the NTSAF Scholar/Fellow Contract.
- If approved, all payments for services **will be made at the NTSAF office with a NTSAF staff member**. Students may NOT make any changes to services and/or payment information without the consent of the NTSAF Staff. **If a student does not use the services purchased, they may owe the money back to the Fund.**

¹ Good standing includes, but is not limited to, cumulative GPA minimum requirement, academic year unit completion minimum and full attendance at all NTSAF program requirements and shall be determined by the NTSAF Executive Committee.

² 2.5 GPA minimum applies to Topping Scholars who are undergraduates.

³ 3.0 GPA minimum applies to Topping Fellows who are graduate students.

Types of Exceptional Funding:

REQUESTS (rolling)	APPLICATIONS
Academic Journal	Conference Travel (incl. ASB, GLP, Maymester and other short-course programs)
Exam Fees	Study Abroad Airfare
Honor Society Membership	Preparatory Course
Professional Association Membership	Summer Tuition

1) Requests:

- **Requests are accepted on a rolling basis between August 23, 2021 and April 29, 2022.**
- Completed request forms must be submitted and formally approved by the NTSAF Staff before the service takes place.
- Requests will be approved pending the review of all eligibility requirements.
- Once a request is approved, you must meet with NTSAF Staff to arrange payment.

REQUESTS	FUNDING (Maximum)
Academic Journal	One (1) Journal per academic year
Exam Fees	Two (2) Exams during tenure at USC
Honor Society Membership	One (1) Membership per academic year
Professional Association Membership	One (1) Membership per academic year

2) Applications:

- Deadlines for Conference Travel, Prep Courses, and Study Abroad Airfare applications are due the first Friday of every month: **September thru April**. Applications for Summer Tuition are due by **Friday, March 4, 2022 at 5pm. Application deadlines are final, no exceptions.**
- All Conference Travel, Prep Course, and Study Abroad Airfare applications must be submitted online by the deadline at least six (6) weeks prior to travel. (For example, if the travel begins December 5, the application MUST be submitted by the October deadline)
- **Letters of recommendation and advisor certifications should also be completed by the deadline.**
- Application requirements vary by the service requested. See application for further details.
- Applications require approval from the Governing Board or the Executive Committee.

APPLICATIONS		FUNDING (maximum during tenure)
Travel Awards	-Conference Travel AND/OR -Study Abroad Airfare	Two (2) Travel Awards max for undergraduates; One (1) Travel Award for graduate students
Preparatory Course		One (1) Course during tenure (\$2000 cap)
Summer Tuition		Four (4) USC units during tenure

Norman Topping Student Aid Fund Travel Awards

PURPOSE:

- The purpose of the Academic Travel opportunity is to compensate the expenses incurred by Topping students to promote national and international travel to academic programs, service learning opportunities, leadership conferences, academic conferences, and short-term programs (i.e. ASB, GLP, LINC, Maymasters, etc.). Undergraduate scholars are eligible for 2 academic travel opportunities while graduate fellows are eligible for 1 travel grant. Fellows may be eligible for a second travel grant during their tenure, depending on the costs associated with the second career-related opportunity. Study abroad airfare will **only** be purchased for an approved USC-sponsored program. *Please note that international conferences are only considered if the student will be a presenter at the conference. International programs sponsored by a USC office or department are exempt from this requirement.*

WHEN TO APPLY:

- Applications are due by the first Friday of every month: **September through April**. Completed applications must be submitted online by 5pm (this includes letters of support):

September 3, 2021	October 1, 2021	November 5, 2021	December 3, 2021
January 14, 2022*	February 4, 2022	March 4, 2022**	April 1, 2022

* January 14th is the first Friday after Winter Recess.

**March 4th is the deadline for applications for Summer Tuition Grants.

NOTE: All Travel Applications must be submitted by the deadline that is at least six (6) weeks prior to travel. (For example, if the travel begins December 5, the application **MUST** be submitted by the October deadline.)

ALLOWABLE EXPENSES:

- Travel** between the Scholar's home and the site of the conference/meeting, (one mode of transportation only) up to \$100. Transportation at (or during) the conference is the applicant's responsibility and is not reimbursable;
- Registration** fees up to \$300.00;
- Food** costs reimbursable up to \$25.00/day for a maximum of 4 days (*Not applicable for ASB, LINC, GLP, Maymasters and other short-term USC programs where some meals are included in program fees*);
- Lodging** up to \$125.00/night for a maximum of 4 nights;
- Airfare** up to \$1,500.00 for international travel (not to exceed \$1000 for domestic flights).

Expense Caps on Conference Travel: \$2000 for domestic travel; \$2500 for International Travel.

Important Note: All original receipts must be received by the NTSAF office within two (2) weeks of the official final conference day or the Scholar accepts responsibility of reimbursable expenses. Reimbursements will NOT be processed without an original receipt. Reflection statements are due within 4 weeks of travel.

SELECTION CRITERIA:

Applicants are evaluated on the following criteria:

- o Complete application (by applicable deadline)
- o Comprehensive documentation
- o Degree to which they meet the purpose of funding
- o Validity of recommendation letter

Priority will be given in the following order:

1. Applicants who are presenting at the conference
2. Applicants attending an academic conference/meeting
3. Proximity to completion of degree
4. Scholars who have not utilized Conference Travel

ONLINE APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS:

1) Please estimate the cost of the travel based on the program information you have or your own research:

- A) **LONG DISTANCE TRAVEL** is travel from home city to the location of the conference/meeting, and back (airfare maximum \$1,500.00 Int'l; \$1,000 Domestic). NTSAF will only fund a single means of long-distance travel. NTSAF Travel grants do NOT reimburse for rental cars, fuel, or mileage, unless that is the sole means of travel to the conference.
- B) **LOCAL TRAVEL** is travel from a transportation center (e.g. airport, train station, bus station) in the area of the conference to the actual conference site and back (up to \$100.00 max). The NTSAF does not fund transportation during the conference.
For example, you may be funded for the cost of a shuttle bus from the airport to the University or Hotel where the conference is held and back, but would not be reimbursed for the cost of buses taken downtown for evening entertainment during the conference, or for transportation between a hotel and the conference site; these constitute transportation during the conference.
- C) **REGISTRATION:** Original receipt from conference registration is required (\$300.00 maximum).
- D) **FOOD:** Meal expenses will be reimbursed according to the following schedule: 1 day at conference: \$25.00 max; 2 days: \$50.00 max; 3 days: \$75.00 max; 4 days: \$100.00 max (4 day maximum). Note: the Scholar may spend this allotment at any rate. **Original receipts are required for reimbursement.** *(Not applicable for ASB, LINC, GLP, Maymesters and other short-term USC programs, where many meals are included in program fees.)*
- E) **LODGING:** Lodging may be covered up to \$125.00/night for a four (4) night maximum. If the student shares a room, they may only request the amount of the room rate divided by the number of occupants in the room. A room charge slip indicating the room rate, tax, occupancy, and extra charges must be included. The Travel Grant does not cover telephone calls, parking charges or any other incidentals.

(IF YOU RECEIVED OR ANTICIPATE OTHER FUNDING FOR THIS TRAVEL, COMPLETE THE "OTHER FUNDING" LINE ON THE APPLICATION.)

2) **Statement of Purpose:**

Include a detailed explanation of why attending this academic conference, service learning trip, short-term study abroad course, or study abroad semester is important to you and how it can support one or more of the following:

- Your academic growth
- Your professional goals
- Your commitment to service in the USC community
- Your leadership development both on and off campus

NOTE: Travel grant applications are reviewed by the Governing Board. Please be detailed in what the program or conference is, what you expect to learn, why you want this opportunity, and why Topping should cover the costs (the benefit to your educational goals).

3) **Recommendation:**

The Board is looking for a letter that **endorses the academic merits of the program**. You have already been vetted by Topping. The letter should support the value of the conference or program you want to attend.

4) **Reflection:**

Upon completion of your travel, you are required to submit a 1-page reflection. The reflection statement should assess your academic, personal, and/or professional growth from attending the conference and/or off-campus program. This reflection statement is due to the NTSAF Staff within for (4) weeks of travel.

Norman Topping Student Aid Fund Preparatory Course Funding

PURPOSE:

- The purpose of the Preparatory Course opportunity is to assist Topping students with preparation for the attainment of a graduate degree. Fellows may apply for prep courses to support the completion of their graduate degrees or prepare for Boards/Licensure Exams.

WHEN TO APPLY:

- Applications are accepted the first Friday of every month: **September through April**. Completed applications must be submitted online by 5pm:

September 3, 2021	October 1, 2021	November 5, 2021	December 3, 2021
January 14, 2022*	February 4, 2022	March 4, 2022**	April 1, 2022

* January 14th is the first Friday after Winter Recess.

**March 4 is the deadline for applications for Summer Tuition Grants.

- **All preparatory course applications must be submitted by the deadline that is at least six (6) weeks prior to start date of the course.** (For example, if the course begins December 5, the application **MUST** be submitted by the October deadline)

- **Summer prep courses must be completed before July 31.**

ALLOWABLE EXPENSES:

- Only one (1) Preparatory Course will be funded during a student's tenure at USC.
- **Expense Cap on Prep Courses: \$2000.**

SELECTION CRITERIA:

Applicants are evaluated on the following criteria:

- Complete application
- Comprehensive documentation
- Compelling Statement of Purpose

Priority will be given in the following order:

- Proximity to completion of degree
- First-time applicants

Norman Topping Student Aid Fund Summer Tuition Deadline: March 4, 2022 by 5pm

PURPOSE:

- The purpose of the Summer Tuition opportunity is to help students complete their USC degree.

SPECIAL NOTICE:

- Scholars and Fellows who do not meet the academic eligibility requirements may still apply for Summer Tuition.
- This funding is intended to provide Scholars/Fellows the opportunity to graduate within the allotted scholarship terms at the University.
- Be detailed and compelling in your Personal Statement.
- Summer Tuition Grants are extremely competitive.
- Summer Tuition applications are reviewed by the Executive Committee of the Governing Board.

WHEN TO APPLY:

- Completed Summer Tuition applications must be submitted via the online database by **March 4, 2022 by 5pm**. Late or incomplete applications will not be accepted, **no exceptions**.
- **Students should also submit a copy of their course plan to the NTSAF office for review** (Obtain this from your academic advisor).

ALLOWABLE EXPENSES:

- The maximum amount of extra units to be funded under this policy is four (4) USC tuition units. Funding is available only for USC academic courses **required** for the student's degree (major, minor, or general requirements).

SELECTION CRITERIA:

Applicants are evaluated on the following criteria:

- Degree to which they meet the purpose of funding
- Compelling and thorough Statement of Purpose
- Validity of Academic Certification (you must provide your course plan for review)

Priority will be given in the following order:

- Proximity to completion of degree
- First-time applicants

II. ONLINE FORMS

All forms must be submitted online via the Exceptional Funding Portal (Application forms are hosted on <https://usc.scholarshipuniverse.com/>).

Requests:

- Academic Journal
- Exam Fees
- Honor Society Membership
- Professional Association Membership

Applications:

- Conference Travel/Academic Travel (including ASB, LINC, GLP, Maymester, etc.)
- Study Abroad Airfare
- Preparatory Course
- Summer Tuition

Appeals:

- All appeals should come to NTSAF as a letter addressed to the Executive Committee of the Governing Board.
- Email your appeal letter to NTSAF@usc.edu.
- When to appeal:
 - i Appeal due to a missed/late event, low GPA, or low enrollment/units
 - ii Appeal for an extra semester of scholarship
 - iii Appeal for extra units (1-2) in fall/spring
 - ❖ Extra units must be for coursework that is part of a student's major, minor or GE program, and are essential for degree completion.