

Applying for MAA Travel Funding for Big Meetings

Congratulations!! Your research has paid off and you are going to speak at one of the “big meetings”. However, big meetings tend to take place in big cities which means attending can be expensive. Luckily, the MAA has travel funding available to help. This brochure is about making sure you know some things *before* you apply. These are things every student and faculty advisor should know. So let’s get to them.

“When and where do I apply?”

First off, YOUR ADVISOR SHOULD BE HELPING WITH THE REGISTRATION AND APPLICATION PROCESS. The process is not difficult, however, advisors should not assume that their students are familiar with the process and will not make an error. Advisors, you may think this sounds silly, a waste of your time and an insult to the student, but it’s not. If the registration is not done correctly, if the

request for travel funding is not complete, then it is the student who has worked so hard who ends up suffering. For ten minutes of your time you can make sure it is all done right.

Applying for a travel grant is done at the same time as you apply to present your poster/give your talk. While submitting your abstract, there



is a prompt asking if you wish to apply for a travel grant. Click the button and you are at the request form. There is some information you will need to have at that time which you may not know off the top of your head. These include airport code for the airport you are flying out of, one-way mileage if you are driving, and the approximate cost of your travel. Dig up these facts before you start.

“From where does the MAA get the money and why does that make a difference?”

The money to support graduate and undergraduate travel comes from grants that the

MAA has secured from the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the National Security Agency (NSA). We submit grant proposals to them in order to help fund travel and they have been good enough to support us. When we request a grant, we do have to be specific about what we will do with the money and how to make sure everything is done correctly. Talking about this is important as it leads to the number one misconception. The money we give to you is not a gift, nor is it a scholarship (both of which people have called it), it is a grant. There are responsibilities you have to meet in order to receive this grant. In general, these are certain events (such as receptions, panel discussions, or talks) that you are required to attend. Therefore it should be no surprise that you need to attend the Reception for Undergraduates and you should not make travel plans that have you arriving at the meeting after that reception.

“It says \$600, so I’ll ask for \$600.”

Yes, I know the form says the maximum amount of a grant is \$600. I know \$600 would go a long way to paying your bills. In order for the MAA to receive our funding, we had to be very specific on where the money will be used. Most people do not need/get the maximum grant. This is for travel expenses only. Travel is the cost of your airfare, or, if driving, mileage at \$0.50 per mile (for 2010). Claiming parking at the airport or the hotel is also ok. So are taxi

costs and tolls. However, this cannot be used to pay for your registration, nor your meals, nor anything else. We're not being mean to you, we're just following the rules. And while I'm on the subject of asking for more, don't make up the cost of getting there. The price of a ticket is easy to find on the internet.

“Then how am I supposed to go to the meeting for free?”

There's no other way to say this than to say this: You're not. The purpose of a meeting isn't to give you a free trip to a fun event. The travel grant is supposed to assist you in being able to attend a professional meeting. Assist. Note though there are other sources of money. The trick is to parlay your MAA money into support from other places. Your department may have travel money for students (especially if you are presenting at the meeting) and, in addition, you should check with your Dean to see if the college has such funds. A friendly tip: wait until you have money from us. You see, it is one thing to ask for money to go and another to be able to say not only do you want to go, but here is an organization that wants so much for you to go that they are giving you money. There is much more “oomph” in the request that way. However, the reality is you should not expect a free ride. Be prepared that this is probably something you will have to save up for in order to afford.

Worth checking out, on the MAA web page for students, are various guides including one on the

big meeting with a section on how to keep your meeting expenses low. You can find them all at <http://www.maa.org/images/meetingbrochure.pdf>.

“Any other advice?”

Sure, of course. This is not meeting advice (go



to the guide mentioned above for that). This is travel grant advice. Don't leave anything blank. Several times people have left something like the airport code (what airport you are leaving from) blank or filled in incorrectly. You cannot get money if the cost of travel is unknown and so you must inform us from where you are leaving. In those instances the student is emailed to find out the information and it all works out... mostly. Several times students have not responded and in each of those cases, the students do not receive any money. This brings up a couple of side issues. First, when you enter your email address, make it one that you actually check. Putting your university address when you only check your gmail or yahoo account means we cannot get to you. Then you are the one who

loses out. Second, the MAA is a professional organization running a professional meeting and this is a time of your life when you need to be professional. The email “snugglebunny2001@msn.com” is not it. As a matter of fact, if that email address sends me a message with the subject “Money question” odds are my spam filter will eat it. This is also the time to write in professional English, not text-speak. In addition, this is a reimbursement grant. You have to spend the money and submit original receipts in order to be repaid. If you have thrown away or lost the receipts we cannot just hand you the money anyway. Our accountants have to report to their accountants. Keep in mind, the deadline is the deadline. If you meant to apply, but got busy and want to do it late you may not. The system will have been shut down by then and it does not reopen. This last bit of advice is to rehash some old advice. This is a travel grant, do not expect or try to use it for other expenses. The answer to an email reading, “My father/grandma/university paid for my ticket, is it ok if I use this money for the hotel/registration/meals/minicourse?” always has the same answer: “No, it can only be used for travel costs.”

Hopefully this gives you some insight into the background and the process of applying for MAA Travel Grants. They are a great way to get some financial help for attending a big meeting and making yourself part of the professional mathematical world.