

# SOUTHWESTERN

## LAW SCHOOL Los Angeles, CA

### **Student Professional Development Fund 2023–2024 Guidelines**

**Administrative guidelines approved August 15, 2021. Effective immediately.**

**Revision history: Revised August 15, 2022; updated August 16, 2023.**

**Scheduled Review Date: July 2024 (Office of Student Affairs)**

#### **A. Purpose**

The Student Professional Development Fund (PDF) has been established to finance some travel costs and other expenses incurred by students who participate in professional development activities not otherwise funded by Southwestern Law School and approved in advance under these guidelines.

#### **B. Funding Priorities**

Although a student may submit an application for a variety of legal or law-related professional development activities, PDF will be prioritized for the following:

- Students serving on the planning committee for academic or professional conferences (i.e., students who are on the board of a national organization like NBLSA, HNBA, NAPABA, etc.).
- Students engaging in pro bono or leadership projects.
- Students whose professional development activity directly relates to a board position on a Southwestern Law School chartered organization.
- Students delivering papers or presentations at an academic or professional conference.

Please note that allocations for advocacy-team travel, externship or internship travel, costs associated with bar study, or costs associated with securing a job will not be made from the PDF.

Funding may be prospective or in connection with a trip or project that already has occurred.

### C. **Eligibility**

A student must be registered at Southwestern during the semester the funds were or are to be used. Summer registration is not required if the student was registered for the prior spring semester and has not yet graduated. At the time of application and at the time when funds are used, the student must be in good academic standing and not on probation and must not be subject to any Honor Code or other disciplinary or criminal investigation. Students may not travel to professional development activities during Reading Period or final exams. **Please note that students who have applied for and been approved for a semester-long remote option should not travel on competition teams or other official school business.**

### D. **Funding Limits and Criteria**

For the fiscal year July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2024, the PDF includes \$25,000. The PDF was not established to cover the entire cost of a student's activity. Typically, awards will be limited to \$500, although awards may be larger or smaller depending on the number of applications received. A student may submit multiple applications in a single year, although a student typically will receive funding only once a year. A student may not receive more than \$1,500 from the PDF in a single fiscal year.

Awards from the PDF are issued as reimbursements following the professional development activity. Reimbursable expenses may include conference fees, training materials, travel and housing expenses, and/or presentation supplies. As of 2023, the current reimbursable rate for mileage is 65.5 cents per mile. No membership fees, food, beverages, or personal incidental expenses will be covered, although a meal at which the student is receiving an award may be covered. Student awardees are responsible for collecting and submitting all pertinent receipts and documentation. Failure to do so within the timelines stated in the award letter will result in a forfeiture of the award.

### E. **Fund Amount and Application Deadlines**

**The PDF Committee will consider applications three times per year. Applications for fall must be submitted by September 15; applications for spring must be submitted by January 15; applications for summer must be submitted by April 15.**

### F. **Selection Process**

Applications will be reviewed by a Professional Development Committee. The Committee will make final recommendations to the Dean, who will make the award decisions. The Committee may make its recommendations based solely on the applications. It may also choose to interview any or all applications and request additional materials from applicants. The Dean may also seek supplemental information about the applications. The Committee, after receiving the Dean's approval, will announce awards within 30 days of each application deadline.

### G. **Award Administration**

The award will be in the form of a reimbursement of expenses and pursuant to Southwestern travel policies and procedures. Any other arrangement must be approved, in writing, by the Dean. Once awarded, the student may not change the project for

which an award was made. Students who are granted a PDF award must submit a reimbursement request within one month of the conclusion of the professional development activity. Fund awards must be used by the end of the fiscal year, or any remaining balance will be forfeited.

## H. Reporting Requirements

Award recipients must submit a 1–2-page summary report after the activity and before reimbursement will be granted. Also, if the fund is used to support a paper, the paper should indicate that Southwestern Law School provided funding. Please include the following information in your report:

- For the essay, the student should identify and describe one important concept, research finding, theory, or idea that they learned at the professional development activity. The student should reflect on why this idea is important to their field of study or their personal learning. Finally, the student should apply this idea to their own life by exploring how it will help them become a practice-ready lawyer or a more innovative professional. The essay may be used for Southwestern publicity, so use graduate-level writing and consider a professional audience.
- The student should include a brief description of someone they met at the professional development activity and how they might be able to assist the student in their professional development (e.g., a session presenter, someone the student networked with at a reception, someone who asked questions about the student’s presentation, or made recommendations about future career paths.)

## I. Application Instructions

- Students must complete the Professional Development Fund Application. The application will require submitting professional development activity information, budget information, a short personal statement about how the activity will likely impact the student’s professional development, and a resume. **All of these application materials should be emailed to the Associate Dean for Student Affairs, Robert Mena at [rmena@swlaw.edu](mailto:rmena@swlaw.edu).**
- Group applications are not permitted. Each student seeking funding must submit their own application, including a unique personal statement.
- The PDF Committee will consider applications three times per year:
  - The fall application deadline is September 15;
  - The spring application deadline is January 15; and
  - The summer application deadline is April 15.
- The project or trip that is the subject of the application need not be limited to the semester in which the student applies but must take place within the fiscal year. So, a student could apply by September 15, 2023 to attend a conference in April 2024; a student could also apply by April 15, 2024 for a conference that took

place in November 2023.

- Students who will be unable to participate in a professional development activity without financial assistance from the Professional Development Fund should apply by the earliest possible application deadline so information on a potential award is known before the registration deadline. Students who are applying for funding for an activity that has already transpired must have access to all required documentation listed below, including receipts and a photo taken at the professional development activity.
- Students who are granted a PDF award must submit a reimbursement request within one month of the conclusion of the professional development activity. Electronic submission of reimbursement requests is preferred. The reimbursement request must include all three of the following items:
  - Reimbursement form and receipts totaling or exceeding the amount of the award;
  - Reflection report (see Reporting Requirements in the PDF Guidelines);
  - A photo of yourself at the professional activity. Consider posing with a keynote speaker, by an entrance banner, or holding a program from the activity. Photographs may be used in Southwestern promotional material.