



ARO Travel Award Committee Meeting Minutes Wednesday, January 17, 2024

Committee:

- Catalina Velez-Ortega, Chair
- Tim Balmer
- Gregory Basura
- Mo Eric Cui, spARO Rep
- Rafael da Costa Monsanto, spARO Rep
- Sian Kitch, spARO Rep
- Xin Luo
- Nima Maftoon
- Manuel Malmierca, Council Liaison
- Zoe Mann
- Rahul Mittal
- Anthony Peng
- David Raible
- Tianying Ren
- Claus-Peter Richter
- Soroush Sadeghi
- Joseph Santos-Sacchi
- Marcel Van Der Heijden
- Jing Zheng

Executive Office:

- Rhiannon McNeely

The committee discussed the demographics of all 2024 Travel Award applicants. The committee received 317 applications, with a majority from the US and Canada, and around 30% from international applicants. The breakdown per application category was 49% graduate students, 39% postdoctoral trainees, 10% medical student or resident and 2% audiologist. The applications were scored from 1 to 9 by three or more reviewers, with around 25% of the top applicants receiving an award. ARO awarded 81 awards total which amounted to \$50,250 in travel award funds for 2024. Out of the 81 awardees, 28% were international and 72% in US and Canada. The breakdown per awardee category was 43% graduate students, 41% postdoctoral trainees, 14% med student or resident and 2% audiologists. Most applications had a standard deviation score of 2.0, 2.5 or less. 72% had a standard deviation score of 2.0 or less and 89% has a standard deviation score of 2.5 or less.

The committee extensively discussed the scoring rubric, the benefits, and challenges of standardizing the scoring process, and the need to implement equity. Other discussion topics including taking into consideration applicants' financial situation and geographical location and lack of resources. The committee discussed bringing the idea to council to increase international travel award funding even more.

The committee discussed how to approach handling conflicts of interest. The suggestion was to list the name and University in the reviewer's portal allowing reviewing to easily and quickly identify if there is a potential conflict of interest. Reviewers will be encouraged to screen applications for potential conflicts of interest soon after they are assigned to avoid delays in the review process.

The committee discussed the issue of inconsistent application of award eligibility rules. A simple solution of adding a checkbox during the application process was suggested to prevent ineligible applicants from proceeding. The committee also discussed the eligibility criteria for a travel



award, deciding to implement a rule that would prevent individuals from receiving multiple travel awards within the same training career stage. The committee will vote on this proposed amendment.

Finally, the committee discussed the importance of applicants providing a well written personal statement. A suggested idea was to include a section where applicants or the applicant's mentor must include a brief, 1-2 sentence statement of why their work is significant in their field.

Next steps

- Add a checkbox in the application form asking if the applicant previously received a travel award that would make them ineligible to apply during the current year. Wording will be tailored to match the results of the survey.
- Discuss boosting the number of international awards and adjusting the ratio of domestic to international awards.
- The applicant's name and institution will be included in the main page of the scoring portal to easily identify conflicts of interest.
- Application guidelines will be revised to include better instructions and expectations for personal statements, and to clarify eligibility for each category, and ineligibility in regards to previous award recipients.
- Consider asking mentors to provide a short significance section for their students' abstracts.
- The applications will be sorted by category in the application portal to facilitate the scoring process.