ARO Travel Awards Committee Minutes
Date: Tuesday, May 20, 2025

Attendees: Catalina Valez-Ortega (chair), Choongheon Lee, Rahul Mittal, Kevin Booth, George Burwood, Sorough Sadeghi, Elika Fallah, Hongbo Zhao, Isabelle Schrauwen, Dave Raible, Vibhuti Agrahari, Estelle in 't Zandt, Rhiannon McNeely (Executive Office)
Minutes:

Introductions and Updates
The committee began with brief introductions of both new and returning members. It was announced that the search for a new committee chair would soon begin. The incoming chair will begin a three-year term starting after the 2026 MidWinter Meeting. Ideally, the selected individual will be someone already familiar with the committee's processes to ensure a smooth leadership transition.

Travel Awards Application Timeline and Eligibility

The committee discussed the upcoming travel awards application cycle, which is scheduled to open in June and close in September, aligning with the ARO abstract submission deadlines. Eligible applicants include graduate and undergraduate students, post baccalaureate, post doctoral researchers, audiologists, and medical students/residents. Required application materials will consist of an abstract, CV, personal statement, and a brief mentor letter.

For postbaccalaureate applicants, an additional letter from the mentor confirming their status will be required. To ensure consistency and clarity, the committee agreed to create templates or guidelines for these mentor letters.

Application Review and Scoring Process

The review process will remain unchanged, with each application evaluated by three committee members using a 1–9 scoring scale. Reviewers generally show strong agreement on scores for well-prepared applications. In cases of scoring discrepancies, a second round of review may be initiated. Committee Members Kevin Booth, Hongbo Zhao and Rahul Mittal agreed to participate in the second round of reviews is needed.

The anticipated funding pay line is expected to fall between 25% and 40% of applicants, with the top applicant in graduate, postdoc, audiologist, medical student/resident categories receiving the Don Henderson Award of $1,500.

While concerns were raised about comparing undergraduate and graduate applications, previous year's data showed no significant scoring differences. The committee acknowledged limitations in the current software platform's ability to separate categories but noted that a new platform is in development to improve this process.

2026 Travel Award Luncheon Speaker

The committee addressed the luncheon speaker status, noting that Dr. Doris Wu, who was unable to attend last year due to travel bans, has been promised a speaking opportunity at the 2026 luncheon. Concerns about possible travel restrictions affecting attendance next year were raised, and the committee agreed to reassess the situation in the fall.

Committee Timeline

Event	**Open**	**Closes**	**Length**
Travel Award Submissions	6/16/2025	9/8/2025	Open 7 weeks & 4 days
***All committee members review initial assigned applications for conflicts of interest**	**9/10/25**	**9/14/25**	**5 days**
Committee Reviews	9/10/24	10/1/25	3 weeks
Tiebreaker, 2nd review if needed	10/2/25	10/5/25	4 days
Travel Award Payline Assigned	10/6/25	10/13/25	1 week
DMAC reviews and selects awardees	10/13/25	10/27/25	2 weeks
Travel Award, Acc/Rej Letters, sent via email	10/28/25	11/04/25	1 week
Committee meets to discuss Travel Award results.	Nov/Dec 2025	--	--