WHEREAS, the Student Association’s Graduate Student Representation Committee exists, “to ensure that Segregated University Fees (SUF) collected from the graduate student population are utilized in the best interest of graduate students.”

WHEREAS, on March 10th 2019 the Student Appropriations Committee (SAC) voted to “change the way we approve Travel Grants as comparison to the way we have done so in the past” which was then implemented as a decision to no longer fund travel grants for students presenting work at academic conferences despite a formal vote on the part of SAC. (Artifact I)

WHEREAS, SAC has previously approved travel funding for presentation of academic work and research at academic conferences with no noted concern of a violation of bylaws or improper use of segregated fees.

WHEREAS, SAC informed RSOs that, “precedence guides the committee on how to fairly allocate money and ensures a consistent process from semester to semester.” (Artifact II)

WHEREAS, SAC bylaws lines 82-83 state, “SAC shall meet at least once in September to set funding criteria in the form of publicly available written addenda …” and the lack of presenters at academic conferences was not a set funding criteria before March 10th, 2019. (Artifact III)

WHEREAS, SAC bylaws lines 94-95 state, “SAC shall provide training for officers of RSOs to ensure that relevant and important information about the SAC funding process is explained…” (Artifact III)

WHEREAS, SAC RSO training did not include any mention of presentations a: conference being grounds for denial of a grant (Artifact II).

WHEREAS, SAC voted to implement this change in travel grant funding for the current cycle following the RSOs’ training. (Artifact I)

WHEREAS, policy 820 (3)a: prohibits expenditures that are “academic credit-producing activities.” (Artifact IV)

WHEREAS, policy 820 (2)a1: permits travel expenses for attending educational, cultural, social, recreational, or university athletic events. (Artifact IV)

WHEREAS, University Legal has suggested a nuanced reading of UW System Policy 820 restricted to cases where attending conferences produces academic credit. (Artifact V)
WHEREAS, student attendance of academic and educational conferences does not, in most cases, provide an individual with academic credit but can still be encouraged by an academic program or advisor for the betterment of the university and said student’s registered student organization (RSO).

WHEREAS, the possibility of a discussion of this proposed change was not posted in the publicly announced SAC 3.10.2019 Public Meeting Notice or Agenda, thereby disenfranchising students or student organizations from participating in this conversation. (Artifact VI)

WHEREAS, there is concern regarding the factual veracity of several statements made at the 3.10.2019 SAC meeting in support of and following the approval of the decision to cut travel for presenters at academic conferences. (Artifact VII)

WHEREAS, the altering of methods for funding travel grants following grant training and without announcing said change to RSOs reflects poorly on the Student Association.

WHEREAS, SAC bylaws lines 120-125 state that, “SAC will fund eligible RSOs with an emphasis on the following criteria: bring[ing] recognition to UW-Milwaukee, provid[ing] support for student leadership development, encourage[ing] on-campus programming, aid which assists RSOs in accomplishing their goals, and support[ing] and enrich[ing] the experience of students at UW-Milwaukee.” (Artifact III)

WHEREAS, research shows that presenting at conferences positively impacts students’ ability to collaborate on future events and publish papers, which are directly affiliated with UW-Milwaukee (Artifact VIII)

WHEREAS, presenting research at academic conferences allows students to network in order to bring speakers to campus, thereby boosting on-campus programming. (Artifact VIII)

WHEREAS, presenting research at academic conferences often enables RSOs to accomplish their goal of disseminating field-relevant knowledge to other entities, often leading to citations in scientific publications.

WHEREAS, presenting research at academic conferences enriches UW-Milwaukee students' experience in the form of traveling to a community and engaging with them in the name of the Student Association, their RSO, and UW-Milwaukee with meaningful connections to conference-goers and local communities.

WHEREAS, presenting at and participating in workshops at conferences enriches student experiences by not only developing student leadership within their discipline and accordingly on campus, but also allowing students and thereby the university to network with external funding agencies. (Artifact VIII)

WHEREAS, presenting research at academic conferences is advertising for UW-Milwaukee’s current research fields and often influences students’ decisions on where to apply for Master’s or Doctoral programs.

WHEREAS, presenting research conducted by an individual is understood to benefit not only the individual but also the university represented by the individual given the prevalence of “affiliation” as a marker of identity at academic conferences.

WHEREAS, presenting at academic conferences as well as publishing papers from said conferences contributed to UW-Milwaukee’s ability to retain its R1 status, an elite mark that makes UW-Milwaukee undergraduate and graduate degrees significantly more valuable and brings recognition to UW-Milwaukee, impacting every student attending. (Artifact IX)
WHEREAS, SAC bylaws line 116 states, “All SAC funding decisions must be made in a viewpoint neutral manner.” (Artifact II)

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Student Association vehemently opposes discrimination in any form, including discrimination as it relates to student status as graduate or undergraduate.

THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Student Association disagrees with the defunding of travel grants related to presenting at academic conferences, so long as said travel is in compliance with UW System Policy 820, in that said presentations do not produce academic credit.

THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED; the Student Association advises the SAC to revise any preliminary decisions made on defunding student travel funds pertaining to presenting at academic conferences wherever applicable, as well as take this into consideration moving forward in the process.

THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that following the appeals process scheduled to take place April 7, 2019, if SAC maintains its current position, the Student Association requests the Oversight and Appeals Commission investigate the violation of SAC’s bylaws in choosing to defund travel grants that support students presenting at academic conferences given the evidence presented that suggests this defunding was of a targeted nature and not in compliance with viewpoint neutrality or SAC’s emphasized funding criteria.

THEREFORE, BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED; for the purpose of dissemination, this legislation will be forwarded to the office of the Dean of Graduate School, the Office of the Chancellor, the Office of the Provost, the Chief Student Affairs Officer, Student Involvement, the Faculty Senate, Department Chairs, the Student Organization Appropriations Director, the Student Appropriations Committee, impacted students, and to “Anonymous Graduate Student.”

Alyssa Molinski
Student Association President

Date

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Legislative History

March 21st, 2019 – Approved by the Graduate Student Representation Committee
March 26th, 2019 – Passed by the Student Association Senate.