

# SOUTHWESTERN

## LAW SCHOOL

### Los Angeles, CA

## Student Professional Development Fund 2025–2026 Guidelines

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

**Revision history:** Revised August 2022; updated August 2023; technical edits performed in June 2024; technical edits made in May 2025

**Related policies and form:** Student Honor Code; Code of Student Professionalism and Conduct; Student Professionalism Development Fund 2025-2026 Application; Student Bar Association and Recognized Student Organizations Policy

**Scheduled Review Date:** April 2026 (Office of Student Affairs)

### A. Purpose

The Student Professional Development Fund (PDF) funds a portion of 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 funding will be prioritized for the following:

- Students serving on the planning committee for academic or professional conferences (e.g., students 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.

Funding for students serving on a planning committee for an outside organization or attending an academic or professional conference is subject to the following: to be eligible for funding, the conference must be hosted or sponsored by an organization whose membership requirements are consistent with the standards set forth in Southwestern's *Student Bar Association and Recognized Student Organizations Policy*. All funding requests must include documentation demonstrating that the hosting organization's membership

criteria align with these standards.

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 Student Honor Code, Code of Student Professionalism and Conduct, or other disciplinary or criminal investigation. Students may not travel to professional development activities during Study Days or final exams.

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

The PDF was not established to cover the entire cost of a student's activity. Awards will be limited to \$500. 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, or presentation supplies. As of January 1, 2025, the current reimbursable rate for mileage is 70 cents per mile. No membership fees, food, beverages, or personal incidental expenses will be covered, although a meal at which the student receives 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. Application Instructions**

- Students must complete the Student 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 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. Each student must pay their own expenses to be eligible for reimbursement.
- 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, 2025, to attend a conference in April 2026; a student could also apply by April 15, 2026, for a conference that took place in November 2025.
- Students who cannot participate in a professional development activity without financial assistance from the PDF should apply by the earliest possible application deadline so information on a potential award is known before the registration deadline. Students 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 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 Report Requirements in Section G below);
  - A photo of the student 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.

#### **F. Selection Process**

The Professional Development Committee will review applications. 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 applicants and request additional materials from them. 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. Report Requirements**

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

- For the essay, the student should identify and describe one important concept, research finding, theory, or idea 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.)

#### **H. Award Administration**

The award will be in the form of a reimbursement of expenses 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 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.

#### **I. Policy Revision**

Southwestern expressly reserves the right to change or modify any aspect of this policy at any time, with or without prior notice.