

FAQs for the GSS Enhancement Award:

What is the GSS Enhancement Award?

The GSS awards twenty scholarships of \$4,000 to graduate students each year. The purpose of this award is to enhance the quality of life and ability to succeed of the graduate students at Utah State University and to recognize their outstanding achievements and contributions.

What is the difference between a scholarship/fellowship and a tuition award?

Scholarships and fellowships are usually awards based on prior academic achievement and are typically obtained through an application or grant writing process. Tuition awards are given through the School of Graduate Studies to eligible graduate students and may cover up to 24 credits in a Masters degree program and/or 70 credits in a PhD program. Please contact your graduate advisor if you have questions about whether or not you are currently receiving tuition awards.

What is the USU Faculty/Staff Half-Tuition benefit?

This benefit is only available to USU employees and their dependents and reduces the cost of tuition by half. Graduate students working as teaching assistants, research assistants, instructors, etc., are not considered USU employees and are not eligible for these benefits.

Why do I have to have completed 12 credits?

This award is intended for graduate students who have completed at least one year at USU, which is approximately 12 credits. We want to help the graduate students who are already here at USU rather than recruit new graduate students.

I need to be full-time, matriculated graduate student. What does this mean?

A full-time matriculated graduate student must be one of the following:

1. Registered for 9 or more graduate credits; **or**
2. Registered for 6 or more graduate credits if employed as a graduate assistant for 15 hours per week or more; **or**
3. Registered for 3 graduate credits with all required coursework completed and only the research component of the degree remaining (the student's Program of Study must have been submitted to the School of Graduate Studies); **or**

4. Registered for at least 3 graduate credits during the semester of the final thesis/dissertation defense or, in a nonthesis degree program, the last semester of coursework required on the student's Program of Study; **or**
5. Registered for at least 9 graduate credits for each semester in which the doctoral tuition remission is received.

Registration for 1 graduate credit during the semester of approval of a thesis or dissertation or the semester of completion of requirements in a nonthesis master's degree program does not qualify a student for full-time status.

Please contact your graduate advisor if you are unsure about either your full-time or matriculated status.

What do the initials GI, GTA, GRA, and GGA stand for?

These are the abbreviations used by the School of Graduate Studies as hiring designations. They stand for Graduate Instructor (GI), Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA), Graduate Research Assistant (GRA), and Graduate General Assistant (GGA). Please contact your graduate advisor if you are unsure of your designation.

What financial documents do I need to submit?

All applicants are required to fill out the Estimated Family Contribution (EFC) form at http://www.fincalc.com/aid_07.asp?id=6 and must place the calculated score on the application were required. This worksheet must also be printed off and submitted with the application. Any application received without this worksheet will be discarded as incomplete. For information on filling out the EFC see: http://www.usu.edu/usugss/downloads/scholarships/EFC_Worksheet_Instructions.pdf

Those applicants chosen to receive the EA will be required to supply a copy of their 2008 federal tax return to verify income information. International applicants chosen to receive the award must submit a copy of their 1040NR or 1040NR-EZ. For further information regarding these forms see "EFC Worksheet Help" at http://www.usu.edu/usugss/downloads/scholarships/EFC_Worksheet_Instructions.pdf

Any applications that display discrepancies, or suspicions thereof, between the EFC worksheet, the federal tax return, and/or information provided by the financial aid office or School of Graduate Studies, will be denied. Award recipients will be notified of the needed further documentation about one week after the application deadline.

What should I tell my recommenders?

Letters of recommendation may be addressed to the Graduate Student Senate and mailed, either through campus mail or the US postal service (the address is on the top of the application) or, they may be included in the applicant's packet. Letters may address academic achievement such as teaching, research, service, and/ or USU Involvement, or they may address financial need.

What if my professor sends the letter of recommendation after the application deadline?

Incomplete applications, including those with missing letters of recommendation, will be disqualified. Please inform your recommenders that timeliness is necessary to have your application considered.

What is the committee looking for in the 500 word statements?

Statements should address academic achievements such as teaching, research, USU Involvement and service. Qualifications for USU involvement and service will be restricted to recognized clubs, organizations, and sponsored opportunities at or through USU. Service that is not affiliated with USU (i.e. religious service) cannot be considered.

How can I find out who my representatives are?

Applications must have the signature of the GSS Departmental Representative. This contact information is available online at www.usu.edu/usugss.

Applicants are responsible for obtaining this signature.

What does a Department Representative do and why do I need their signature?

The GSS Department Representatives ensure that each department on campus is heard and made aware of what the GSS can do for graduate students at USU. They are welcome, but not required, to attend meetings and serve on GSS committees. The minimum requirement is monthly email correspondence with your GSS College Senator.

Because there are several requirements and quite a few documents that must be submitted with the application, you may have a lot of questions. Your GSS Department Representative will be informed of frequent questions associated with the application and they will know the answers. Applications that aren't complete or were not filled out appropriately will not be considered. Your Department Representative will be able to help you successfully complete the application. They will also ensure that the information you give the GSS on the application is kept safe and confidential.

Once the awards have been given, **ALL** applicant information is shredded to protect your privacy and identity. If there is part of your application that you would like returned to you, please let us know when you turn in your application.

What do I do if I don't have a Department Representative?

Some departments may not have a GSS representative. In order to receive this award though, every application must be signed by a GSS Department Representative. If your department has not yet identified a GSS Department Representative, talk with your Department Head, your graduate organization, or the graduate students in your department for input about who might be the best representative. You also might consider volunteering for this position. Please contact your GSS College Senator for more information about GSS Department Representatives.

Why are there so many requirements? That's a lot of work!

Many scholarships are based only on academic achievement and require much less paperwork. Because we're looking at more than just academics, we need more information from each student. The GSS Enhancement Award is given to students who demonstrate academic achievement, university involvement outside research and academics, and significant financial need.

I received the GSS Enhancement Award last year; can I apply again this year?

If you were awarded the scholarship the previous year and apply again this year, your application will be disqualified automatically. Due to the limited number of scholarships the GSS can give and the large number of graduate students qualified to receive the award, a student may only receive the award once.

Do I have to use the money for research or tuition?

There are no restrictions on what the money can be used for. The award will be given directly to the student in the form of a check or direct deposit into the account they have linked to the University payroll system.
