

THE
UNIVERSITY
OF RHODE ISLAND

WORK-LIFE COMMITTEE

URI PROFESSIONAL FAMILY TRAVEL FUND

Annual Report 2014-2015

"I remain grateful for the support of this fund as well as proud that URI offers such support."

-- URI Travel Fund Awardee

"I wished Illinois had such an intelligent and progressive program."

-- University of Illinois Professor

Summary: The Family Travel Fund, managed by the Work-Life Committee and sponsored by College Deans and the AAUP has been very well-received, and much appreciated by its recipients. The program began being widely advertised in October 2014, when applications began coming in. An evaluation committee of 3 developed and completed application rubrics. Between October and June 2015 eight awards of \$300 or less were awarded, totaling \$2,256. Nearly all applicants were Assistant Professors, all were female, and 75% were from the College of Arts & Sciences. Three-quarters requested funding to bring a child along and either bring a caregiver or locate a caregiver at the destination; two requested funding for child care at home while on travel.

Number of applications	9
Number of awards	8
Total requested	\$3,609
Total awarded	\$2,256
Average award size	\$300
Colleges	6 from Arts & Sciences; 1 from HSS, 1 from A&S/CELS split
Gender	8 female
Rank/Position	7 Assistant Professors, 1 Research Associate III
Reasons	Bringing child and caregiver 5; caregiving at home while on travel 2; bring child find care at location 1

Assessment Survey: All recipients were required to complete a very brief, Likert-scaled agree-disagree questionnaire, with 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree. The questions and mean scores are shown below.

Question	Mean
I would definitely not have attended this event had it not been for the travel funding.	3.8
Traveling to this particular event was important to my career advancement.	4.8
I would recommend this grant program to a co-worker.	5
If the need existed, I would apply for this funding again.	5
I feel the University should continue with this program.	5
I feel the University should expand this program.	5

Program Funding. In 2013, all college Deans and the AAUP were asked to contribute to the fund. We secured commitments totaling \$9,000, but to date have a few outstanding pledges. Everyone was enthusiastic about the program and most offered to continue to contribute, as needed. We are currently following up to secure unfulfilled commitments, which may enable us to fund the program through the end of 2016. We anticipate requesting a second round of contributions in the fall or early 2017. We are also considering widening our reach to include other offices.

Preliminary 2016 findings: As of December 31, 2015, we have already received 11 requests for funding. All requests so far are female, but the college distribution is broader, including A&S, CELS, HSS, GSO, University Libraries, and the Research Office. The rank distribution is broader, from Lecturer to Full Professor, and includes one staff member. As word of the program spreads, we anticipate at least double the requests as in the first year.

Input from Awardees. The Work-Life Committee is grateful to the contributors to this program, as it has enabled several people to travel professionally more easily and with less financial burden. We believe that the modest amount of funding recipients received may have been enough to encourage some who were hesitant or unwilling to part from their children for professional travel to do so. As one awardee noted, *“When I travel, the effects on my family are extraordinary at a number of levels: psychologically, emotionally, logistically, and financially. Therefore, I attend conferences with a keen eye for balancing the needs of my family against my professional goals and opportunities.”*

The actual and symbolic value in URI respecting and supporting the caregiving needs of our faculty and staff as they pursue professional growth is significant, as can be seen from these testimonials from awardees.

“Without this funding I would have been unable to accept the invitation and meet with people who can be external letter writers for my tenure application and reviewers for my papers and grant applications.”

“Going to a professional conference is always important in my career, but with three young children, sometimes I have to cut off the trip or at least shorten it. With the help of the URI Professional Family Travel Fund, I could be more relaxed about arranging the time away. As a junior professor with all family responsibilities, I feel that the fund provides the support not only on the financial end but also on the emotional end, when the resources are so limited at this stage.”

“Last year I was unable to attend due to my pregnancy and I was concerned I’d miss the opportunity again because I’m breastfeeding. This grant allowed my husband and son to accompany me which would not have been possible within my family’s personal budget.”

“My talk was scheduled on my son’s 2nd birthday, and if he could not have come with me, I would not have made the trip. There are times—lots of times!—when work and family conflict, and I was not willing to miss my son’s second birthday for the conference. Because he was able to join me—and because my husband was able to travel to take care of him during the conference—I was able to make it there and present my work to a large audience at this fairly prestigious event. This funding also enabled me not to leave my husband at home with two small children for five days while I attended the event. It was important that I deliver this paper . . . and I am grateful that this funding allowed me to fulfill that professional obligation while still meeting my obligation to my family.”

Grant funding allowed another to attend “the single best career experience in terms of who I met and the science I learned. I would not have been able to attend if I had to leave my breastfed 8-month-old at home. Thank you!”

“I told everyone who would listen about this (at my conference) – all were highly impressed but none had ever heard of it!”

One awardee presented at a conference session along with “luminaries” in her field. “It was a privilege to be chosen . . . and a remarkable opportunity to present my work in the active intellectual presence of . . . The Work/Life fund made an enormous difference to my family when I had to leave my husband alone (with a complex work schedule of his own) with two small children for more than a week. The fund allowed me to address the logistical and financial aspects of the hardships incurred by my travel, which was of great benefit to me, my husband, and my two young sons. The presentation I gave at the conference, and the conversations it sparked in the Q&A period, had a profound and positive impact on my career.”

One awardee shared input she received from a workshop colleague. “Professor Levine was very interactive and engaging at the NSF Workshop we both attended. It was even more impressive to see that she was attending with her young daughter and that the University of Rhode Island had supported a nanny to accompany her. There was no indication that Prof. Levine was anything other than fully engaged in the workshop (12 hour-days!) except for the last day when she introduced her daughter to some of us. Kudos to Professor Levine for fully participating with a child along on the trip and kudos to URI for making that possible! I wished Illinois had such an intelligent and progressive program.” From Professor Steven Zimmerman at UIUC