ECE Development and Research Excellence Awards Process

The ECE Development and Research Excellence Award provides financial support to PhD and MS research students for attending conferences and covering research-related expenses. These awards are designed to help students advance their research, share their work with the academic community, and participate in professional development opportunities. The process outlined here establishes transparent and fair criteria for the distribution of these awards.

Annual Budget and Distribution

The annual budget for the ECE Development and Research Excellence Awards is updated to $2,500 per semester. The awards will be distributed twice a year with the following structure:

- Awards will be provided to the best students who meet the specified criteria.
- Honorable mentions will be awarded to students whose work demonstrates exceptional merit and warrants recognition.

The awards will be distributed in January (Spring Award) and July (Summer / Fall Award), allowing ample time for recipients to use the funds.

Eligibility

The awards are open to both funded and unfunded PhD students, as well as MS research students. Awards are intended to cover full expense items, specifically *conference registration fees*, *travel expenses related to conferences or research*, and *paper submission fees*.

Awards must be used within the fiscal year (ending June 30). The deadlines for expense submission are as follows:

- For *Spring Awards*, the application deadline is December 31.
- For *Summer Awards*, the application deadline is July 1.

These deadlines ensure compliance with Rutgers' reimbursement policy, which requires submission within 60 days of the expense or event.

Selection Process

The Graduate Student Mentoring Committee will handle the selection of award recipients. The committee will:

- Review applications submitted through the link on ECE website and the ECE GSA web site.
- Select awardees twice per year, once in the fall and once in the summer, after each submission deadline.

Committee members with conflicts of interest, such as when their own students apply, will recuse themselves from the selection process.

The awards will be announced a few weeks after the submission deadlines to ensure that recipients are informed by the beginning of the respective semester.

Evaluation Criteria

Applications will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- *Relevance of the conference or event to the student's research* – 40%
- *Academic performance and progress in the program* – 20%
- *Financial need*, with priority given to students without other funding – 20%
- *Contribution to the department* (e.g., mentoring, teaching) – 10%
- *Alignment with department diversity goals* (e.g., supporting underrepresented students) – 10%

The evaluation criteria will be made publicly available on the department website to ensure transparency.

Application Process

Students must submit a brief application through the link on ECE website, which can also be found on the ECE GSA web site. The application must include the following.

- *Conference details and relevance to their research*
- *Justification for financial support*
- *Estimated budget and any other sources of funding*

Administrative Process

The administrative process will be streamlined as follows:

- Two months before expected travel, the student will make a request and enter the project number.
- The project number will be included in the DocuSign that the student is given and will work with our letter to figure out the administrative details.
- The department will use *DocuSign PowerForms* for electronic signatures, simplifying the process for students to upload proof of their award to Concur.
- All awards must be used by *June 30*, and expenses must be submitted by the appropriate deadlines.
- Students must submit an expense request at least *2 months before the conference* to ensure timely processing and adequate travel and other expense planning. The project number will be used for the *registration* expense.

The department will also coordinate with the School of Engineering to restore the missing link on the ECE website. This link will allow students to submit applications and access a PDF guide, previously prepared by Roy and the committee, with instructions for PhD students on conducting research and submission links for awards.

Diversity Initiatives

The department will encourage greater participation of female students in conferences and professional development workshops, such as *CRA-W* and *IEEE-WIE*. To promote diversity, the department covers memberships for two students each year. Efforts will be made to increase awareness and participation to fully utilize these opportunities.