



Guide to requesting funding for the SSA conference

Believe it or not, there is money available for your club activities. That very often includes funds for students to travel to leadership development and other events related to their club. The key is to find out how the system works and get your request in early. Every school is a little different but typically this information is one of three places. A good place to start is with the search engine.

Navigating to the right spot

Go to your school website and find the search bar that searches that website (not the entire internet). Search for “funding for clubs” or something similar. Usually this takes you right to what you’re looking for.

For example, I just went to University of Minnesota Twin Cities (<https://twin-cities.umn.edu/>). In the search bar on the top right of the website I typed “club funding.” The first hit is “Student Unions & Activities Grants.” The second hit is “Grant Funding FAQ.” That’s exactly what we’re looking for.

Planning ahead

Each college and university has its own deadlines. It is important that you and your leadership team become acquainted with those deadlines so you don’t miss out. If you have already missed the deadline for one grant, there are often other ways to apply for funds if you’re a brand new group or other special cases. We highly recommend asking someone in Student Activities, Student Government, or both.

Sending the right message

Each campus will have a slightly different procedure, but in general, the terms of this funding are related to how your activity or travel will benefit student life *on your campus*. It’s key to put yourself in the shoes of the student affairs leadership. What do they want out of this money?

It’s probably a good idea to emphasize the **leadership development** angle. You can also discuss the **growing number of non-religious students** on campuses around the country and how this conference will help your student organization be better equipped to meet the needs of non-religious students.

Every campus is worried about **students’ mental health**. Loneliness and isolation is the enemy and inviting students into meaningful community is one solution. Emphasize the tendency for non-religious students to feel isolated from campus community and how you plan to address that challenge by bringing back new tools to create community on campus.

Civic engagement is a key goal that many universities have. This year we will be giving students the opportunity to visit with elected officials and their staff on Capitol Hill. Mention the invaluable experience and opportunity you will have to become a more engaged citizen.

We're here to help

If you get stuck, want us to read over what you've written, or need other guidance, please reach out any time. You can email us individually or just email organizers@secularstudents.org and we'll get right back to you.

Sample language

The fastest growing demographic on campus are the non-religious. According to recent research from Pew and PRRI, we know that nearly 40% of millennials don't identify with any religious group and that number just keeps growing. As the only student organization on campus devoted to building community among non-religious students, it is imperative that we keep growing in our capacity to providing meaningful connections and opportunities to serve at [Our University].

...

[Our University] emphasizes that importance of students becoming active and engaged citizens. The Secular Student Alliance conference this summer will give us the opportunity to meet and speak with our elected officials on Capitol Hill. This is a something I never imagined being able to do. We will be addressing our concerns about protecting religious freedom for all Americans.

...

We know that the mental health of our student body is among the top concerns of [Our University]. We also know that having meaningful relationships on campus prevents students from experiencing isolation and loneliness. That is the main purpose of [Your SSA Chapter]—to create a safe space for all students to find friendship and connection, especially those that don't have a religious affiliation to turn to. The annual Secular Student Alliance Conference will help us get new ideas and learn new skills to improve our community on campus.

Sample letter

Dear _____,

As a student organization that seeks to meet the needs of secular students and works on issues of equal protection and human rights, our leaders and members need to explore tools, best practices, and strategies to address our members' needs and give them opportunities to succeed. It's also important that we maintain a strong working relationship with the Secular Student Alliance organization.

For this reason, we are interested in attending the National Secular Student Alliance conference from July 25-27, 2020, in Washington D.C. This conference will give me the knowledge, perspective, and materials to make a positive impact at [Our University] and to help us achieve our goals.

The national Secular Student Alliance conference brings together leaders from other higher education institutions as well as high school students who are looking for leaders in our community to be positive

role models for them. The conference offers an in-depth look into the secular community as well as issues that threaten our American values. Here is how our attendance will pay off for [Our University]:

- We will have the chance to engage in deeper discussions with our peers about how to effectively address issues facing the secular community and how combat issues such as isolation and loneliness on campus.
- We will learn how to turn our commitment into action and results through collaboration and through access to programs, insights, and approaches that work.
- We will meet with our members of Congress and their staff to share our views on pressing issues of religious freedom and equality.
- We will gain valuable experiences through leadership development skills which are beneficial to my personal development, but that will also contribute to my effectiveness as a student leader on campus.

Here are the approximate costs for me/our leaders to the Secular Student Alliance Conference:

Registration: \$____
Transportation: \$____
Residence hall accommodations: \$____
Meals: \$____
Total costs: \$____

Through attending the conference, I will be better equipped to address the issue facing secular students on campus by gaining invaluable skills in community development, leadership, and civic action.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

[Your Title]