



## **Guide to requesting funding from your school for your chapter to attend the SSA conference**

Believe it or not, there is free money available from your school 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 in one of three places. A good place to start is to search your school's website.

### **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," "student government funding," or something similar. Usually, this takes you right to what you're looking for.

For example, I went to the 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 the Student Activities Office, 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 government or student activities 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 are the enemy and inviting students into a meaningful community is one solution. Emphasize the tendency for non-religious students to feel isolated from the 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. Mention the invaluable experience and opportunity you will have to become a more engaged citizen through what you will learn at the conference.

### **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](mailto:organizers@secularstudents.org) and we'll get right back to you.

## Sample Q&A

Here are some helpful information you can adapt and personalize when completing the application for funds from your campus. If you need assistance answering specific questions that your college or university asks on an application, please reach out to us.

### **What is the purpose of the organization?**

Our chapter of the Secular Student Alliance at **[school]** serves as a vital community and resource hub for non-religious students and those advocating for religious freedom and church/state separation. By fostering a supportive environment, we provide valuable opportunities for personal growth and leadership development. SSA chapters play a crucial role in equipping young individuals with the tools necessary to carry grassroots activism into adulthood. Our advocacy is particularly significant for young people without a religious affiliation, who often face ostracism within their communities due to their diverse worldviews. Based on a study conducted by the Secular Student Alliance, about one-third (33.6%) of non-religious youth had negative experiences in an educational setting due to their non-belief. Through our efforts, we aim to empower these students, promote inclusivity, and contribute to a more tolerant and understanding society.

### **Why is this organization special on campus or what makes it unique?**

There is a growing percentage of non-religious students in the US that lack services for them on campus. Gen Z is the least religiously-affiliated generation, with 48.5% stating that they do not follow any religion. There are religious groups on campus for Christians, Catholics, and Jews, but non-religious students are mostly overlooked. Atheists routinely face discrimination and bullying because of their non-belief. All students deserve to have a safe space to explore their beliefs without judgment. For those who question the religion they grew up with, SSA provides the only space and community where they can talk about any doubts they may have, and discover that there are other people just like them.

### **What is the purpose of the activity you are requesting funds for?**

We are requesting funds to travel to the University of Maryland, College Park for the Secular Student Alliance National Leadership Conference 2026. The conference is a special opportunity to meet like-minded students across the country, gain knowledge and inspiration from many speakers, participate in leadership and skills-building workshops, and network with other student leaders across the country. After the conference, we will be much more prepared to be the leaders our community and our generation need.

### **How does this activity benefit the student body/your school?**

Through workshops and seminars, we will enhance crucial leadership skills, so that we can foster a culture of intellectual engagement and critical thinking on campus. The conference serves as a networking platform, connecting students with peers from other institutions, and expanding their horizons and potential collaborations. Participating in a national event like SSACon elevates our college's profile, attracting attention and recognition on a broader scale. The conference also aligns with our values of inclusivity and diversity, showcasing our commitment to these principles. We intend to return with inspiration and motivation, influencing our peers to take on leadership roles and positively contribute to our college community's development.

### **How do you recruit for your organization?**

Our SSA chapter makes meaningful connections with students through well-planned themed events, informative tabling sessions, and campus-wide distribution of signs and flyers. We're all about building a vibrant community through grassroots activism, working purposefully for a cause we believe in. Attending this conference to refine our leadership skills isn't just a formality, it's an intentional effort to attract more students who could benefit from our services and contribute to our community.

## **What events, programs or activities does your organization have planned for next year?**

Ask an Atheist Day  
Carl Sagan Day  
Women's Equality Day  
Banned Books Week  
Freethought Day  
National Day of Reason

Graveyard of the Gods  
Transgender Day of Remembrance  
Community Service: Secular Spring Break  
Bill of Rights Day  
Religious Freedom Day  
Freedom of Speech Week

## **How does your organization benefit the student body?**

Our SSA chapter plays a vital role in enriching the college experience for the student body in several ways. We provide a supportive community for individuals who identify with secular values or are curious about exploring diverse perspectives. This sense of belonging fosters connections among students who may feel marginalized due to their secular beliefs, creating a more inclusive campus environment. About one in five (20.8%) non-religious youth under 25 report having been threatened because of their beliefs, which shows the urgent need to foster connection and respectful communication between students with different belief systems and lifestyles.

Our organization actively promotes critical thinking, intellectual discourse, and open dialogue. Through secular activities and events, we encourage students to engage with different philosophical and ethical perspectives, fostering a culture of academic curiosity and tolerance. This not only enhances the intellectual diversity on campus but also contributes to the development of well-rounded individuals capable of navigating a pluralistic society.

## **How does your organization bring recognition to your school?**

We employ a multifaceted approach to bring recognition to our school, fostering a positive and inclusive environment for our members. We engage in community outreach programs, collaborating with local organizations and participating in events that align with our values. This not only contributes to the betterment of the community but also highlights our commitment to social responsibility.

To enhance our visibility on campus, we organize thought-provoking student activities, discussions, and events that promote open dialogue and critical thinking. These events not only attract attention from students and faculty but also establish our organization as a hub for intellectual discourse. In the digital realm, we leverage social media platforms to share our activities, achievements, and perspectives. Maintaining an active online presence allows us to connect with a broader audience, both within the college community and beyond. By curating engaging content, we aim to challenge stereotypes, promote diversity, and showcase the positive impact of our secular group.

## **Conference Schedule**

If needed, you can print the conference schedule from the SSA website. The schedule will be updated on a regular basis with speaker and workshop information.

## **Registration and Housing Costs**

If needed, the cost for registration and housing are provided on the the SSA conference website. Most of your meals during the conference are included, so you just need meals while you are traveling.

You can also mention that you will be fundraising to help with costs and applying for a financial assistance from SSA to attend the conference.

# 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.

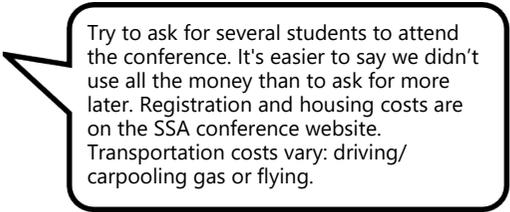
For this reason, we are interested in attending the Secular Student Alliance National Leadership Conference July 16-18, 2026, at the University of Maryland, College Park. This conference will give us the knowledge, perspective, and materials to make a positive impact at [Our University] and to help us achieve our goals.

The Secular Student Alliance national leadership 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 benefit [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 to 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 gain valuable experiences through leadership development skills that are beneficial to our personal development, but that will also contribute to my effectiveness as a student leader on campus.

Here are the approximate costs for our leaders to go to the Secular Student Alliance National Leadership Conference:

Registration: \$\_\_\_\_  
Transportation: \$\_\_\_\_  
Residence hall accommodations: \$\_\_\_\_  
Meals: \$\_\_\_\_  
Total cost per person: \$\_\_\_\_



Try to ask for several students to attend the conference. It's easier to say we didn't use all the money than to ask for more later. Registration and housing costs are on the SSA conference website. Transportation costs vary: driving/ carpooling gas or flying.

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

Sincerely,

[Your Name]  
[Your Title]