

Travel Grants: How LASA Helps Fund Attendees' Travel Expenses

By Elaina Zachos, Staff Writer at MaestroMeetings

Most seasoned travelers will say that there are no downsides to packing up a suitcase and hopping on a plane, but financially hurting academics will probably tell you otherwise. Organizations like the [Latin American Studies Association](#) are working to fund economically unsound members by providing them with travel grants to attend their annual International Congress.

LASA [allocates travel grants](#) to some of their members who are professors or Latin American-based students. Pilar Rodriguez Blanco, the operations manager and congress coordinator for the organization, said that the grants are worth a portion of the attendees' travel expenses. They are funded by organizations like the [Inter-American Foundation](#) and the [Open Society Foundation](#).

"We never claim to cover the whole expenses because we can't," Blanco said. Depending on where congress attendees are traveling from, transportation costs vary.

These travel grants are given to students living in Latin America and to non-tenured professors. LASA congresses are often based in the United States, so Latin America-based students inherently have higher transportation costs. Non-tenured professors often teach part time and have lower salaries, so the travel grants help to offset the cost of the academic congress.

Last year, professors and applicants based in Latin America received \$1,000 each in grants. Of the recipients, students received \$600 each and U.S. non-tenured professors got a two-night stay at one of LASA's host hotels for the congress.

LASA only admits attendees who are already contributing to the Congress by presenting a paper at a panel.

"We're not just paying for you to come. We're paying for you to do research and provide a paper of your research on a Latin American topic," Blanco said.

Eligible candidates cannot have received any travel grants in the last three LASA congresses. Applicants also can't serve in LASA as a program chair, track chair, executive council member or any similar position while seeking these grants.

"That is to allow more people in a more diverse group to come, so it's not always the same one being selected every year," Blanco said.

The main criterion for picking grantees is a strong paper, Blanco added. Candidates are also required to submit their curriculum vitae, and a description of how much money they need and why.

After candidates submit their papers, curriculum vitae and descriptions, these materials are sent to LASA track chairs, program chairs and grant committees, who rank the papers based on the merit and academic quality. The papers that are accepted are then sent to the LASA secretariat.

From there, the secretariat calculates the percentage of panels accepted compared to the number of panels proposed by the track. This percentage is used to calculate how many travel grants can be distributed. The candidates are notified whether or not they have received grants by January of the Congress year, and funds are allocated until there is no more money available.

Travel grants "support with the costs of traveling to the congress to present," Blanco said. "Many people don't have affiliations [or] institutions supporting their travel and they have to fund the trip themselves."