**The Student Travel Grant Committee (STGC)**

**Non-Standing Committee**

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**THE STUDENT TRAVEL GRANT COMMITTEE PROPOSAL**

**Introduction:**

The Student Travel Grant Committee (STGC) was formed with the support of the Assistant Deans of the School of Arts and Humanities and the Dhanani School of Science and Engineering. It is a student led initiative that was formed keeping the need for funds for student endeavors in mind. Thus, STGC is responsible for providing students with financial assistance and to help them with acquiring sponsorships. STGC will provide students who have been selected and need financial assistance ways to secure sponsors. Another purpose of the Committee is to collect funds that will be provided to students who will be traveling for academic purposes (conferences, internships, exchange programs, projects). The committee will review the applications and will allocate funds accordingly.

Through this, it is our aim to maximize the number of Habib students participating in national and international forums and to enable talented students to explore opportunities across different borders without financial barriers. The committee also aims to increase exposure for students to experience different perspectives and through travelling, ensure an exchange of values and culture in an effort to promote inclusivity and diversity in the student body. The committee will be inclusive—catering to the entire student body at HU and will, therefore, also look towards the HU community for support in order to meet its objectives.

**Committee Structure:**

The committee is divided into three subcommittees: the Sponsorship and Mentorship Committee, the Finance Committee, and the Proposals and Content Writing Committee.

The Sponsorship and Mentorship Committee will consist of faculty and Student Life members as well as staff/sub-committee members. It will primarily be responsible for reviewing applications, providing feedback on applications upon review, pitching funding proposals to organizations, and addressing any queries applicants may have after the reviewing process.

The Finance Committee will have a Chair, Vice-Chair, and staff/sub-committee members and will be in charge of monitoring and maintaining documentary evidence of transactions into and out of the Habib Account. The responsibilities of the Finance committee are *further elaborated under Fiscal Management*.

The Proposals and Content Writing Committee will comprise of staff/sub-committee members and will be drafting proposals for potential sponsors, writing up official committee documents, taking testimonials from successful students in order to record their experiences and compiling the bi-yearly evaluation report with help from the Finance Committee.

Each subcommittee will be headed by a core committee member.

**Background and Justification:**

This committee is a response to the multiple challenges HU students face when applying for travel funds. In addition to airfare and visa fees, there are many more aspects of academic programs abroad that students need to consider. These includes tuition fees, registration fees, International Service fees, document management fees, fees for housing and meal plans, costs for books and other supplies, health insurance, and even transportation costs. With all these expenses, only a limited number of people can afford to attend these programs without additional financial assistance.

The Habib community is one that aims to uplift and support its students, but unfortunately its outreach with study-abroad sponsorship can practically only assist a select few. While the Habib University scholarship and financial aid budget does assist students when applying for national and international programs, the scholarships and aid provided can only help a limited number of students. STGC is a solution that will help increase the cap for this limit and eventually help most, if not all, meritorious students applying for academic programs.

**Objectives:**

The committee’s main objectives are to:

* To assist students with sponsorship documents.
* To act as a bridge between students and various organizations for sponsorship.
* To provide for students who are selected for Academic Conferences, Study-Abroad Programs, Internships and Project Display.
* To select students on the basis of merit and need to cover an x % of their travel and accommodation.
* To do background checks to make sure that the students meet the eligibility criteria to be able to receive a travel grant.
* To gain funding support from both within and out of the Habib community.

**Scope:**

Applications can be from any year within the student body whether that is freshman, sophomore, junior, or senior. Currently, the committee is only helping students travelling for academic events, which include but are not limited to semester exchange programs, summer abroad programs, conferences, internships, research projects etc. However, once the committee is fully functional and has a stable success rate, STGC aims to expand to travelling related to metacurricular activities including but not limited to sports competitions, entrepreneurship programs, debate competitions, art exhibitions, musical/theatre performances, in which students applying are participating.

**Strategies:**

STGC’s main strategies to fulfill its aims are as follows:

1. *Mobilizing the internal HU community to generate funding*: The committee was founded to help the HU community, which cannot be done without the support of the community itself. The committee will ask for funds from within the HU community through either the Give Your Share or Adopt a Learner initiatives. Contributors have the option of giving monthly funds to the committee itself (Give Your Share) or giving a onetime partial/full sponsorship to a student applicant of their choice (Adopt a Learner).

For contributors choosing to give monthly funds, STGC has four packages they can choose from:

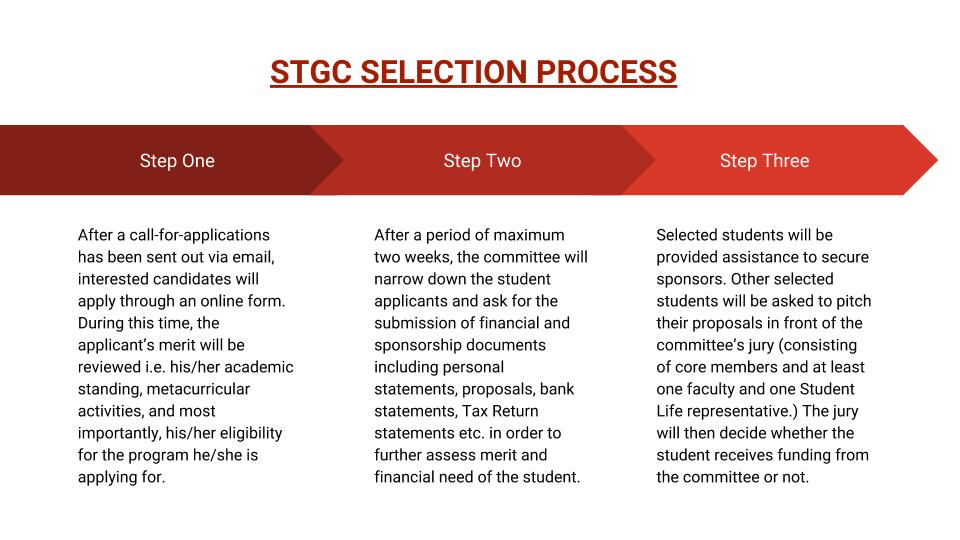
* The Gold Pack (Rs.2500+/month)
* The Silver Pack (Rs.2000/month)
* The Bronze Pack (Rs.1000/month)
* The Convenience Pack (any amount you choose/month)

In order to gain funding from contributors, STGC will be providing them with a list of incentives *(further elaborated under benefits)*. After initial approval, contributors will have to sign an official pledge form stating their consent to HU Finance to obtain money (in accordance with their chosen pack) from their account.

2. *Gaining sponsors to generate external funding revenue*: The committee’s aim is also to bridge students with various sponsors and sponsorship organizations. The committee aims to build a network of sponsorship contacts firstly, by asking the HU community to connect STGC with any relevant contacts they know (the Bridge the Gap initiative) and secondly, by contacting sponsorship organizations ourselves and pitching proposals. Sponsors will either transfer funds to the student him/herself— a direct transaction—or transfer funds to STGC through the Habib Account, which STGC will allocate towards a student through the selection process *(elaborated on below)*.

3. *Capacity-building mentorship programs for proposals and self-funding*: The committee, in addition to the above, will also be hosting a series of capacity-building mentorship programs that will not only assist students with their sponsorship proposals, presentations, and interviews but will also help them think of innovative ways to self-fund and help them implement those ideas so that they have the best chance at success. To aid in these programs, the committee may arrange for professional speakers such as corporate representatives from sponsorship organizations.

**Selection Process:**



A call-for-applications via emails will be sent continuously throughout the academic year *(further elaborated under timeline)* through which students may apply. The application form will also be made available on the Habib University website so that students may have easier access. The application form will ask the student for academic records, metacurricular activity records, and a brief personal statement. After the student has applied, the committee has a period of two weeks to assess the validity of the program the student has applied to i.e. whether the student meets the criteria.

Students that pass the assessment will be asked for financial and sponsorship documents. Sponsorship documents will include proposals, personal statements etc. Financial documents will include CNICs of the student, student’s parents/guardians, and siblings, salary slips, Tax Return statements, bank statements etc. *It must be made clear that any financial documents will not be handled by students—all such documents will be given to the HU Finance to assess for financial need of the student applicants. Such sensitive information will be kept strictly confidential and is not allowed to be passed onto any student working in the committee*.

Students that are selected on the above mentioned basis will be called for a meeting to pitch their proposal in front of the jury. The jury will consist of core committee members, one faculty, one student council and one student life representative. After careful deliberation, the jury will decide whether or not to fund the candidate from the committee’s reserves. Other selected students will be provided assistance to secure sponsors through the Bridge the Gap initiative as well as the committee’s mentorship programs.

**Timeline:**

The call-for-applications will be a year round process. An email will be sent out to the students every 45 days or so with an online application form. The application process will be on-going throughout the academic year, where applicants may apply anytime. The application form, therefore, will be made available on the Habib website for ease of access. However, the committee will be sending out a call-for-applications with certain timelines in mind. This particularly includes the timeline when the Learn-Abroad applications go live, which is an annual process where students that are applying are seeking for sponsorship and financial assistance.

**Fiscal Management:**

Fiscal management comes under the responsibilities of the Finance Committee, the HU Finance department and Office of Student Life.

The STGC Finance Committee is responsible for overseeing the sponsorship/grants program for trust monies, as well as the accounting and internal control systems of the STGC. The grants have been classified as either mega or non-mega where mega grants are those above one lakh rupees and non-mega are those below. The Committee shall serve in an advisory capacity to the Executive Committee and Board, and recommend policies, procedures and practices to be implemented regarding various financial matters of the Authority.

The committee is responsible for the following:

* Reviewing budgets (approved/to be approved)
* Managing the account’s balance sheet
* Facilitating the Sponsors in depositing the sponsorship money into Habib Account
* Reviewing financial statements on a quarterly basis
* Recommending for approval the Treasurer of the Authority

The committee will keep track of and prepare various evidential documents such as cover letters, emails, accounting documents including budgets, interim financial statements, and spreadsheets of cash flow (in and out) on a monthly basis. The committee will also help the Proposals and Content Writing Committee in compiling the Popular Bi-annual Report for review of the Committee.

HU Finance is in charge of reviewing financial documents of student applicants and advising selection committee members on the financial need of each student. Furthermore, HU Finance and the Office of Student Life will be overseeing all transactions to and from the Habib Account under the rules and regulations of the HU Finance department. The Office of Student Life, along with the STGC Finance Committee, will also be maintaining a ledger on each applicant for the purposes of transparency.

**Bi-annual Report:**

For the purposes of transparency and evaluation, a bi-annual report will be generated at the end of every semester. The report will document information such as the number of students who applied and got selected and the number of students who went for the said programs. The report will also include the number of students who got help from the committee: with sponsorship documents, to find sponsorship organizations, and with financial aid. It will also document the percentage and amount of financial aid provided by the committee to the students. This would help us maintain transparency, measure the success of the committee, and also to predict the need for future funds.

**Benefits:**

The committee’s main goal is to benefit students by providing them with an opportunity for development and success. To do this, the assistance of sponsors and contributors both internal and external from the HU community is extremely vital.

By collaborating with the STGC, contributors will become a partner of the first liberal arts university in Pakistan. This will show their support towards the representation of Pakistan at international forums, the liberal arts education system and overall educational inclusivity. Furthermore, the students can help with marketing their sponsors’ organization on national and international forums depending on the nature of program they are attending.

Moreover, contributors will be working towards the enrichment of life and skills of Habib University students by providing them with the opportunity to engage with the world and help the community through service and internship. This will demonstrate a desire to have a positive impact on the society and the world at large.

The students will return as more learned and better human beings and will engage with their sponsors’ organization on return by sharing new ideas that they have learned and, if need be, by holding training programs or workshops to share those ideas. Thus, by partnering with the committee, STGC contributors will become a part of the lives of talented young students who believe in changing the world for the better.

Incentives offered to Contributors to STGC (both internal and external):

* Honorable mentions on STGC social media pages
* Assistance with brand awareness and national/international media exposure
* Merchandise/Product endorsement
* Help with any event management/PR
* Establishment of a staff volunteer program—aiding contributor in an initiative of his/her choice
* Distribution of contributor’s staff recruitment information
* Inclusion of contributor in all media releases and other media contacts
* Provision of opportunities to endorse promotional activities
* Advertisement in the student’s event program/catalog
* Supporting the sponsor’s charity of choice in the event or activity
* Access to discount coupons, merchandise, monetary prizes etc.
* Workshops held by students upon their return from the program

**Testimonials:**

Habib University has diverse and talented groups of students who have been very successful in academia—producing work that has been accepted not only in national but also in international forums. They have been very active participants in the study abroad programs, conferences and internships. The students have always appreciated the opportunity and support provided by Habib University—which is the premise for the creation of this committee.

The following are testimonials collected from students speaking about their experience travelling abroad:

*"We realized the importance and relevance of liberal arts education and values taught to us by Habib when we went out and showed our work to the world. Such opportunities are important for students to grow personally and professionally. For me, a conference in Chicago with Farwa Hussain (SDP '18) to present the work that herself, Osama bin Rizwan (EE '18) was an eye-opening experience. We were lucky because the generosity of a donor allowed us to attend this conference which gave us the exposure and help build our motivation that we can give back to the society. (Uzair Ibrahim, Class of 2018)*

*"I have been a Stanford IHP alumna and then went on to participate in the impact challenge for the Environment and Sustainability track at the HPAIR conference (Harvard, 2018); both experiences have helped me established important connections with researchers and students abroad who share similar interests as mine. It was through these experiences that I came up with the idea and found support for my Final Year Project on Agent Based Modeling for Energy Consumption in a Rural Setting. International exposure is of essence for undergraduate students, while some of these opportunities are funded, most require the participants to raise funds on their own." (Hunza Irfan, Class of 2019)*

*“I have been fortunate to represent Pakistan on several international platforms, such as, a 10-day fully-funded program in New York and Vermont in 2017 and Clinton Global Initiative's meeting at University of Chicago in 2018. These experiences have taught me that sometimes an idea might work, and many a times it may not. But the most important thing is to keep trying! I also had the opportunity to do my summer internship in Tanzania for 3-months, wherein I learnt to come out of my comfort zone, which I believe is very important. However, unfortunately, many a times, students are held back from availing such opportunities, if they are not funded. I understand such pain, since even I had to go through the hassle of availing sponsorships from people who really believed in me, and wanted to contribute something to the wider community.” (Anusha Somani, Class of 2020)*

PROGRAMS HABIB STUDENTS HAVE ATTENDED OVER THE YEAR:

Study abroad programs

1. US Summer Sisters Exchange Program, Smith College, MA, USA
2. University of Michigan Summer Semester, USA
3. Stanford Summer session 2018, USA
4. UC Berkeley Summer Learn Abroad, USA
5. Global UGRAD exchange program, USA
6. London School of Economics (LSE) Summer School, UK
7. Oxford Summer School, UK

Conferences

1. Harvard Project for Asian International Relations (HPAIR), Malaysia
2. MCW Global, USA
3. Clinton Global Initiative University, USA

Internships

1. AIESEC, Malaysia + Turkey
2. Harvard University South Asian Institute, Pakistan
3. Internship in Africa, Tanzania

**Conclusion:**

The need for this committee is apparent in our community where there are so many diverse and enriching opportunities provided to students. Through this committee, more and more students will be able to receive exposure, endorsing the good name of Habib University on both national and international intellectual platforms. This committee will aim to make every talented and worthy student’s financial barriers disappear so that they are able to celebrate their accomplishments.

To do this, the committee needs a set procedure for evaluation and improvement. The overall impact of the committee will be assessed through the bi-annual evaluation report. The success rate of STGC will depend on the number of students the committee was able to successfully aid. Additionally, the extent to which the mentorship programs aided the students will be measured through the number of students able to successfully secure funding through the program.

Additional feedback on the subject will be obtained through a qualitative survey with the applicants as well as representatives of Student Life, HU Finance, faculty members, and the Habib University Student Government that are involved with the committee. Any queries or issues within or regarding the committee will be addressed firstly, when the committee is re-elected and secondly, when the bi-annual evaluation report is compiled.

The feedback will be taken into every consideration and provide valuable insight on how to improve the structure and workings of the committee. It is through this dedicated process of trial and error that STGC hopes to make an effective program that, once implemented, will help countless students.