**MESA Professional Development Fund Recommendations (2014-2015)**

Committee members should meet with the S&A advisor that processes the reimbursement paperwork at the beginning of the year. Committee members should decide on a point person who will communicate with the Assistant Director and the S&A advisor about awards.

“As far as the rubrics go, it seemed like a nice and easily navigable approach to me, both as a rater & as an applicant. I think the questions are good ones, although it's possible we could make their intent more transparent, particularly the questions about involvement with MESA and plans for sharing what's learned with MES. We could explain somehow that we're wondering how the funding will ultimately benefit the MES program as a whole, and how the person shows up in terms of the MES community. The questions are simple and direct, though, and maybe that intent is obvious at the outset. Maybe we could create a short "vision" or mission statement to put at the beginning of the application (e.g. "This fund was created to further the following goals: (1) to increase MES students' access to professional development opportunities; (2) to increase the MES program's visibility and reputation in environmental studies and related fields; and (3) to benefit the MES program as a whole by infusing our learning community with cutting-edge knowledge" or something like that?)”

A sample application could also be created

Challenges:

MES students are very busy, and sometimes members would not show up or fill out the rubric. The members who did show up to the twice quarterly meetings determined what amounts would be awarded to applicants. Members who did not attend the meeting would be emailed for approval of the awarded amounts.

The goal at the beginning of the year was to have 3 first year students and 3 second (or 3rd/4th) year students on the committee. This year we only had 2 first year students, but were able to have 3 2nd year students on the committee.

Though it is possible for S&A and the travel office to award reimbursements if necessary, the committee decided at the end of the year that it would be better not to give much preference to applicants that have already attended the conference. They did not want to set a precedent of awarding money to applications where the conference has already happened since the Travel Authority Form is meant to be filled out before the person goes to their conference.

Many of the applicants would quote directly from the conference website (sometimes without even putting those sentences in quotations) and future applications should make sure to clarify that answers should be in the applicants own words.