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Networking is critical for early career researchers, but many struggle financially to attend conferences. This was the situation Marcos Vasquez, a PhD student, found himself in. While working to publish his first paper post-PhD, a friend sent him a link to a conference in his field that would be perfect to meet well-known researchers in the field. There was just one problem—the conference was in Rome, and Marcos was in Pennsylvania. He [calculated the total cost of travel](#), lodging, and conference fees would be well over \$5000. In the end, he couldn't put together the funds and missed out.

Marcos's situation is not unique—early career researchers across the globe find themselves unable to attend the conference and networking events so critical to launching the next step of their careers. In this article, we look at the challenges facing young researchers when it comes to conferences and [offer tips for attending academic conferences](#) on a budget.

More Young Researchers Struggle Financially

While academia and research are fulfilling careers, they come at a price, particularly for those just starting out in their careers. The cost of attending a conference is more than just the entry fee—there is also travel, lodging, and food. It's easy to feel pressured to spend money on expensive dinners or happy hours to maximize networking. Conferences are [often held at four-star hotels or other pricey venues](#), which only increases such pressure.

But graduate and postdoc stipends are low, with the majority in the US [ranging from \\$16,000-\\$35,000 per year](#) and the national average at \$30,604. Considering the median rent for one-bedroom apartments in the US is \$1,025, that doesn't leave much money for travel or registration fees. Financial support exists, but the costs of most conferences still outweigh the financial aid available. But conferences can give early career researchers a huge boost in their career paths. What's the solution?

Attending Conferences on a Budget

Fortunately, there are still ways to [make attending academic conferences affordable](#). Use our five tips for making academic conferences affordable to ensure you can build your career without breaking the bank.

1. **Volunteer.** The easiest way to get your registration fee reduced is to volunteer to work at conferences. All conferences need staffing support, and you can still sit in on sessions. It is a great way to network and even spend time with the speakers.
2. **Share costs with other attendees.** If you're comfortable, sharing a room can be a great way to [cut down on your lodging costs](#). Even if the event is at a four-star hotel, you can stay nearby for a fraction of the price! Reach out to the conference organizers to find others looking to split costs.
3. **Bring your own food and snacks.** You can save a lot by visiting a grocery store on your first day and stocking your room with cheap snacks and drinks.
4. **Book travel early.** Sites like Google Flights can help you find the best dates and price, and will even alert you when flight prices have changed. If you have to fly, tickets get expensive the longer you wait, so make your bookings as early as possible.
5. **Ask your advisor or others in your department about funding assistance.** Just because you don't know about it doesn't mean it doesn't exist! You may be [eligible for reimbursements or grants](#).

Universities and research institutions can do their part by offering more robust financial support to attend conferences. As many students can't afford to wait months for reimbursements, consider providing up-front travel grants or scholarships.

Do you have any tips for saving money on conferences? Let us know in the comments below.

Category

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