

27 August 2025



Dear Potential Sponsor:

We are respectfully requesting your support of the **Third Global Amphibian and Reptile Disease (GARD) Conference**, which will be held in Knoxville, Tennessee, USA from 8 – 12 June 2026. The goal of GARD26 is to bring together scientists from across the globe to discuss various amphibian and reptile diseases, organize discussions on the similarities and differences among host-pathogen systems, and identify disease management strategies that can be used to ensure the conservation of herpetofauna species for generations to come. The conference will include professional development workshops; keynote, research, and poster presentations; facilitated discussions; field trips; and opportunities for professional and social interactions. For those unable to attend in-person, an online platform will be provided for virtual participation. Sessions will be recorded to allow virtual participants in disparate time zones to watch the proceedings at their convenience. In addition to professional enrichment, we will publish a peer-refereed paper that coalesces information and concepts presented, and emphasizes next steps necessary for the proactive management of herpetofaunal diseases. We expect 200 – 400 participants, including scientists, veterinarians, applied biologists, natural resource managers, policymakers, private industry, and students. Additional information about GARD26 can be found at: <https://tiny.utk.edu/gard26>.

The GARD26 Fundraising Committee is attempting to **raise \$100,000** to foster participant diversity and engagement by students, early-career professionals, and individuals with limited financial resources. GARD26 will be offering grants to support registration and travel (if in-person) from three global geographic regions (Table 1). To keep registration fees low, we are also attempting to raise funds to support coffee breaks, social mixers, workshops, field trips, and activities being planned by a student-led GARD committee.

We are offering four sponsorship levels: (1) **Platinum** = \$10,000 USD or above, (2) **Gold** = \$5,000 to \$9,999, (3) **Silver** = \$2,500 to \$4,999, and (4) **Bronze** = less than \$2,500. All sponsors will be acknowledged for their contribution level on the landing page of the GARD26 website, in the GARD program, and at numerous intervals during the conference. Sponsors will receive complimentary registrations and a display table at the conference, if desired. Details on sponsorship benefits are provided under the *Sponsor menu* at the above website. If desired or required, **sponsors can dedicate their funds towards specific uses**. For example, some organizations can support domestic travel but not international travel, or might prefer to host coffee breaks or a social event. Page 2 of this letter outlines the fundraising budget (Table 1).

If your organization is willing to contribute to the GARD26 Conference, please contact Dr. Matt Gray (mgray11@utk.edu; +1-865-974-2740) or anyone else on the fundraising committee. Thank you very much for considering our request.

Table 1. Fundraising goals and budget for the 2026 GARD Conference.

Expense Category	Cost/Unit	Units	Total
Travel Grants ¹			
International Region 1	\$2,500	8	\$20,000
International Region 2	\$1,500	12	\$18,000
Domestic	\$1,000	22	\$22,000
Reduced Student Registration ²	\$100	75	\$7,500
Field Trips ³	\$2,000	3	\$6,000
Workshops ⁴	\$1,500	3	\$4,500
Poster Session Mixer ⁵	\$5,000	1	\$5,000
Student-Professional Mixer ⁵	\$5,000	1	\$5,000
Other Student-Led Activities ⁶	\$1,000	3	\$3,000
Coffee Breaks ⁷	\$500	10	\$5,000
Student Presentation Prizes ⁸	\$500	8	\$4,000

Fundraising Goal \$100,000

¹We are budgeting for 42 travel grants (20 international and 22 domestic) divided among 3 geographic regions that differ in travel cost to Tennessee. These travel grants are dedicated for students, early career professionals (e.g., post-docs, assistant professors), and individuals with limited resources (e.g., developing countries). International Region 1 (IR1) is Asia and Australasia; IR2 is Europe, Africa, and North and South America (excluding the US); and domestic is the US. Travel cost for IR1, IR2, and domestic is \$2500, \$1500, and \$1000, respectively, and includes total expenses for airfare, hotel, meal per diem, and registration. Three additional grants (one per region) are budgeted for keynote speakers.

²Regular in-person registration is \$350. Students will be offered a discounted registration rate of \$100.

³Three field trips are planned: (1) plethodontid salamander sampling and pathogen surveillance in the Smoky Mountains, (2) eastern hellbender health assessments in the Hiwassee River, and (3) reptile surveys in eastern Tennessee. Expenses include sampling supplies, wet suit rental (#2), van rental, and box lunches for participants. Each field trip will accommodate 15-30 participants.

⁴Three workshops are planned and budgeted at \$1500 each to support travel for workshop organizers and to provide participants refreshments and snacks. Each workshop will accommodate 15 – 50 participants.

⁵Two mixers are planned – during the poster session and a student-professional mixer, and each is budgeted at \$5000 for beverage and food expenses.

⁶A student-led committee is planning additional activities to enhance student experiences and professional development. An additional \$1000 is budgeted for these activities.

⁷There will be 10 coffee breaks (2 per day x 5 days) at \$500 per coffee break.

⁸Eight presentation awards (\$500 each) will be given to students, with competitions separated by experience-level (PhD, MS, BS).

Hosting Organizations:

