

J-WAFS Travel Grant for Water Conferences 2026 Call for Applications

Background

The Abdul Latif Jameel Water and Food Systems Lab (J-WAFS) was established in 2014 as an Institute-wide effort to bring MIT's unique strengths to bear on the many challenges of water and food supply. J-WAFS catalyzes MIT research, innovation, and technology for ensuring safe and resilient supplies of water and food while reducing environmental impact to meet the local and global needs of a rapidly expanding and evolving population on a changing planet.

J-WAFS is offering travel grants for graduate students to attend one of three major upcoming water sector conferences:

- [Stockholm World Water Week](#) (August 23-27, 2026, Stockholm, Sweden)
- [UNC Water & Health Conference](#) (October 26-30, 2026, Chapel Hill, North Carolina)
- [The International Water Conference](#) (November 8-12, 2026, Orlando, Florida)

Through these grants we seek to support learning and networking opportunities for outstanding MIT graduate students who are pursuing careers in the water sector, whether in academia, non-profits, government, or industry.

J-WAFS anticipates awarding five or six students with funding to cover conference registration and travel expenses to attend the conference of their choice (out of the three options). The travel grants are supported by gifts to J-WAFS from our [Research Affiliate companies](#), Xylem Inc. and GoAigua. Xylem is a leading global water technology company with operations in more than 150 countries. The company was named to the Dow Jones Sustainability Index four times for advancing sustainable business practices and solutions worldwide. Xylem is a major sponsor of the Stockholm conference, and the selected students will benefit from opportunities to interact with Xylem leaders and participate in Xylem-sponsored side events. GoAigua is a Spanish company leading the digital transformation of the water industry, delivering services and technological solutions to manage the entire water cycle. With customers around the world, GoAigua is a strategic technological partner for the water industry. The company was also at the forefront of wastewater-based epidemiology for Covid-19.

Summary information about each conference is provided in the addendum to this announcement, and detailed information is available at the conference websites:

[Stockholm World Water Week website](#)

[UNC Water and Health Conference website](#)

[International Water Conference website](#)

Eligibility and Expectations

Students eligible to apply for the travel grant must be full-time MIT graduate students whose research, academics, and other activities demonstrate a commitment to addressing water quality, water supply, or related public or private sector challenges around water use, sustainability, and access, as well as an interest in pursuing a career in the water sector.

Students selected for support will be responsible for making their own travel arrangements, and if they don't hold a U.S. passport, they are responsible for determining visa requirements and applying in a timely manner for any needed visas.

Funded students will be expected to maintain a daily journal at the conference, in which they record and reflect on their experiences there, including sessions attended, people they meet or engage with, any interactions with Xylem, what they are learning, and how the conference influences their thinking about their research or career aspirations. Upon return, J-WAFS' communications staff will request a summary of each student's experience, as well as photos to be used in the J-WAFS' newsletter, correspondence with the funders, and other materials. The funded students will also be asked to acknowledge their appreciation to Xylem and GoAigua for the gift that is supporting this funding opportunity and any additional opportunities provided during the conference.

Application and Selection Process

Applications for consideration should be sent by email to jwafsupply@mit.edu.

Stockholm World Water Week: Complete application packets (see detailed instructions below) are due by email no later than **5:00 p.m. ET on Monday, May 11, 2026.**

The UNC Water & Health Conference: Complete application packets (see detailed instructions below) are due by email no later than **5:00 p.m. ET on Monday, August 24, 2026.**

The International Water Conference: Complete application packets (see detailed instructions below) are due by email no later than **5:00 p.m. ET on Monday, September 14, 2026.**

J-WAFS will select students to be awarded funding based on their statement of interest, resume and academic achievement, and expected benefit from attending the conference. Decisions are expected to be announced within a week or two of each application deadline.



Applications must include the following:

Part 1: Student application

Please submit the following, in a single PDF, in the order given below:

1. A completed [cover sheet](#).
2. Your resume or CV.
3. A brief, 1–2-page statement of interest. The statement should directly address these three questions:
 - Why would you like to attend Stockholm World Water Week, the UNC Water & Health Conference, or the International Water Conference?
 - What water sector issues are of most interest to you?
 - What are your career and/or MIT research objectives and how will they benefit from attendance at this conference?
4. A current, unofficial copy of your transcript (this can be obtained free of charge by emailing the Registrar's Office at records@mit.edu). Please include only the transcript itself. Do not include any extraneous pages explaining how to read the transcript etc.

Part 2: Faculty advisor support

Your MIT faculty advisor or program director should email a statement of support directly from his/her MIT email account to jwafsapPLY@mit.edu. The letter should confirm your MIT research interests and career objectives related to water, and the anticipated benefit of your participation in the conference.

Questions? Contact J-WAFS senior communications and program manager, Carolyn Blais Pinter at cblais@mit.edu.

See addendum below for additional information.



Addendum: Conference Information

Stockholm World Water Week (SIWI), August 23 – 27, 2024

[Stockholm World Water Week](#) is the annual focal point for the globe's water issues. It is organized by [SIWI](#), the Stockholm International Water Institute. The theme of World Water Week 2026 is "[Water for People and Progress](#)." The week will work towards a more just and equitable water secure future for all people, especially the most marginalized, against the backdrop of climate change. Sessions at World Water Week 2026 will include themes focused on women's rights and responsibilities relating to water; Indigenous science and knowledge; knowledge and learning between generations; displaced people, migrants, and refugees and fair access to safe water; how water can be allocated equitably at the local and household levels; climate change mitigation and adaptation to ensure water, peace, and security; and more. The conference takes place both online and on-site in Stockholm, Sweden.

World Water Week provides a unique forum for the exchange of views, experiences, and practices between the scientific, business, policy, and civic communities. It focuses on new thinking and positive action toward water-related challenges and their impact on the world's environment, health, climate, economic and poverty reduction.

Experts, practitioners, decision makers, business innovators, and young professionals from a range of sectors and countries attend World Water Week in Stockholm to network, exchange ideas, foster new thinking, and develop solutions to the most pressing water-related challenges of today. In 2025, the conference attracted 13,000+ participants and consisted of 270 sessions and activities.

Xylem has been a collaborating sponsor of this important gathering of thought leaders for more than a decade, and is the Founding Global Sponsor of the Stockholm Junior Water Prize. Depending on final arrangements, MIT students attending the conference may be invited by Xylem to join 50-60 [Junior Water Prize](#) winners for a tour of Xylem's facilities in Stockholm, and may be invited to a poster session for the Stockholm Junior Water Prize.

The UNC Water & Health Conference, October 26 - 30, 2026

Since its founding in 2009, the goal of the Water Institute at UNC has been to inform the way the world works on water, sanitation and hygiene (WaSH) issues by generating the evidence that drives improvements in both practice and policy. The annual [UNC Water and Health Conference](#) is intended to advance these goals by creating a widely accessible space where policymakers, practitioners and researchers can gather to review the evidence, interrogate the science and improve old and develop new approaches to expanding WaSH access.

Throughout the years, the UNC Water and Health Conference has brought together stakeholders from 150+ countries around the world and engaged more than 6,000 registrants. More than 789 organizations have been represented and 258 universities. The 2026 conference will continue to explore the latest learnings around improving public health by achieving universal access to WaSH services that are safe, affordable and sustainable.

The International Water Conference, November 8-12, 2026



As the preeminent international technical forum in the water field, the [International Water Conference \(IWC\)](#) brings together end users, researchers, practicing engineers, managers, educators, suppliers and contractors. Since 1940, the conference has been organized and sponsored by the [Engineers' Society of Western Pennsylvania](#), which was created to advance the professions of engineering, architecture, and applied sciences through technical activities, public service participation, and social organizations. The IWC is also supported by over 50 member companies who participate as members of the IWC Advisory Council. The companies represent the leading water treatment service companies, OEMs engineering firms, consultants and chemical suppliers in the industry.

The IWC is dedicated to advancing new developments in the treatment, use, and reuse of water for industrial and other engineering purposes. Timely, relevant, and non-commercial scientific information is presented in a unique, peer-reviewed format, unlike any other conference. The technical program offers an opportunity to learn about the latest developments in industrial water technology and gain best practices from industry experts. Multiple workshops are also offered on topics from water treatment basics to specific technologies like reverse osmosis or ion exchange.

In 2019, the IWC celebrated its 80th anniversary with 900 attendees from 25 countries who learned about the latest applications and technologies, and engaged in wide ranging discussions with their peers active in water treatment.

With a focus on education, the IWC does a great job welcoming students and growing professionals, and encourages first-time presenters by offering supportive videos and guidance. There is also a student poster award and display session—a premier opportunity for students to gain visibility, network and build professional connections, and strengthen their resumes through this nationally recognized competition.

