

East Carolina University

**Basic Spending Guidelines
by
Fund Source**

March 29, 2018

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Introduction

The University has a wide variety of sources of funds, each of which has its own spending characteristics. No set of guidelines can be written that addresses every possible expenditure decision which may arise. These guidelines provide some basic rules, regulations, and precedents to guide an employee in making wise spending decisions. They are provided to ensure that faculty/staff can carry out the University's mission effectively, while ensuring that fiscally wise, politically sound, and legal spending practices are followed.

All Sources of Funds

Appearance and Reasonableness Tests

For all potential expenditures from all sources of funds, the "appearance test" should be used, i.e., how would this purchase look to external constituents if placed on the front page of a newspaper. Another test that is useful is to ask the question, "Is this expenditure necessary for a faculty/staff member to do his/her job or for the University to carry on its normal business?" The use of these tests should help to guide faculty/staff members in their decision-making. At all times, faculty/staff are expected to manage funds wisely.

Exceptions and Interpretations

If a case occurs in which an individual believes an exception should be made to the guidelines, he/she should request from their division business officer that an individual determination be made on a particular item. The division business officer or designee will work with the University Controller to determine the latitude available on the request, the University business purpose of the request, and other options which may be available.

Department Head Responsibilities

The department head (individual responsible for the funds in a fund/org) has the responsibility to ensure that proper documentation procedures are followed for funds/orgs that he/she controls and that only authorized expenditures are charged. Furthermore, the department head is responsible for ensuring that any funds/orgs which he/she may control are reviewed at least monthly and any errors found are corrected. Finally, the department head is responsible for ensuring all trust funds maintain a positive or zero cash balance.

The department head may delegate authority to approve and sign direct payment forms, budget forms, position change forms, pre-travel and post-travel forms and/or journal entry forms for

funds/orgs by the proper completion of a Delegation of Authority Form located in [Pirate Port](#) under “Tools” and “Finance”. The naming of a delegate does not relieve the department head of the ultimate fiscal responsibility and accountability of funds under his/her control.

Reimbursements to Employees

Regardless of funding source, payments to employees are limited to authorized reimbursements, or authorized salaries. Payments to employees for compensation for work must follow guidelines published by ECU Human Resources and must be initiated through the payroll system.

According to IRS regulations, the University must have an “Accountable Plan” for reimbursing employees for business related expenses on a tax-free basis. This “Plan” must apply to all funding sources. Expenses must have a business purpose and must be reported within a reasonable period of time. IRS requires that any payments made to employees NOT in compliance with this policy be treated as supplemental wages and subjected to income tax withholding and payment of social security, Medicare, and FUTA taxes.

Personal reimbursements for items such as supplies, travel, or meals to an employee must be for a valid business purpose and must be approved by an individual at a higher level of authority in the employee’s reporting structure. The purchase of items for personal use is prohibited regardless of funding source. Any non-travel purchases should normally be made with prior planning and through one of the following preferred purchasing methods: ProCard, on-line orders for office supplies from contract vendor(s) as designated by Materials Management, PORT purchase requisitions/orders (including campus storerooms), or blanket order. Note that all purchases using grant funds also must be in compliance with regulations from the granting agency and/or in the contract. Any purchases utilizing foundation and institutional trust funds must be in compliance with any restrictions applicable to the particular fund. For purchases that cannot be processed by one of the preferred purchasing methods listed above, the Direct Payment Form may be used for reimbursement requests, (please consult accounts payable). Any such approved reimbursement must be documented appropriately for the expenditure. An original, detailed, itemized receipt is the preferred documentation for reimbursement requests. Reimbursement should be requested within 30 days of the date on which the expense was incurred.

Travel Reimbursements

Comprehensive travel reimbursement procedures may be found in the [Travel Procedures Manual](#). This manual also includes regulations and procedures for reimbursement of costs for conferences, training sessions and management retreats even when travel is not involved.

Moving Expenses

The hiring approval process may include payment of reasonable moving/relocation expenses in accordance with the University’s Policy on [Non-Salary and Deferred Compensation for Employees Exempt from the State Human Resources Act](#). When authorized, moving expenses for *new* employees must be paid from a nonstate funding source and should be carefully documented. All payments and/or reimbursements for moving expenses are taxable to the employee.

Reimbursements to employees should be coded to account code 61250, processed on a direct payment form and sent to Accounts Payable. Payments to a vendor via Procard or PORT should be coded to 73086. Reimbursements to employees will be paid via payroll and the appropriate withholdings will be deducted at the time of reimbursement. The value of the payments made to third parties will be added to employee paychecks as a noncash benefit and withholdings will be deducted accordingly. The payment amount will determine the number of payrolls the noncash benefit will be deducted. Additional information on moving expenses can be found in [Publication 521](#) on the [IRS website](#).

Organization Codes

The organization code is the designation for departmental subdivisions within the University which identifies a unit of budgetary responsibility and is used to define “who” spends the money.

Expenditure Account Codes

Expenditure account codes are codes that must be used when processing financial transactions to identify various classes of expenditures, for example, salaries, travel, supplies, equipment, etc. The actual codes will provide even more detailed breakdowns of these groupings. This coding scheme gives the University the ability to create reports that include, or are broken down by, the various classes of expenditures.

Information regarding expenditure account codes for coding expenditures may be found by logging into the [Banner e~Print System](#) and viewing the account code listing report, FGRACTH (Account Hierarchy Report).

Program (Purpose) Code Attributes

Program (purpose) codes are codes that help to classify financial activity by its function, for example, instruction, institutional support, research, or public service. With the exception of a few grants, these codes should not be used to code a financial transaction but are built into the financial system for each fund at the time the fund is created. Because of the need to report financial activity by function, a fund may not be classified into more than one function.

Sponsorships

External sponsorships may be allowed from state and/or nonstate funds if there is a clearly written, documented benefit to the University or to the sponsoring department. For example, the ECU Regional Development Office sponsors the North Carolina Eastern Region Entrepreneurship Summit. The Office of Undergraduate Research sponsors the State of North Carolina Undergraduate Research and Creativity Symposium. Undergraduate students participate in this annual event benefit by presenting their own research and observing the presentations of other undergraduates. If a sponsorship is paid from more than one state funds (not fund 111102 or fund 111103), move budgeted funds from one state fund to the other using a BD04. If a sponsorship is paid from either state fund 111102 or state fund 111103, split-code an invoice or reclassify the expense. State funds cannot be used to pay for sponsorships to 501(c)3 organizations.

Funding Sources

State Budget Codes - General Operating Funds

This group of funds consists of state appropriated funds and receipt supported funds in the state budget code. The University follows the rules, regulations and guidelines set forth in the Budget Manual prepared by the Office of State Budget and Management (OSBM).

Unallowable Purchases from State Budget Codes

There are some purchases that are specifically not allowable from state funds. Examples include the following:

- Alcoholic beverages, “setups”, drinks, or food items;
- Contributions and donations;
- Decorations (seasonal or otherwise);
- Excess per diem for meals on travel status;
- Extra insurance for travel (ex. Rental cars, airlines – see Travel Manual);
- Flower arrangements, cut flowers, works of art, paintings, drawings, pictures, plaques, plants, etc. Decorative/aesthetic items may be purchased for public areas such as lounges, hall ways, and reception areas.
- Food, coffee, tea, drinks, bottled water, candy, snacks, break refreshments, etc. except for those provided under University and state travel regulations. The State Budget Manual gives specific requirements and limitations for internal and external conferences.
- Get well cards, sympathy cards, birthday cards, thank you cards or holiday cards;
- Gifts or items of recognition (regalia, lanyards, cords, ribbons, plaques, awards, prizes) unless recognizing years of service or items related to the graduation fee;
- Medications (pain relievers, aspirin, etc.), shots, and/or medical supplies for staff/employees other than as may be required by federal or state regulations or for emergency first aid.
- Multi-year agreements not with original purchase and multi-year agreements where vendor requires up-front payment for all years;
- Paper products (cups, napkins, plates, utensils, etc.);
- Penalties or late fees;
- Personal clothing items or t-shirts which are not part of required uniforms, safety related, or required program-related;
- Personalized or personal use items (Kleenex, hand sanitizer, desk name plates, personal memberships, wireless routers for home use, etc.). Name badges may be purchased with state funds as long as the position requires such identification. The badge must be worn during all work hours.
- Pre-payments;
- Rental of portable water dispensers, coffee pots, or table cloths or the purchase of items related to refreshments;
- Search expenses for travel related to SHRA employees;

- Staff development expenses (Ropes courses, motivational speakers, etc.);
- Student registration fees unless on official state business;
- Window curtains and draperies made of cloth (blinds, shades, etc. may be ordered through Facilities' work order system).

The University may employ a private employment search firm to conduct employment searches for difficult to fill professional and managerial vacancies. Non-state funds shall be used to pay these costs to the maximum extent possible. State funds may be used for EHRA positions only when non-state funds are not available.

Overhead Receipts Trust Funds

Expenditures from overhead receipts funds must be related to research unless the receipts are from a grant that is not research related. Examples include public service or educational grants. In those cases, the overhead receipts fund expenditures should be related to those purposes. Under no circumstances may the following costs be charged to Overhead Receipt Funds.

- Alcoholic beverages
- Alumni activities
- Bad debts
- Charitable contributions, donations, gifts
- Commencement and convocation expenses
- Disallowed direct costs
- Entertainment costs
- Fines, penalties, damages and other settlements
- Fund raising and investment management costs
- Investment costs, borrowed capital, etc.
- Legal costs
- Lobbying costs
- Memberships in country clubs, social or dining clubs and other organizations where purpose is lobbying
- Organizational costs of establishing a new organization e.g., broker's fees, incorporation fees, attorneys, etc.
- Personal use goods or services
- Selling and marketing costs of products or services
- Student activities costs (publications, clubs, athletics, etc.)
- Travel or subsistence or living allowances for Board of Trustees or Board of Governors.

The Office of Grants and Contracts [Policies and Procedures](#) website has additional information in the [Allowable Costs - Cost Principles](#) document.

Auxiliary and Institutional Trust Funds

Auxiliary and similar operations include, but are not limited to, the Student Stores, Student Center, University Dining, Parking and Transportation, Campus Living, Student Health Services, University Printing and Graphics, and Central Stores. Expenditures from auxiliary funds and other institutional trust funds must follow the same guidelines used for state funds except when used for certain program related activities as noted in the fund authority for the respective fund. For example, student activity funds can pay for student programs including inflatables, bands, and giveaways. Expenditures must align with the approved fund authority form. No extra benefits, compensation, food, or any other item which could not be paid from state funds may be provided to University employees except as noted in sections below. The purchase of alcoholic beverages from auxiliary funds is prohibited. Reasonable administrative expenses, not to exceed the amount of STIF interest earnings for the fiscal year, may be allowed with the approval of the appropriate Vice Chancellor or designee.

Receipts from Vending Facilities Trust Funds

Per North Carolina general statutes [N.C.G.S. 116-2. and N.C.G.S. 111-42(d)], the term “vending facilities” includes both of the following descriptions:

- a. any mechanical or electronic device dispensing items or something of value or entertainment or services for a fee, regardless of the method of activation, and regardless of the means of payment, whether by coin, currency, tokens, or other means; and
- b. a snack bar, cafeteria, restaurant, café, concession stand, vending stand, cart services, or other facilities at which food, drinks, novelties, newspapers, periodicals, confections, souvenirs, tobacco products or related items are regularly sold.

North Carolina general statutes also specifically restrict the use of vending receipts. The following uses of net proceeds from the operations of vending facilities are authorized:

- a. Scholarships and other direct student financial aid programs;
- b. Debt service on self-liquidating facilities;
- c. Any of the following student activities if authorized by the Chancellor:
 - Social and recreational activities for students residing in self-supporting Housing & Residence Life facilities. However, expenditures for these purposes shall not exceed the amount of total net proceeds derived from vending facilities located in such facilities;
 - Special orientation programs for targeted groups of students (e.g., peer mentor programs); and
 - Operating expenses of scholarships and student awards and honors programs;
- d. Specified use of net proceeds as a condition of certain gifts, grants, or bequests. For example, a condition of a gift of a vending facility to the university might be that

proceeds are to support some specific segment of the university.

- e. Retention to provide for working capital, replacement of facilities and equipment, and other purposes to support the continuing, orderly operation of the particular self-supporting service operation.
- f. Transfers to other self-supporting student service operations and authorized capital improvement projects, upon the written recommendation of the University's Chancellor and subject to the written, advance approval of the UNC President. [N.C.G.S. 116-36.4]

Grants and Contracts Trust Funds

Grants and contracts must follow all state appropriated funds guidelines, sponsor specific terms, and conditions noted in the awards documents unless excepted as noted below.

Exceptions to the state funds guidelines must be discussed with/approved by the Vice Chancellor for Research, Engagement and Economic Development or the Office of Grants and Contracts (OGC). An example of an exception would include allowances for food costs for seminars or workshops associated with the objectives of the award.

Grants and contracts may also be subject to Cost Accounting Standards (CAS) or other requirements set forth in OMB Circulars or other federal regulations or specific sponsor guidelines. Cost Accounting Standards and other guidance in OMB circulars are applicable to Federal and Federal flow through awards. All Cost Accounting Standards, OMB Circulars, and any other sponsor exceptions must be approved by the Office of Grants and Contracts.

Sometimes University requirements may be more restrictive than sponsor requirements or sponsor requirements may be more restrictive than University requirements. In most cases, the most restrictive policy will apply to a financial transaction. Any exceptions must be approved by the Office of Grants and Contracts.

The Principal Investigator (PI) has the responsibility to monitor the budget, ensure that proper documentation procedures are followed and that only authorized expenditures are charged to a sponsored project. The PI is responsible for ensuring that sponsored projects' funds are reviewed monthly and any errors found are corrected on a timely basis. While processing of transactional documents and forms may be delegated within the unit that does not relieve the PI of fiscal responsibility and accountability for his/her sponsored project funds.

For additional information on sponsored projects spending guidelines see "Allowable Costs – Cost Principles" on the [OGC Website](#).

Residual Funds Related to Contracts

When the University is authorized to retain unobligated fund balances, expenditures of remaining balances must be related to research.

Gift and Endowment Income Trust Funds

Expenditures from gift and endowment income funds must be made prudently with the intent of the donor in mind and follow the restrictions set by the donor as evidenced in the fund authority. The primary purpose of an expenditure must be for the benefit of the University and, therefore, not for the direct benefit of an employee.

Endowment Principal Funds

Endowment principal funds are funds provided to the University, normally in the form of a trust or gift, for investment to generate income. The income may be unrestricted or restricted for a particular purpose.

The request for an endowment fund should include the following:

- Original or copy of the gift agreement, bequest or other gift document;
- Description of the source of funds;
- Purpose of the fund, how the income earned is to be used - in support of what activity or function;
- Any restrictions on the types of allowable expenditures;
- Name of person authorized to spend endowment income;
- Name of fund.

Expenditures are not allowable against these endowment principal funds. All endowment related expenditures must be made from *endowment income funds*.

Patent Royalty Trust Funds

Patent royalty funds are royalties derived from licensing of a patent. These funds must be used for support of research.

ECU Physicians Trust Funds

These funds include fees and other payments for services rendered by professionals under the University's approved practice plan. These funds may be utilized to maintain and/or improve the areas of teaching, research, patient care, public service, and support administration of the practice plan. May purchase items falling outside the state funds guidelines for incentive bonuses, food and beverages for recruitment, Grand Rounds or student and resident events.

ECU School of Dental Medicine (SoDM) Trust Funds

These funds include fees and other payments for services rendered by faculty and clinical staff. These funds may be utilized to maintain and/or improve the areas of teaching, research, patient care, public service and support administration of the School of Dental Medicine. They also may be used to purchase items falling outside the state funds guidelines for incentive bonuses, food and beverages for recruitment, or student and resident events. Also included in the SoDM Trust Funds

are selected student fees which are used for the purposes approved in the University Tuition and Fee approval process.

Agency Trust Funds

This category includes funds held by the University as fiscal agent for student, faculty, and staff organizations where it has been deemed in the best interests of the University to provide an accounting service. These funds do not belong to the University and the University does not determine what they can be spent for except as follows:

- a. The University requires a formal approval process to ensure, to the extent possible, that funds in these projects are not misused.
- b. The funds should not be spent for any purpose which would be detrimental to the image of the University.

Adequate documentation is required to ensure that an authorized person is initiating an expenditure request.

Foundation Funds

The University affiliated foundations are legally separate organizations and are not subject to the University and State spending policies specified in this document. However, all expenditures from foundation funds must follow restrictions set by the donor and should be supported by appropriate documentation and approvals. See the [ECU Foundation Website](#) under “Governance Documents” for the [ECU Foundation, Inc. Expenditure Policy](#). See the [ECU Medical & Health Sciences Foundation Website](#) under “Governance Documents” for the [ECU Medical & Health Sciences Foundation Expenditure Policy](#).

Discretionary Trust Funds

Discretionary funds are not budgeted for a specific purpose and can be used to meet a broad range of University needs. The flexibility that is associated with discretionary funds is vitally important to the University. At the same time expenditures of discretionary funds must be consistent with a number of general guidelines as set out below.

Each expenditure of discretionary funds must be for a valid University purpose. These expenditures (whether for meals, travel, lodging, entertainment, official functions, gifts and awards, or memberships) must follow all University policies that apply to that type of expenditure and must be accompanied by appropriate documentation including receipt(s), purpose, date, location, and names of persons involved.

The very flexibility associated with discretionary funds means that determining the propriety of some expenditures will require judgment. In these cases, the prudent person test applies. The individual making the decision about the expenditure must be comfortable with the prospect that the specific expenditure would come under the scrutiny of individuals outside the University.

Expenditures that confer a personal benefit upon the individual authorizing the expenditures are not allowable. Expenditures for items such as retirement gifts and employee achievement or recognition awards that are authorized by one individual to be received by another are allowable as discussed below.

Employee Achievement or Recognition Awards and Retirement Gifts

Awards/Gifts to Employees: Achievement and recognition awards may be purchased for employees. IRS regulations state that employees may accept gifts not to exceed \$25 in value. The award may not be cash or cash equivalent (a gift certificate, gift card, or prepaid tickets). Any awards in excess of \$25 must be reported to the Payroll Office to be included in the individual's Form W-2.

Retirement Awards/Gifts: The IRS will allow employee achievement awards that recognize length of service. The award cannot be cash, or cash equivalent (a gift certificate, gift card, or prepaid tickets). The value of the gift can be up to \$25 for every year of service, not to exceed \$400.

IRS guidelines for employee achievement awards that recognize length of service or safety records state that expenditures:

- Cannot be disguised as wages;
- Must be awarded as part of a meaningful presentation;
- Cannot be cash, cash equivalent (gift certificate, gift card, or prepaid tickets), vacation, meals, lodging, theatre or sports tickets, or securities.

Restaurant Charges

There are unique requirements for certain purchases, such as restaurant charges, to be paid from discretionary funds. While business purpose justification can be provided for working breakfasts, lunches, and dinners, IRS guidelines allow this type of reimbursement only on an occasional – not a routine – basis. Restaurant charges may be allowable if documented with an agenda describing the business purpose of the meeting and a list of attendees. Unless ECU employees are participating in an internal conference, meals including *only* ECU employees must be paid for from personal funds. (Exceptions to this include an occasional holiday or annual event and the case where an internal candidate has a meal related to the interview/search process.)

In the case of a restaurant that does not provide itemized receipts, the requestor must certify in writing that no non-food items were purchased regardless of funding source. Grant and/or contract guidelines and any other fund guidelines all apply here as well.

Contributions and Donations

Use of discretionary funds for donations or contributions to non-profit organizations is not permitted unless a substantial university purpose can be demonstrated and the receipt of the donation by the organization does not threaten the tax exempt status of the university or its foundations. Political contributions are not allowed.

Expediting Fee for H-1B Visa Forms (Form I-907)

Normal processing of an H-1B petition may take between 4-7 months, while paying a premium processing (expediting) fee will ensure a response within 15 calendar days.

Payments for expediting fees for H-1B Visa Forms may track the salary funding source so long as the payment is made for a business reason and for the convenience of the University and not for the employee. Regardless, contracts and grants funds may not be used to pay the fee for any reason. The expediting fee is considered a business expense and is classified as a recruiting expense and/or a retention expense. Some examples of appropriate funding sources are as follows:

Salary Source

Possible Funding Sources for Expediting Fee

State funds

State funds or discretionary funds

Contracts/Grants

Discretionary funds

Gift funds

Gift funds or discretionary funds

Contact Information for Questions

Questions may be addressed to the appropriate Budget Office as listed in the [Contact List for Budget Offices](#) located on the website for [Financial Services](#).

Appendix

Appendix A: Quick Reference Guide of Spending Rules by Fund Source

	State Funds	Institutional Trust Funds			
		Contracts & Grants Funds	Auxiliary & Int. Service Funds	Other Inst. Trust Funds	Discretionary Funds
Moving expenses	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Travel reimbursements	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Membership dues	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Passports & Visas	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Employee awards	Yes ¹	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) fees	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Food & Refreshments (non-travel related)	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Financial aid/scholarships to students	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Promotional items of nominal value	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Alcoholic beverages & set-ups	No	No	No	No	Yes
Medications and/or medical supplies for personal use	No	No	No	No	No
Microwave ovens, refrigerators, coffee pots	No	No	Yes ²	Yes ²	Yes ²
Framed art work or diplomas	No	No	Yes ²	Yes ²	Yes ²
Party items or decorations	No	No	No	No	Yes
Gifts, flowers/plants, cards	No	No	No	No	Yes
Personal clothing with University logo	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Personal clothing	No	No	No	No	No
Other items for personal use	No	No	No	No	No

- This Quick Reference Guide reflects the rules that generally apply in the **majority** of situations (80% plus). It is NOT all inclusive.
- A **YES** may require: Specific Criteria to be met, adherence to Restrictions, appropriate Documentation, Authorization and Approvals.
- For **NO**, authorized exceptions for specific situations may exist.
- The User of this Quick Reference Guide should always research the Spending Guidelines Document in its entirety, as well as the applicable policies and procedures, before making a final determination of appropriate spending from the various fund sources.
- If your research fails to resolve your spending question, please contact the appropriate Budget Office as listed in the [Contact List for Budget Offices](#) for further discussion and resolution of your question.

¹ Only Service Awards.

² Allowable in common space but not in an individual office.