

Dear colleagues,

This is an update about professional development funding for 2022-2023. Starting last year, in response to the travel restrictions of the pandemic, faculty could pick between two exclusive options for the academic year: (1) a “conference reimbursement plan” (funding for conference presentation travel) and (2) a “flexible development plan” (funding for research materials, software or datasets, small equipment items, etc.) Now, for 2022-2023, faculty need not pick between the two – faculty can now mix conference travel with other materials, for a total of \$1,200 for the academic year.

The application process is noncompetitive; faculty will submit a budget and brief description of the project the funding will serve. This funding in general should support the initiatives laid out in the faculty member’s three-year plan. Requests will typically be approved after a quick review from the Professional Development Committee. Funding can be requested only after any individually designated college funds that might exist, such as start-up funds or endowed chair support, has been exhausted for these purposes.

We are committed to pushing for additional professional development funding in the future, but for this year, we are interested in hearing from that handful of faculty who have exceptional professional development needs this year—for small equipment, to complete a project, or for essential international travel. As funds are available, we will attempt to support those needs, especially those leading directly to publication, presentation, off-campus performance or exhibition. We have also have heard from faculty for whom attendance at a conference causes them to incur personal expenses such as unusual childcare needs; we are investigating tax and benefit implications of such support with a goal to making some effort to address these needs next year. If you have a need outside of our usual programming, please send a note to the professional development address (professionaldevelopment@ursinus.edu).

Requests—for conference travel and flex expenses, should include a budget detailing the full request; it is not necessary to have formal quotations, but please attempt to be accurate.

Professional development funding may be used to support a variety of expenses, including the following:

- travel for conference presentation, performance, or creative project installation
- participation in conferences or meetings where your primary responsibility is typically characterized as service to the profession (chair or presider, a board member or an executive in a professional society, member of a professional committee)
- research, scholarship and creative materials (e.g., library privileges, database subscriptions, physical supplies, photocopying or scanning)
- publication costs, including open access or image reproduction
- travel to off-campus research sites (including parking and public transit costs)

- professional dues (for journal subscriptions, check with the library first)
- professional services (e.g., Mechanical Turk, copy/developmental editing, proofreading, indexing)
- software or datasets
- small equipment (typically less than \$500) or repairs

This information is also posted on the [faculty development web site](#).

Please refer to the FAQ below, which may help address specific questions.

The Office of Academic Affairs

FAQ

Q. So what exactly is changing, in a few sentences?

A. In 2021-22, we supported *either* (A) faculty travel up to \$1000, with the possibility of additional funding up to a total of \$1300 per year, *or* (B) research materials, software or datasets, small equipment items, etc. In 2022-23, there's no either/or, and the total amount is \$1200. So, for instance, in 2022-23 a faculty member could spend \$800 on conference presentation travel and \$400 on lab supplies.

Q. Is this change a response to budgetary pressures?

A. No. We expect the change to be largely budget-neutral.

Q. Why are we making this change?

A. In the interest of moving toward a more equitable distribution of funds, we aim to enable faculty who may not have taken advantage of college faculty development funds in the past to do so. We also wish to acknowledge that faculty work is highly individualized and that needs for resources evolve over time. By allowing faculty to determine the best use of their research support, our approach to faculty development emphasizes that "one size does not fit all." Through this approach, we hope to better understand faculty needs so that we can improve in the future.

Q. To pursue my professional work, I need paid childcare. Is support for childcare expenses off the table?

A. For the time being, yes, but we are actively investigating this for 2023-2024.

Q. If I understand right, there is now a cap of \$1200 per year on standard travel funding. If I need more money than this to attend my conference, are there alternative sources of funding? And will other funding opportunities supported by the professional development committee remain in place?

A. Yes. There will still be funding for Pearlstine Grants, Staiger Grants, Summer Grants, Student Humanities Research Assistantships, and Van Sant grants. Faculty with budgets from grants, start-up accounts, or endowed chairships should use those sources first before seeking professional development funding. If you have questions or concerns, please reach out to the Dean's Office (doffice@ursinus.edu) or send a note to the professional development address (professionaldevelopment@ursinus.edu).

Q: I want to avoid out-of-pocket expenses for my purchases. How do I do that?

A: Faculty using the flex plan should work with purchasing@ursinus.edu to procure supplies because the College qualifies for favorable pricing and tax exemption on many items. Faculty who must order their own items should work with the dean's office and accountspayable@ursinus.edu as in the past.

Q: Is this a common practice at peer institutions?

A: Some liberal arts colleges, including Kenyon and Haverford Colleges, have been using an approach like this for some time. Members of the dean's office have been researching this approach, and gradually improving it, since 2018.