

## INTRODUCTION TO THE FACULTY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY

The Faculty Handbook describes in [Chapter VI, Section C](#) four categories of financial assistance available to full-time faculty for travel and other professional expenses. These benefits are extended to eligible part-time faculty on a prorated basis through [Chapter III, Section C.2](#). The categories are fairly narrow in scope, and some of them require application to the Provost. For example, the Handbook requires application to the Provost for any out-of-pocket expense related to professional development. Our current practice is far more generous and less burdensome than promised in the Faculty Handbook. This is a reflection of Ohio Wesleyan's commitment to the ongoing professional development of its faculty.

Our current practice, however, is not documented. For several reasons, some of which are listed below, Academic Affairs wanted to document our practices in a [Faculty Professional Development Policy](#). This does not replace Chapter VI, Section C of the Faculty Handbook. Instead, it documents the long-standing and substantial expansion of those benefits in a manner that is consistent with IRS regulations and the need for Ohio Wesleyan to exercise fiscal responsibility. In publishing this policy, we intend to achieve these goals.

1. **Increase Fairness of Access** - A written policy will make purchasing guidelines more clear, ensuring that it is transparent, fair, and easy on everybody from faculty to staff to determine appropriate uses for professional development funds. This will help improve consistency of approvals for all faculty.
2. **Reduce Waste** - Faculty and staff involved with professional development expenses must ask numerous questions of each other and individually negotiate many purchases, often reworking decisions that were made previously. Documentation will reduce the number of these conversations, reduce rework, and thus free everybody to do more valuable things.
3. **Better Communicate OWU Benefits** - We currently have no documentation to share with faculty candidates about our professional development offerings. This written policy will help in recruiting faculty and in new faculty orientation.
4. **Improve Fiscal Responsibility** - This policy provides some basic guidelines that help us use our resources better so that we get the most out of our budget. For example, this policy makes clear that professional development funds may not be used to pay Ohio State sales tax. This policy to improve our fiscal responsibility in this and other ways.
5. **Better Comply with IRS Regulations** - Professional development funds are an employee benefit that is not subject to payroll taxes. Because of this, the IRS places some restrictions on their use. This policy helps ensure that we remain in compliance with those regulations and makes these limitations transparent and clear.

During development of this policy, we researched the professional development available and the associated policies at our [benchmark institutions](#). None of these institutions provide their faculty with an annual allotment of professional development funding that can be spent at the discretion of the faculty member. All of them do provide professional development in fairly narrow categories, but they all require that faculty apply to gain access to those funds. For most of those institutions, professional development funding is competitive. Our professional development policy remains more flexible, more generous, and more accessible than that at any of our benchmark institutions.

To read the policy, go to [The Faculty Professional Development Policy](#).