

UNC SOG Policy on Professional Development

This Professional Development Policy fosters a culture of continuous learning and growth among faculty and staff. By investing in professional development, the School of Government aims to enhance individual and institutional effectiveness, promote career advancement, and support the overall mission and strategic goals of the School.

This policy applies to all permanent employees of the School of Government and School of Government Services. Professional development opportunities for temporary employees and students will be considered on a case-by-case basis, based on the availability of funding.

Objectives

Enhance Skills and Knowledge: Provide opportunities for employees to acquire new skills and knowledge relevant to their roles and career aspirations.

Support Career Growth: Facilitate career advancement through targeted development initiatives.

Promote Innovation: Encourage innovative practices and ideas that contribute to the School's mission and goals.

Foster Engagement: Strengthen employee engagement and satisfaction through meaningful development opportunities.

Raise the School's Profile: Academic and professional conference presentations build the School's reputation, strengthen our engaged scholarship, and foster recruitment and retention.

Transparency and Equity: Allow all employees to understand how professional development funds are allocated, and encourage similarly-situated employees to be treated fairly with regard to professional development opportunities.

Professional Development Opportunities

The School will support a variety of professional development opportunities. These opportunities are in addition to the tuition reimbursement and waiver programs offered by UNC¹ and SOG Services.² Professional development opportunities supported by the School include, but are not limited to:

- **Workshops and Seminars:** On-campus, off-campus, or virtual sessions focused on skill-building, leadership, and emerging trends.
- **Conferences:** Conferences hosted by relevant professional and academic associations, universities, and other partner organizations.
- **Certification Programs:** Training and resources for obtaining relevant professional certifications.

¹ <https://cashier.unc.edu/payment-options/employee-waivers/>

² See SOG Services Employee Assistance Program for details (GLADYS)

- **Online Learning:** Access to on-demand or real-time online courses and educational resources.
- **Experiential Learning:** Field observation and other experiential learning intended to improve expertise or enhance knowledge of relevant current professional practices.
- **School of Government Programs:** Participation in SOG courses where appropriate and approved by the lead faculty.

Application and Approval Process

All full-time employees, including faculty and staff, are eligible to participate in professional development programs. Professional development budgets are inclusive of all costs included with an employee's professional development activities, including registration fees, travel, required supplies, etc.

Application and Approval Process for Staff:

Staff should submit a request for a professional development activity, including a brief description of the program and objectives, and how it aligns with the staff member's professional goals, to their supervisor for approval. Alternatively, a supervisor may assign specific professional development opportunities based on the employee's annual professional development plan.

Each department will be granted an overall professional development budget equal to \$500 per employee, per fiscal year. Supervisors may allocate this budget within their department to best meet the department's development goals and needs. Supervisors are granted flexibility in how these funds are distributed amongst their team. Unused funds do not roll over from year to year.

Any requests that would exceed the total departmental budget in a given fiscal year should be approved by the Senior Associate Dean for Administration.³

Application and Approval Process for Faculty:

A faculty member should submit a request for a professional development activity, including a brief description of the activity and how it aligns with the faculty member's professional goals, to the Senior Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs (SADFA) for approval.

The SADFA will routinely approve up to \$1500 in professional development expenditures per faculty member, per fiscal year. In other words, each faculty member may spend up to \$1500 per fiscal year on job-relevant professional development, largely at the discretion of the faculty member. Faculty members are encouraged to use these funds. Unused funds do not roll over from year to year.

The SADFA will also approve professional development expenditures that exceed \$1500 per fiscal year. Faculty members may appropriately incur significantly larger expenses for conference attendance and other professional development activities. This policy is not intended to impair

³ Note that approval from the Senior Associate Dean for Administration is not required when an external source of funding (grant or gift) is available to support the opportunity.

professional development activities or to reduce professional development costs. At the same time, the School's resources are not unlimited. When considering a request, the SADFA will consider the activity's potential benefit to the faculty member and to the School, whether the faculty member has been invited to speak or present at the activity, the faculty member's field of work, other resources available to the faculty member, the cost of the activity, and the faculty member's history of professional development activities among other factors.

Funding and Reimbursement

Funding Allocation: The School will allocate a budget to support professional development each fiscal year. Funding availability may be subject to budgetary constraints.

Payment & Reimbursement: Eligible employees may receive partial or full reimbursement for approved travel activities pertaining to professional development, subject to the University's policies and procedures⁴. While most expenses should be paid directly using an SOG credit card, some expenses can be reimbursed. In all cases, receipts and documentation must be provided.

Responsibilities

Employees: Employees are encouraged to actively seek and participate in development opportunities. They should discuss development goals with their supervisors and incorporate feedback into their professional growth plans.

Supervisors: Supervisors are responsible for supporting and approving professional development plans, providing guidance, and ensuring alignment with performance goals. Supervisors should assign development goals as part of an employee's annual performance plan. Supervisors may ask employees who attend conferences or other development opportunities to share a short presentation or written summary of the experience with others.

Human Resources: The Assistant Dean for Human Resources can assist supervisors and employees in identifying appropriate professional development activities and creating professional development plans. The Assistant Dean for Human Resources can also help determine whether a potential professional development opportunity is appropriate.

Business Office: The Business Office is responsible for ensuring that University policy is followed when paying for professional development activities, including registration and speaker fees, associated travel, venue rentals, and supplies. The Business Office will also assist supervisors in tracking utilization of funds throughout the fiscal year.

⁴ See <https://www.sog.unc.edu/resources/microsites/office-business-and-finance/how-be-reimbursed-work-related-travel-expenses>

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by both the HR office and Business Office to ensure its relevance and effectiveness. Revisions will be made as necessary to align with the School's strategic goals and evolving needs. All revisions will be approved by the Senior Associate Dean for Administration and the Senior Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs.

For questions or additional information about the Professional Development Policy, please contact the Senior Associate Dean for Administration or the Senior Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs. For help with payments and logistics, please contact the Business Office.

Faculty Professional Development FAQ

1. I go to the same conference for my professional development every year. Can I request a standing approval, or do I need to request approval every year?

You need to request approval every year. The School's financial situation may change from year to year, as may the cost of the conference and the other demands on the School's professional development budget.

2. Does the \$1500 roll over from year to year? In other words, if I don't spend anything this year, can I spend \$3000 next year?

No. To maintain budgeting predictability, the \$1500 does not roll over. However, as noted in the professional development policy, faculty members are not limited to \$1500 in professional development spending in any given year and may request additional funds.

3. Do my professional memberships count towards the \$1500?

No. Professional memberships are budgeted separately.

4. I have professorship funds (or other outside funds) that I want to spend on professional development. Do I need approval from the SADFA to do so?

No. Of course, you should comply with any applicable laws and policies in spending these funds, which may be subjected to audits.

5. If I have professorship funds available, am I still eligible for School-supported professional development? Or am I required to fund my professional development from my professorship?

You're still eligible for School-supported professional development. However, if you are likely to have unused professorship funds during the year in question, it would be helpful for you to use those funds to cover your professional development costs. That would leave more resources available to your colleagues for professional development. Furthermore, the availability of professorship funds is a factor that may be considered when evaluating a faculty member's requests for professional development funds beyond \$1500.

6. I'm presenting at a conference. Does that conference count as professional development?

If you're teaching North Carolina public officials at a conference organized by the public officials, their professional association, or the School, that generally does not count as professional development. Expenses associated with such teaching, if not covered by the conference organizers, come from the School's general budget.

If you're presenting at a conference of your professional peers, that generally does count as professional development. For example, a lawyer faculty member with expertise in immigration law who travels to a conference of immigration attorneys in Washington, DC, presents a one-hour talk, and is an audience member at several other sessions, is engaged in professional development. The School recognizes that having its faculty members present at professional conferences is good for the faculty members and good for the School and those factors will be considered when evaluating professional development requests.

