



THE UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT STAFF COUNCIL

TO: Richard Cate, Vice President for Finance and Treasurer
Patricia Prelock, Provost and Senior Vice President

CC: Suresh Garimella, President
Gary Derr, Vice President for Operations and Public Safety

FROM: Staff Council Personal & Professional Development Committee

RE: Making the UVM Staff Council Professional Development Fund Permanent

DATE: February 3, 2021

The purpose of this proposal is to make permanent the Staff Council Professional Development Fund at UVM. By maintaining this funding opportunity for qualified non-represented UVM staff members, the President's office and Staff Council's Personal and Professional Development (PPD) Committee will continue to enhance learning opportunities for motivated UVM staff seeking to participate in trainings, conferences, and other professional development opportunities. Just as we prepare UVM students to thrive in a diverse and changing world, so must we strive to enable UVM staff to adapt and grow.

Description & Current State

The Staff Council Professional Development Fund (PDF) Pilot was started in FY20 with \$20,000 in funds for FY20 and FY21 (\$10,000/year). The Staff Council PPD Committee created a PDF subcommittee to administer the funds. The PDF subcommittee worked to develop eligibility requirements and the application process, as well as a rubric system for determining awardees. Currently, the PDF subcommittee takes applications and meets quarterly to evaluate the applicants. The quarterly process gives applicants 4 chances in a fiscal year to identify opportunities and apply via email to Staff Council. To space out funding and opportunities, no one is awarded more than \$500, and usually the PDF subcommittee limits the quarterly total awarded to \$2,500, so 5 awardees per quarter is the yardstick. These guidelines served the subcommittee fairly well in the first 3 quarters of FY20, when training and travel opportunities were abundant, and the committee needed (and developed) a rubric and a ranking system to aid in promoting the most qualified applicants. Once COVID-19 began and both travel and gatherings were severely restricted, fewer applicants applied, so our current status is that \$7,136 remains for the remaining 2 quarters of FY21 (\$3,568 for each quarter if we distribute evenly).

Rationale for Improving the Pilot Program

We appreciate the initial Pilot program being awarded; to date, 30 individuals have benefited from this program. Many more applicants would have benefited from the program were it not for the pandemic slowing the program substantially (for example, in FY20 4th quarter, we had no applicants). We fully expect and anticipate that as UVM emerges from the pandemic, staff's focus on learning and growth will return stronger than ever. The University should have a robust game plan that enables staff to take advantage of all available professional development opportunities, with the continuation of this Fund being part of that plan. We are mindful of the fact that the University is facing economic challenges and have developed the rubric to better ensure that awardees are not just bettering themselves, but also their departments and ideally the entire UVM community.

Proposal for permanent PDF program

The Pilot is set to expire June 30, 2021. With a goal of creating, maintaining and fostering professional development opportunities that give staff the opportunity to contribute to UVM's mission while also enabling staff to grow personally, we propose that the Staff Council Professional Development Fund be not only continued but made permanent, starting with FY22 at a level of \$12,000 per fiscal year (\$3,000 per quarter; this would allow for six \$500 awards per quarter).

- 1) The Staff Council Professional Development Fund UVM being permanently maintained would send a strong message that UVM encourages and supports non-represented staff and their ability to grow in their performance, development, satisfaction and status at UVM.
- 2) Increasing the annual funding by 20% (from \$10,000 to \$12,000) both recognizes the value of the program as a professional development tool and helps the President's office and Staff Council better meet what will surely be an anticipated increase in staff requests for training assistance and an increased pursuit of professional development post-COVID. We also request a yearly increase in the funding of \$1,000 per year to keep up with increasing demand for the program.
- 3) The PDF subcommittee would submit via the Staff Council PPD Committee a progress report annually for review by both the Staff Council and the President's office.
- 4) The PDF subcommittee would be allowed to carry forward any unused funds to future fiscal years.