University *of* California, Merced

Unit 18 Faculty Professional Development Fund (PDF) Guidelines

Revised June 2026

PDF Important Dates

Academic Year 2026 – 2027

Expense Period: July 1, 2026 – June 30, 2027

Applications will be accepted starting August 19, 2026 through April 1, 2027

Applications submitted by November 1, in fall semester, will be notified by December 1, at the latest. Applications submitted by April 1, in spring semester will be notified by May 1, at the latest.

Application Process and Due Dates

All Unit 18 faculty, regardless of type or length of appointment are eligible to apply for reimbursement of professional development expenses. Prospective applicants can access the PDF application and guidelines online at: https://academicpersonnel.ucmerced.edu/Unit_18_Faculty_Professional_Development_Fund.

Application and up-to-date guidelines are also sent directly to all active lecturers around August 1 and will be resent periodically through the academic year with final notification by March 1.

Applicants may apply for funds throughout the application period of August 19 through April 1. The Professional Development Fund operates on a rolling application system. That is, people can apply anytime during Fall or Spring semester (up to the April 1 cutoff). Successful applicants will be provided instructions on how to process documents and how to be reimbursed for expenses included on the approved application / proposal.

The Academic Personnel Office assists the UC-AFT Council on Professional Development with tracking and processing all applications. The UC-AFT Council's recommendations are sent to the Associate Vice Provost (AVPF) and/or the Vice Provost for the Faculty (VPF) for approval.

The UC-AFT Council on Professional Development comprises of Unit 18 faculty members who are elected and/or volunteer, in the fall semester of each academic year and recommended to the Provost/EVC for voluntary appointment. If a conflict of interest arises during the decision-making process, the Council's Chair will consult with the AVPF and/or VPF for guidance regarding the Council's recommendations.

Approval of Application and Reimbursement

Applicants will initially submit all available supporting documents with their proposals. These can include photocopies or electronic copies of receipts (**no original receipts**), banks records (redacted to maintain privacy), and other similar documents. This should reflect funds already spent in the applicant's pursuit of their professional development goals as outlined in their submitted proposal.

Supporting documents are best submitted as separate files submitted concurrently with the proposal. All submissions will be made to the Academic Personnel Office (academicpersonnel@ucmerced.edu). The Council will have access to these materials to review and assist with current and future funding decisions.

The UC-AFT Council on Professional Development Fund will also consider and approve proposals submitted without supporting documents. If supporting documents are not yet available, because funds have not yet been spent, the applicant will submit a proposal with a tabulated list of anticipated expenditures. The expectation is that supporting documents will be submitted as soon as they are available.

Even if the Council approves an applicant's proposal no reimbursement is possible without submission of supporting documents.

Rules for Applicants

Applicants should read all of the following policies, restrictions, and qualifications. The Council will return for modification incomplete applications or those not meeting the required specifications. At the Counsel's discretion, incomplete applications may be set aside and the applicant disqualified for funds for that application period.

Important Qualifications and Restrictions

- **AWARDS**: At the discretion of the Council, the number and size of awards each academic year will reflect the number of applications received, the strength of the pool, the size of budgets, and the semiannual balance of the fund.

- **ELIGIBILITY**: The Professional Development Fund serves all Unit 18 faculty (i.e., all lecturers, not just UC-AFT members). Lecturers who have a part-time appointment are also eligible for Professional Development funds at a rate proportional to the percentage of full-time their appointment constitutes.

- **PARTIAL-EMPLOYMENT**: Lecturers who have a part-time appointment should provide a full, detailed budget of the total costs of the proposed activity, and indicate the total amount requested in line with their percentage of full-time employment.

- **AMOUNT TO BE FUNDED**: To ensure equitable distribution, the Council encourages applicants to limit funding requests to $1,500 per academic year. For funding requests above $1,500 for an academic year, the applicant should attach a document stating that they have explored alternative funding and have kept expenses to a reasonable minimum. For example, The Center for Engaged Teaching and Learning (CETL) and other University-based units are able to help pay for many pedagogy-related activities. Lecturers whose applications could possibly be supported by other campus units will need to make a clear case why alternative funding has not been procured.

- **MULTIPLE APPLICATIONS**: The applicant is welcome to submit multiple applications in one academic year when applying for distinct multiple purposes (e.g., reimbursement for a conference and for professional dues).

Proposals

- Eligible Unit 18 faculty may be granted funds in support of improving and enhancing pedagogical endeavors by demonstrating their substantive participation in a variety of academic ventures including, but not limited to: conferences, training sessions, and research activities relevant to their discipline. The lecturer's professional development proposal must clearly explain how and why such activities, such as research agendas, contribute to the applicant's professional development and effectiveness as lecturers and mentors and how their proposals positively impact the university.

- Grants are awarded for specific, approved purposes and projects. If an applicant wishes to use award money for a different (even if related) purpose, they must re-apply and then notify the Council that the original grant money will not be spent. Those unspent funds will revert back into the Professional Development Fund.

- The Council will not fund course relief or, in general, the purchase of time.

- Professional Development funds can pay for memberships to professional organizations, with the exception of American Federation of Teachers union dues.

- Any proposal that may be interpreted as asking for "course support," or that impacts several courses within a department, program or college, should be accompanied by a statement from the department chair/director/dean that such support, matching funds or seed money is not available from the department. Purchase of equipment (e.g., projectors, laptops, iPods, iPads, other electronic devices, etc.), for "course support" or personal use, is not supported by this grant.

- Unit 18 faculty wishing to spend money in the summer must have written confirmation of a Unit 18 faculty appointment for at least one semester in the following academic year, except where the Unit 18 faculty has a continuing appointment with the department/program/college for which they are seeking the grant. Written confirmation of a Unit 18 Faculty appointment is an appointment letter or a letter from the unit chair outlining the department's intent to rehire the Unit 18 faculty in the upcoming fall semester.

- The purchase of food for campus-wide events open to all members of the UCM community is an allowable expense under UC rules as detailed on www.ucop.edu/ucophome/policies/bfb/g28.html. Financial support for departmental or School-restricted events is not reimbursable.

- Any proposal for the purchase of equipment not intended for "course support" must clearly explain how the applicant will use the equipment to positively impact pedagogical endeavors in the university community. Equipment remains the property of the University and will be added to department inventory.

- The UC-AFT Council on Professional Development will not fund any book project—or any aspect thereof— for which advance royalties have been received.

- All purchases must comply with the University conflict of interest policy.

- Grant recipients wishing to make budgetary adjustments within an approved grant should seek confirmation from the Council. In the event that grant-related costs have increased over original statements (e.g., airline tickets or registration fees), the grant recipient should send request for such adjustments, with documentation, to the Council and await notification from it.

- Any proposal for the purchase of books, CDs, video or digital materials must be discussed first with Library staff to determine their ability/willingness to purchase such materials for UCM. A statement from the Library must accompany all proposals requesting the purchase of such materials.

Travel Policy and Requirements

For all reimbursable University-related travel, a price quote of the lowest available fares must be supplied. Examples include fares acquired from the airlines themselves, or from websites such as Orbitz, Expedia, or Travelocity. The same applies to quotes for car rentals and other transportation. (**However, packages that combine lodging, airfare, and/or rental car for one combine rate are NOT reimbursable**.)

- Receipts for qualified lodging expenses must include the name of the applicant to qualify for reimbursement, and at the end of the trip, must show a zero-balance owed.

- Budgets must be detailed and include specific rates—or Internet documented estimates— for airfare, lodging, registration fees, etc. Please calculate mileage driven on your own car at the current approved rate.

- Those awarded grants for travel (conferences, etc.) are strongly encouraged to submit all requests and supporting documents, for reimbursement, within 90 days of the travel dates. Requests and supporting documents. submitted more than 90 days after travel has occurred, may incur undesirable consequences (e.g., having to pay taxes on the award). Travel award recipients will receive more guidance in their award letters.

University of California, Merced Travel Policies Reimbursement Guidelines

For more specific policy information related to travel, please see the University of California Travel Policy at http://policy.ucop.edu/doc/3420365/BFB-G-28

Air Travel

Coach/discounted airfare shall be used. Please present a receipt for the airline ticket showing zero balance due and method of payment. Please note that insurance for ticket will not be reimbursed.

Hotel

To insure proper reimbursement, your name must be stated on the receipt, and you must obtain a zero-balance invoice when you check out of the hotel. Any additional time you choose to stay for personal reasons will not be reimbursed. If your travels will be within California, be sure to check for the state discount rate.

Rental Car

According to the University of California policy, when renting a rental car, you will be reimbursed for the cost of the rental, but not for the purchase of additional insurance coverage or gas through the rental agency. The university insurance policy will cover the rental car when you are traveling on university business. Please obtain an itemized receipt showing your final credit card charge for proper reimbursement.

The University car-rental agreements include the highest level of Loss Damage Waiver (LDW) and Liability insurance. Travelers must decline all optional insurance.

Other optional items like GPS navigation and Fuel Purchase options will not be reimbursed. If purchased, these items will be deducted from your reimbursement.

Mileage

Mileage reimbursement for use of your personal vehicle during 2026 is 72.5 cents per mile; this rate may change effective January 1 of every year.

Meals

Save your itemized meal receipts so UC Merced can reimburse you for meals charged within the period of time designated for your travel. UC policy does not reimburse travelers for alcohol expenses. UC does not have a per diem for meal expenses but will reimburse actual expenses up to the current UC limit per day ($92) for meals and incidentals.

Additional Reimbursement Submissions

Please provide a copy of the conference agenda and your award letter when you submit for reimbursement.

Caution: Do not pay for any travel but your own, as you will not be reimbursed for others' travel expenses.

Award Notification and Required Follow-up

The UC-AFT Council on Professional Development will notify applicants of the outcome of their application in a timely manner. Applications submitted by November 1, in the fall semester, will be notified by December 1, at the latest. Applications submitted by April 1, in the spring semester will be notified by May 1, at the latest.

All applicants will receive a letter notifying them of the outcome. Successful applicants will receive instructions for post-award follow-up. This may include requests for submission of a brief description, outlining the proposal's progress and an evaluation of its success.

Applicants must keep **ORIGINAL** receipts (i.e., photocopies of receipts are not acceptable), travel reimbursement request forms, and copies of any other documentation required in accordance with appropriate University regulations. The awardee shall submit these receipts and other documentation to in accordance with the processes utilized by the financial services office in their school to receive their monies from the fund. The Academic Affairs Business Service Manager will transfer award funds to the appropriate school account upon receipt of a request from the appropriate school staff and notification the school has incurred the reimbursement expense.

Note: The UC-AFT Council in Professional Development does not have the authority to reimburse successful applicants. If an application is approved, the reimbursement process is initiated with the administration of the Unit 18 faculty's school.

Further Information:

Direct any questions about the application process or the Professional Development Fund to the Council Chair, **Daniel Mello** (dmello2@ucmerced.edu), or the Academic Personnel Office (academicpersonnel@ucmerced.edu).