

## Policy on Research Support Funds Usage

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Policy Number	ACA-027
Effective Date	
Responsible Office/Person	Academic Affairs
Related Policies	ACA-026
Additional History	This policy updates ACA-027 from May 8, 2018

### **Purpose**

This policy informs recipients of Research Support Funds on allowable expenditures to support research and sponsored projects development.

### **I. POLICY**

Each year the Provost's office distributes Research Support Funds (RSF) from a variety of sources, including grant close-outs, internal grants and distributions based on percentages of recovered F&A costs from externally funded grants. These funds are distributed to faculty (PIs), academic departments and colleges for the purpose of investing in and supporting research programs and initiatives. Generally, Research Support Funds should be used to enhance research, creative activities and scholarly work, and to increase external funding for these activities.

### **II. IMPLEMENTATION**

**Research Support Funds** are restricted to the following uses unless approved for other use by the Chancellor (or her/his designee):

1. Development of new funding for sponsored projects and programs;
2. Research expenditures not reimbursed by the grant or contract agency;
3. Reimbursement of grants and contract expenditures disallowed by the granting agency;
4. Dissemination of results from grants and contracts;
5. Instructional symposia and program development related to grants and contracts;
6. Increasing university research capabilities including information resources, and creation and support of shared and core facilities;
7. Providing matching funds for contracts or grants;
8. Supporting research administrative and management services;
9. Development of intellectual property;

10. Building and/or renovating research facilities and supporting building maintenance or operations;
11. Professional society memberships;
12. Conference or workshop attendance to present a paper to develop professional contacts (Principal Investigators (PIs) and student Research Assistants);
13. Research materials including equipment, books, software, etc.;
14. To fund course buy-outs in accordance with policy ACA-025;
15. Support of student Research Assistants;
16. Support of Post-docs, Technical Associates, Research Professors or Research Associates;
17. Clerical and/ or technical support for sponsored projects and programs;
18. Maintenance or repair of research equipment;
19. Faculty start-up packages;
20. Laboratory enhancements;
21. Software licenses and maintenance contracts; and
22. Research administrative overhead at the college or departmental level.

RSF cannot be used: a) to provide additional compensation for PIs during the academic year; b) to supplement a PI's salary while on sabbatical leave; or c) to pay a PI on a leave without pay.

RSF may be used to support some summer salary for the purpose of conducting research or writing proposals under one of three conditions:

1) If the RSF were specifically allocated to the PI for that purpose - e.g. as summer salary support or as summer fellowship funds.

2) Faculty may use RSF to support up to two weeks of summer salary if they meet criteria (a) or (b) below. The amount of summer salary that can be supported using RSF by meeting the two criteria is not additive. If criterion (a) is met, then whether (b) is met is irrelevant. A maximum of two weeks of RSF supported summer salary may be funded under these conditions.

a. If a PI uses external funds to support at least one month of summer salary for him or herself, the PI may use RSF to support up to two additional weeks of summer salary during that summer.

b. If criterion (a) is not met, but a PI uses external or RSF funds to support at least one student research assistant during the summer, the PI may fund one week of summer salary for him or herself per \$12,000 of such funds used to support student research assistants during that summer or during the preceding academic year, up to a maximum

of two weeks of summer salary support. Student support for this purpose includes payments to a student as well as tuition and fee payments made on a student's behalf.

3) A PI who does not meet the criteria detailed in condition 2 above, but whose average research expenditures over the prior three fiscal years is greater than \$50,000 per year, may use RSF to pay up to 4 weeks of summer salary with approval of the Provost, Dean and Chair. This "bridge funding" technique may never be used in two consecutive summers and generally will not be approved a second time until the PI has secured another significant grant.

Faculty who are seeking full summer support (33% of AY salary) are strongly encouraged to use RSF to cover at least 1.5% of their salaries - i.e. 31.5% from external grants and 1.5% from RSF. This allows for about 5% of their summer time to fill in ad-comp forms, prepare new grant proposals or perform other non-research tasks.

### **Unusual Spending Patterns**

The rapid spending of RSF in anticipation of retirement or resignation violates the intended purpose of these funds, which is to support on-going research activity and to provide seed-funding for new projects at UMass Dartmouth. In the event that an unusual level of spending activity is detected in a faculty member's RSF account, the Chair, Dean or Provost may freeze the RSF account and request an explanation for how the requested purchases will benefit on-going or future work. Ultimately the decision as to whether RSF can be expended for any purpose lies solely with the Provost.

Similarly, the accumulation of balances in excess of \$50,000 in RSF accounts may be inconsistent with the intention to support research and may be questioned by a Chair, Dean or Provost. In such cases, an explanation for why such a balance is being held and a plan for its intended use over a reasonable timeframe may be required in order for the funds to remain available. Valid reasons to accumulate large balances of RSF include but are not limited to covering annual payroll, sick time or vacation for soft-money employees, plans to make major equipment purchases or perform laboratory upgrades, and maintaining secure bridge funding for high activity research programs whose expenditures exceed \$100,000 per year. Other reasons will be considered on a case by case basis. In the unusual event that a plan agreeable to the Provost, Dean and Chair cannot be developed, funds may be recovered to make other research investments.

### **Retirement and Emeritus**

When a faculty member resigns or retires from the University, the remaining funds in that faculty member's RSF accounts are transferred to his/her Dean's RSF account or in the case of internal grant or start-up money, back to its source. Emeritus faculty do not have RSF accounts and thus do not have spending authority over any RSF. Departments and Deans may spend RSF in support of the work of emeritus faculty subject to the standard guidelines for use in this policy, but they are not required to do so.

## **III. RESPONSIBILITY**

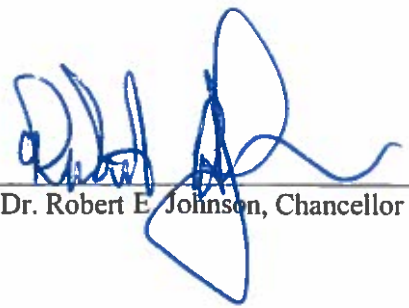
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RSF over-expenditures by a PI are the responsibility of his/her academic department.

RSF over-expenditures by a department are the responsibility of the Dean.

**IV. ATTACHMENTS**

None

Approved:  Date: 12/17/18  
Dr. Robert E. Johnson, Chancellor