I. Purpose:

To describe the types of staff/professional development activities available to employees, the role of the Staff and Professional Development (SPD) Committee, and the process of applying for professional development funding.

II. Procedure:

The college values employees who are current in their practice and job skills and makes every effort to support employees’ professional growth. This is accomplished by providing on-site professional development activities, funding seminars, workshops and training opportunities, and supporting staff members who wish to return to college to further their education.

Each vice president will be responsible for administering and tracking funds specifically allocated for staff development. The vice president for academic affairs and student services will review all submissions from individuals under his authority. The vice president for administrative services will review all submissions from individuals under his/her authority and for those that report to the president. Each vice president will have budgeted funding line for seminars/workshops and conferences. They may delegate the funds tracking portion within the division, if desired and other budget lines may be created as necessary for tracking purposes. All requests for seminar/workshop and conference funding will be approved or denied at the appropriate vice president level. The director, human resources will have a budgeted line item for all active Educational Program Plans and is responsible for administering and tracking all active plans.

The college will also have a standing committee known as the SPD Committee which is responsible for administering funds allocated for coordinating college-wide employee professional development activities. The SPD Committee is comprised of employees from each of the college’s employment classifications: administrative, faculty, professional, and career service. The chairperson and committee members are appointed annually by the vice president for...
administrative services. This committee may meet monthly, or as needed, throughout the year for the following purposes:

- Recommend professional development activities and assist in the planning and coordination of such activities as needed
- Plan and coordinate an annual college-wide professional development event
- Periodically schedule other professional development activities for faculty and staff
- Maintain awareness of professional development opportunities and promote appropriate activities to employees, working closely with the Corporate and Continuing Education and e-Learning Departments to develop in-house programs whenever possible
- Develop and review guidelines and procedures

The committee meetings will be conducted according to Robert’s Rules of Order.

A. SPD funding

All full-time employees of the college who have successfully completed the 90-day probationary period are eligible to receive SPD funding for activities as described below. Exceptions may be granted by the appropriate vice president upon the supervisors' written request to allow probationary employees to participate in special job related activities.

Part-time employees, dual enrollment instructors, and volunteers may be authorized to participate in and benefit from funded activities only when participation is requested in writing by the appropriate supervisor to the appropriate vice president documenting the project’s importance to the department, program, accreditation, or outside agency approval.

All applications for SPD funds must be submitted, with appropriate signatures, to the appropriate vice president or director, human resources. Forms listed in the following procedure are available on Panther Central.

1. Education grants

Education grants may be awarded to applicants to enroll in an approved course or courses.

a. Full-time employees seeking a degree or professional certification must have an Educational Program Plan (EPP) approved in advance by their immediate supervisor and administrative supervisor (if immediate supervisor is not an administrator). To be eligible for funding, the EPP must be submitted to the appropriate vice president on an SPD Educational Program Plan form along with a Request for Educational Grant
form. Multi-year, long-range educational plans may be proposed, but funding will be on a fiscal year basis and subject to availability of funds. Approved original EPP’s will be forwarded to the Human Resources Department for tracking toward completion.

b. Employees who use SPD funds to earn baccalaureate or higher degrees or to complete multi-year, long-range professional development projects must agree to remain at the college for at least two complete fiscal years after the fiscal year in which the program was completed or to return funds under the following guidelines:

1) If the employee elects to terminate employment during the fiscal year (July 1 through June 30) in which the educational program is completed, then all funds expended by the college during the current fiscal year, as well as those funds expended during the previous two fiscal years shall be returned.

2) If the employee elects to terminate employment during the fiscal year immediately following the fiscal year in which the educational program was completed, then all funds expended by the college during the previous two fiscal years shall be returned.

3) If the employee elects to terminate employment during the second fiscal year following the year in which the educational program was completed, then all funds expended by the college during the last fiscal year of the educational program shall be returned.

4) Expenditures for textbooks used in South Florida State College (SFSC) courses do not require reimbursement as outlined below if they are returned to the library immediately upon course completion.

5) All funds due to the college based on the above guidelines shall be repaid prior to the employee receiving a final paycheck. Human Resources Department will verify this requirement.

c. Employees are encouraged to apply for funding and enroll in courses which are directly related to their present or future employment at the college. An EPP is not required for such job-related courses, but the Request for Educational Grant form must be submitted with all signatures, to the appropriate vice president and after approval a copy sent to the director, human resources for tracking. To ensure consideration for funding, employees must apply for SPD funding prior to enrolling in a course.

d. Funding will not be approved for courses to be taken at other institutions when equivalent courses are available at SFSC, unless scheduling conflicts make it impossible to complete the needed courses at SFSC. In such cases, the other institution(s) must be accredited by a regional accrediting agency.
e. Full-time employees may receive up to $1,750 per fiscal year in SPD funding for course related expenses while working on associate degrees, baccalaureate degrees, or certificates and $2,500 per fiscal year for graduate and post-graduate programs. The following guidelines apply for SPD funded course related expenses:

1) Application, matriculation, tuition, student activity, health and laboratory fees may be approved for funding.

2) Consumable texts, workbooks, and other course-required supplies may be approved for funding.

3) Textbooks
   a) The following options are available for obtaining textbooks under an approved education grant:
      i. For SFSC courses, the employee must first check the library inventory for availability of textbooks. If available, the employee may borrow the textbook until completion of the course, then return it to the library. If not available, the employee may secure the textbook, either by rental or purchase, through the college bookstore where it will be charged to the SPD fund. If the textbook is available for rental, employees are strongly encouraged to use this option.
      ii. For courses other than those offered by SFSC, the employee may purchase textbooks and receive reimbursement from the SPD fund. Requests for reimbursement should be made to the director, human resources. Such textbooks must also be turned in to the library upon completion of the course.
      iii. At the discretion of the director, human resources, textbooks purchased with SPD funds that are maintained in the library’s inventory may be checked out on a long-term basis. Requests for long-term loans will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis to maximize the value and use of the textbook.
   b) Textbooks purchased with SPD or other college funds will remain college property. Textbooks purchased with SPD funds must be turned in to the library upon completion of a course. Appropriate forms for facilitating textbook purchases are included in the education grant approval packet.

4) Travel and per diem expenses related to SPD funded courses will not be reimbursed.

f. Funding of approved course expenses, as defined in "e" above, will be provided as follows:
1) For courses taken at SFSC, an approved Request for Educational Grant form must be submitted to the Cashier's Office prior to course registration and to the college bookstore when acquiring approved materials. Expenses may be charged directly to the assigned SPD account upon approval of HR. Fees for courses taken at educational institutions other than SFSC may be paid by SPD funds through one of the following arrangements:

a) Employee shall provide the director, human resources with an invoice from the institution the employee is attending stating the actual cost of the course. The invoice is approved for direct payment to the institution that the employee will be attending; or

b) Employee shall provide proof of payment of the educational costs to the director, human resources. Upon receiving the required documentation, the director, human resources will approve reimbursement for the employee.

2) To be eligible for SPD funding, employees must successfully complete all courses by earning a grade of C or better for undergraduate courses, a grade of B or better for graduate courses, or by providing other evidence of satisfactory course completion. Withdrawal from any course, registering under audit status, or receiving an incomplete grade, which is not resolved within six weeks of course completion date, is not considered successful completion. Employees who do not successfully complete courses must reimburse the college for all funds received for those courses.

3) Employees repeating a course previously funded by SPD will not be eligible for additional SPD funds for the repeat.

   g. Employees on approved professional leave, with or without pay, are eligible with proper approval to receive SPD funding for course work.

   h. Approval of an EPP by a supervisor or of an educational grant by the appropriate vice president does not represent an authorized change in the employee's current or future employment, title, or position at the college.

   i. It is the responsibility of each employee to obtain approval in advance from supervisory and administrative staff for necessary work schedule modifications on a term-by-term basis to participate in professional development activities, courses or programs.

   j. It is expected that course work will be taken at times other than during the employee’s normal work day. If no other alternative is available, a supervisor may approve a revised work schedule for the employee. However, all required work hours must be completed each week and departmental needs must be met.

2. Seminars, conferences, workshops, industry training, professional meetings
and other staff development activities

a. SPD funds may be awarded to employees to participate in seminars, conferences, workshops, industry training, professional meetings and other activities that contribute to the professional development of the individual and benefit the college (Note: departmental funds may be available for such purposes and should be pursued prior to requesting SPD funds).

b. Funding of activities which update or upgrade professional competencies will be considered by the appropriate vice president on an individual or group basis. The SPD Funding Request for Seminars, Conferences, Workshops, and Meetings form must be submitted to the appropriate vice president along with a copy of the agenda (if available). Travel-related expenses, registrations, and materials eligible for consideration are included in the following guidelines:

1. All travel costs will be paid in accordance with college policies and procedures.

2. Out-of-state travel will only be approved in special circumstances where the applicant can document the need to engage in the travel, document that no other college funds are available to finance the travel, and obtain written administrative approval.

3. Travel outside the contiguous United States requires documentation of the direct contribution and benefit of the travel and requires the approval of the president of the college.

c. Pre-service and in-service activities may be considered for funding. Proposals for these activities must be submitted by the appropriate supervisor or coordinator. An evaluation component must be planned and the activities must be consistent with current institutional goals and objectives. Funds may be approved to pay for consultants, travel, materials, equipment rentals and related costs.

d. Employees may participate in an approved professional development program in cooperation with a business, industry or professional organization that is designed to improve technical knowledge and skills. In such back-to-industry programs, there must be an agreement or learning contract, including itemized training costs, between the participating parties approved by the appropriate administrator.

e. Employees participating in seminars, conferences, workshops, industry training, meetings, and other professional development activities may be asked to share information with colleagues in a format and at a time agreed to by the supervisor.

f. Funding will not be considered for a program or activity when the same
program or activity is offered by SFSC, unless scheduling conflicts make it impossible to participate in the SFSC activity.

g. Multiple requests for the same professional meeting should be submitted as a single SPD request.

3. General provisions

a. To ensure consideration for funding, applications including requested documentation must be submitted as soon as possible before the event and approved prior to the beginning of any activity.

b. It is the responsibility of the employee to submit the completed application to the immediate supervisor for approval and to have all necessary forms properly completed and signed. In the case of an application submitted by multiple parties, the application must be submitted for recommendation to all of the appropriate supervisors whose employees are affected by the proposed activity.

c. The director, human resources has the authority to act on all educational grant requests when an approved EPP is on file.

d. Each application will be reviewed on its individual merit. The college encourages departmental financial support of applicant's requests for funding, and the appropriate vice president will give additional consideration to applications which indicate funding from multiple (other) sources.

e. An employee of the college who is 100 percent funded through a contract with the college to carry out the purposes of the contracting agency shall not be eligible for SPD funding.

f. An applicant must provide documentation to the appropriate vice president that no grant funds are available to fund the professional development activity before consideration can be given to SPD funding.

g. All expenditures, final reports, and evaluations shall be completed within 60 days of activity completion (Requests for payment made more than 60 days after the end of the request will require the appropriate vice president’s approval).

h. Periodic checks will be made by the director, human resources and supervisory personnel to determine the progress in an approved educational activity. Any concerns should be discussed with the designated vice president. If insufficient progress is being made or if the funds allocated have been too generous or insufficient, funds allocated may be appropriately adjusted.

i. Approved SPD funds not obligated by the agreed upon ending date shall
revert back to the appropriate SPD fund, unless an extension is approved by the appropriate vice president.

j. Once approved, all activities and expenditures must be consistent with the original application. Variations in excess of $100 or 10 percent of the approved application (whichever is greater) must be requested in writing and be approved by the appropriate vice president prior to implementation.

k. Any materials or equipment purchased with SPD funds are the property of the college.

l. If a multiple year activity is proposed, allocation of funds must be approved each fiscal year, together with a satisfactory annual evaluation or progress report.

m. SPD funds may be used to fund only those portions of an approved request which are not being funded by another public source.

n. All payments to employees or consultants for services rendered are subject to applicable deductions.

o. Employees who are approved for travel must submit travel expense requests for reimbursement according to college policies and procedures.

p. The president may approve reallocation of SPD funds.

4. Guidelines for evaluating requests for SPD funds

Stated college priorities and the following guidelines will be used when reviewing applications for funding:

a. The degree to which the planned outcomes directly support the institutional vision, mission, and core values

b. The degree to which the planned outcomes are related to the program, departmental and division goals and objectives

c. The degree of positive impact upon the college (immediate and long-range) of the planned outcomes, especially in relation to its projected cost

d. The degree to which the planned outcomes are educationally sound, measurable and achievable

e. The degree to which the planned outcomes will enhance employee job performance and skills

f. The degree to which funds are available
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