

Messiah College

Cell Phone and Data Plan Policy

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1 Introduction/Purpose

Cellular telephones and wireless communications devices can be an effective resource for campus employees in the performance of their job duties. For employees who spend considerable time outside of their assigned office area, or who must be accessible outside of scheduled or normal work hours, a cellular or mobile device can be a significant benefit. Based on job duties, certain employees may qualify to be provided a stipend to cover the business use of personal cell phones and iPad data plan purchases.

Due to the requirement to comply with IRS and the difficult and time intensive manual labor required to identify, track and determine personal versus business use, the College will no longer provide cell phone service to individual employees. The level of institutional cost for cell phone service has rapidly increased over the past few years, and with the introduction of iPads, data plan requests related to these types of hardware purchases are increasing. To bring costs more into line with the level of institutional benefit, a stipend policy for cost sharing has been adopted. This policy assumes that for most employees the device will be used for both personal and business use.

Certain employees may qualify for the College to provide an institutional stipend to cover the presumed business use of personal cell phones and service, or a data plan associated with an iPad. The stipend will be considered taxable income to the employee. The level of cash subsidy (stipend) will be determined by a person's job duties as it relates to usage and access. Guidelines

to categorize cellular use as mandatory, beneficial or incidental are determined by the area Vice President. The stipend includes the cost of service plus equipment. The College will review and set the amounts to be provided for stipends and reimbursement on an annual basis.

2 General Policy: Institutional Stipend

This policy institutes an institutional stipend to cover presumed business use of personal cell phones, and iPad data plans for certain employees.

2.01 Employee responsibilities for Cell Phone: The employee will purchase cellular phone service and equipment and assume responsibility for vendor terms and conditions. The employee is responsible for plan choices, service levels, calling areas, service and phone features, termination clauses, and payment terms and penalties. The employee is also responsible for the purchase, loss, damage, insurance, and/or replacement of phone equipment.

2.01.01 Data-phone purchase: Prior to purchasing any smartphone, employees should check with ITS to determine compatibility with campus systems. ***Do not purchase a non-Windows Mobile device (i.e., a Blackberry or Palm) before consulting with ITS.***

2.01.02 Service discounts: The employee should check with ITS regarding the current availability of any institutional discounts.

2.02 Guidelines to receive a stipend or reimbursement for Cell Phones: Based on job duties, three categories are identified to determine if the employee should be provided funds to offset the cost of a personal cell phone and service.

2.02.01 Mandatory: The institution requires an employee to have a cell phone and/or data service to fulfill job duties. The President, Provost, or a Vice President will approve qualifying employees in this category. Employees in this category have duties that require access by the College while away from the office or in off-hour situations. Service is required for “on-call” personnel to be contacted in the event of an emergency or service need. Service is provided for life or safety requirements.

2.02.02 Beneficial: The use of a cell phone is not mandatory but is considered highly beneficial to an employee to fulfill job duties. The President, Provost, or Vice President will approve the stipend paid to employees in their area that qualify under this category. Service is provided so that an employee can work more efficiently, or because their working conditions require that they be away from traditional communications resources. Simple convenience is not sufficient to qualify for a monthly stipend.

2.02.03 Incidental or occasional use: Reimbursement for business use of a personal device would be allowed on an as-incurred basis for all others. This would be in the form of a business related reimbursement request instead of a monthly stipend, and must be accompanied by documentation of the business purpose of all calls.

2.03 Levels of stipend payment for Cell Phones and iPad Data Plans: There are many carriers with varying plans for phone equipment and plan service. The payment levels are intended to cover a presumed level of business use of personally-owned service and

equipment in keeping with institutional benefit. The policy assumes that for most employees the device will be used for both personal and business use; therefore the overall costs are shared.

- 2.03.01 Tier One – Basic Use (or voice only service): To receive this stipend, the individual is considered key personnel for emergency or safety purposes, or must be available 24/7 to monitor essential systems, but the average monthly volume of business calls is modest.
- 2.03.02 Tier Two – Enhanced Use (heavy voice, or voice plus data service): To receive this stipend level, the employee is considered key personnel for emergency, safety, or essential functions and is expected to average a moderate to high number of minutes of daytime business use per month, or the employee uses fewer minutes per month, but because of travel or other position requirements, the availability of smart phone capabilities is required and/or a cost-effective benefit to the institution.
- 2.03.03 Tier Three – Data Service Required (or full voice + data service): Employees receiving this stipend must maintain both voice and data service because they travel out of town frequently, and/or the individual's job description requires frequent out-of-office access to institutional email and calendar functions, or extensive use of text messaging.
- 2.03.04 Tier Four – Heavy Travel (heavy voice and data service): Employees receiving this stipend travel extensively (average one or more complete days out of the office per week). Their job description requires frequent out-of-office access to institutional email and calendar functions, and they are expected to average an unusually high level of daytime business calls per month
- 2.03.05 Tier Five—Data Plan stipend for an iPad: Employees receiving a data plan stipend for an iPad travel extensively (average one or more complete days out of the office per week). Their job description requires frequent out-of-office access to institutional email, calendar functions, and internet based activities.
- 2.03.06 Stipend Rates: Amounts listed in each category above will be reviewed and set annually by ITS and the Vice President for Finance. The stipend amounts will be listed on the annual [Cell Phone and Data Plan Stipend Agreement](#).

2.04 **Additional guidelines and information:**

- 2.04.01 Taxable stipend: The stipend amount will be considered taxable income to the employee and added to their monthly paycheck. The stipend levels are set to provide for the additional tax burden an employee incurs. The stipend is only eligible for tax-related deductions and is not compensation that is eligible for, or included in benefits based on percentage of compensation (retirement benefits, long-term disability, medical insurance premium share, etc).
- 2.04.02 Budget accounts: The stipend will be charged to account 6152 in the employee's org, while incidental use reimbursement will be charged to account code 6380.
- 2.04.03 Annual agreement: An annual [Cell Phone and Data Plan Stipend Agreement](#) will be completed by the employee and approved by the area Vice President. Updates or changes to cell phone service (phone numbers, voice/data vs. voice only, stipend amount, et cetera) will be reported promptly to the employee's department head and to the Department of Safety and Dispatch Services. The employee's department head/dean and area Vice President are responsible for an annual review of the business need for a cell phone stipend and iPad data plan

and the authorized agreement must be submitted to Payroll prior to June 15th of each year to maintain continued payment of the stipend.

- 2.04.04 **Change in employment:** If the employee resigns, is terminated, transfers departments, or no longer qualifies for an institutional stipend; the department head will promptly notify the Payroll Office to discontinue the stipend payment.
- 2.04.05 **Exceptions to standard stipend:** There may be rare circumstances where the stipend level must be adjusted due to extenuating conditions. If evidence of ongoing documented business use of cell/data service is provided, the President or area Vice President will approve exceptions.
- 2.04.06 **Tax deduction:** With sufficient documentation (i.e., name of callee and business purpose of all calls), the employee may be able to claim cell phone expenses as a miscellaneous deduction on their personal tax return.

3 Guidelines for Cell Phone Use

- 3.01 **Personal and business use:** The stipend policy assumes that the cell phone will be used for both personal and business calls. Since the stipend amount is taxable as income, the employee is not required to track business versus personal use to report to the College.
- 3.02 **Institutional benefit:** The stipend agreement requires that the personally-owned device is available for business access. An employee receiving a stipend must maintain active cell phone service. The employee agrees to carry the cell phone with them, keep it charged and in operational condition, and be accessible for business use as required by their department head or supervisor.
- 3.03 **Appropriate use:** The employee agrees to use the phone in ways consistent with College policy and all applicable local, state or federal laws. Inappropriate and unlawful use of cell phone features, such as camera equipment, is prohibited.
- 3.04 **Use while operating a vehicle:** Cell phone users must be aware that state and municipal laws regarding the use of phones while driving vary widely by location. Regardless of the legality, use of phones while driving can cause hazardous distraction, especially in adverse weather, heavy traffic, or limited visibility.

4 Departmental Cell Phones

There are limited circumstances where a department may maintain one or more cell phones to assign to employees during their working or on-call hours only (i.e., Department of Safety personnel). The following guidelines apply to the administration and use of those cell phones:

- 4.01 **Service and equipment procurement:** ITS will arrange for service and phone equipment as appropriate.
- 4.02 **Monthly billing statements from the carrier:** ITS will process the carrier invoices for payment. When new service is ordered the department must provide the number to which all usage should be charged (the 4-digit org number plus account number 6152).
- 4.03 **Departmental bill back:** ITS will allocate the full amount of each individual billing statement to the responsible departmental budget number on a monthly basis, and provide a copy of the billing detail to the departmental budget manager.

- 4.04 **Usage tracking and review:** The departmental budget manager should review monthly billing statements, confirm the usage charges, and any additional features or equipment included on the statement.
- 4.05 **Personal calls:** No personal calls are permitted on departmentally-assigned cell phones. Unauthorized personal use of institutional cell phones will be subject to disciplinary action.

5 **Cell Phone and Data Card Loaner Pool**

ITS maintains a pool of cell phones for use for employees who travel occasionally on College business but do not have a cell phone stipend. They also stock a small number of data cards that make it possible to access the internet via a cell plan if you travel to an area that has cell phone but not wireless internet service. These devices are available on a first-come reservation basis. A fee of \$1 per day and per minute fees based on call or usage time are charged to the department.

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