

Policy on Auburn University Hardship Fund

I. POLICY STATEMENT

The Auburn University Hardship Fund (the “Fund”) is established to provide financial support to eligible Auburn University staff, A&P, and faculty members who are experiencing a temporary financial hardship due to a qualifying life event.

II. POLICY PRINCIPLES

Fund Administration:

- A. The Fund shall be funded by voluntary charitable donations provided by employees and any entities or individuals who wish to contribute to the Fund. Because the Fund is supported by donations, there is no guarantee that funds will be available for distribution at any given time.
- B. The need for funding must be the result of a qualifying life event as defined in the policy. The maximum award amount is \$2,000 per event, subject to availability of funds and extent of need. The distribution of the fund will not take effect until the fund balance reaches a total of \$50,000. This is to ensure adequate funds for distribution. The fund balance will not be allowed to fall below \$20,000. An employee may receive no more than one award per rolling twelve-month period, and may receive no more than \$4,000 during his/her lifetime.
- C. Financial assistance shall be limited to one recipient or one person per household. Applicants to the Fund must have a documented event of emergency situation that has caused a financial hardship. The application is reviewed by the Fund Review Committee and an award is based on supporting documentation, which may include but is not limited to: certification of medical condition, certified death certificate, obituary, medical bill(s), insurance claims, police reports, expense receipts, foreclosure or eviction notices.
- D. All financial assistance shall be distributed in compliance with Auburn University’s non-discrimination policy.

Eligibility:

The Fund applies to any full-time employee of Auburn University, with a minimum of one year of continuous service, or an immediate family member of the eligible employee who is applying on behalf of an employee who is unable to do so. The applicant must not have any disciplinary actions that resulted from violating Auburn University’s Personnel Policies and Procedures within the past twelve (12) months. If an employee is being investigated for potential violations thereof, the application will be placed “on hold” pending the final decision. If cleared, the employee will be eligible for consideration for financial assistance from the Fund.

Donating to the Fund:

Any person or entity is eligible to donate to the Fund. Donations cannot be earmarked for a specific individual, department, college, etc. Donations are tax deductible to the extent provided by the law. Regarding tax information, donors should discuss any questions related to deductibility with a personal tax advisor.

Applying to the Fund:

- A. Applications must be completed and submitted to the Executive Director of Campus Relations. Financial records, billing statements, and/or estimates must be submitted as supporting documentation with the application. The Executive Director of Campus Relations shall prepare applications for the Fund Review Committee, omitting any identifying information in order to

preserve anonymity. Applications will be reviewed anonymously by the Fund Review Committee.

- B. The Executive Director of Campus Relations communicates the Committee's decision to the applicant and, if appropriate, submits paperwork to Human Resources according to the established procedure, and follows up to ensure payment has been processed and received. Taxes will be deducted from the financial assistance consistent with applicable tax laws, however, every effort will be made to ensure the full requested amount will be disbursed to the applicant and taxes will be deducted such that the final disbursement is as close to the requested amount as administratively possible.
- C. Approval is subject to extent of need; satisfactory completion of the application; and availability of funds. All decisions of the Fund Review Committee are final. There will be no appeals process. Financial Assistance applications will be reviewed anonymously and the Fund Review Committee members will not be given the individual name associated with any application. Information provided by applicants will be treated as confidential and shared only with individuals directly involved in fund administration, processing and tax reporting.

Exclusions:

- A. Catastrophic community events such as mass destruction due to acts of god (weather, earthquake, and other natural unavoidable events) or other similar occurrences are not qualifying events for which financial assistance from the Fund will be made.
- B. Common life occurrences such as routine car and home repairs, car and home maintenance, legal fees, monthly bills, animal care, and living beyond one's means are not qualifying events for which financial assistance from the Fund will be made. The Fund is not designed to replace all losses or to reimburse the cost of nonessential, luxury or decorative items or services. Also, financial hardships caused by garnishments, payday/title loans, and student loans do not qualify an employee for assistance.

Fund Review Committee and Policy Management:

The Fund Review Committee shall consist of six (6) appointed representatives from each of the following groups: Administrative and Professional Assembly (2), Staff Council (2), and University Senate (2). A representative from Human Resources (1) will serve on the committee as a continuing, non-voting member. Committee members will serve three year staggered terms unless otherwise specified. Committee appointments will become effective July 1 and expire on June 30th. At the initial constitution, 2 members will serve one year terms, 2 members will serve two year terms and 2 members will serve three year terms. All subsequent appointments will be for three years. Selection of the terms for the initial constitution of the committee will be accomplished by random drawing. The committee members will be selected by the Nominations and Elections committees of each of the three governance bodies through the normal and established process for university committee selection.

III. EFFECTIVE DATE

November 14, 2018

IV. APPLICABILITY

Full-time employees of Auburn University, with a minimum of one year of continuous service, or an immediate family member of the eligible employee who is applying on behalf of an employee.

V. POLICY MANAGEMENT

Responsible Office: Human Resources

Responsible Executive: Associate Vice President, Human Resources

Responsible Officer: Executive Director, Campus Relations

VI. DEFINITIONS

- A. Qualifying Event – A Qualifying Event is defined as extreme misfortune experienced by the employee or the employee’s immediate family member for reasons beyond his or her control that prevents the employee from meeting basic living expenses. Examples of such events include, but are not limited to the following: (1) death of a family member; (2) unusual uninsured medical expenses caused by severe illness or accident; (3) losses to primary residence (rental properties where the lessor is the applicant are excluded) caused by fire, crime, flood or other disasters except as described in Exclusions section above; (4) unusual uninsured expenses for the care of a family member; and (5) insupportable indebtedness for reasons beyond the individual’s control.
- B. Immediate Family Member – A Family Member includes a Child, Dependent, Spouse, Sponsored Adult/Child Dependent, or Parent.
- C. Child – A Child is defined as a biological or adopted child, foster child, step-child, legal ward or child for whom a person has legal custody.
- D. Dependent – An individual meeting the criteria used by the Internal Revenue Service in defining “dependent” will be considered a dependent for purposes of the policy.
- E. Spouse – A husband or wife as recognized by the State of Alabama.
- F. Sponsored Adult/Child Dependent – For purposes of this policy, documentation of 12 or more continuous months of shared residency with the Sponsored Adult/Child Dependent and signed affidavit verifying the individual meets the eligibility requirement for a Sponsored Adult/Child Dependent and birth certificate of Sponsored Adult/Child Dependent.
- G. Parent – A parent, step-parent or in-law.

VII. POLICY PROCEDURES

- A. Auburn University Human Resources will administer the processing of the applications, including application qualification, verification of eligibility of employee or other qualified individuals as described in VI. (B-G) but will not conduct any review of application for the purposes of distribution. **Review and approval of requested funds is the sole responsibility of the Fund Review Committee.** Auburn University Human Resources will facilitate the distribution of funds through the Executive Director of Campus Relations and the Executive Director of Payroll, Benefits & Records.
- B. Policies will be reviewed on an annual basis and revised as needed by the Executives Committees of each of the three governance bodies. No alteration, amendment or adjustment to the policy shall be permitted without the expressed permission of the aforementioned Executive Committees.

VIII. SANCTIONS

IX. EXCLUSIONS

Exclusions are expressly stated.

X. INTERPRETATION

Associate Vice President, Human Resources