Section VI. Professional Development

A. Professional Development Program

Pima Community College and AFSCME encourage non-exempt employee professional development. To encourage non-exempt employee professional development, a fund is established to provide non-exempt employees with access to resources to help them develop in their current career/job or a position in the employee’s development plan as part of their annual evaluation and for growth and development to support the College’s mission. This fund is administered in partnership with AFSCME by the Office of Human Resources, with the advice of the Non-Exempt Professional Working Group.

The Working Group’s objectives are to evaluate applications for funds submitted by non-exempt employees, based on merit and criteria as set forth in this policy. The Working Group shall act on questions and requests for expenditures, allocation of funds and fund balances.

Additionally the work group may:

- Provide input to the College Professional Development Committee comprehensive employee development plan for all segments of non-exempt classified staff.
- Provide information to communicate with non-exempt employees about continuing education in their current job/career or other areas of development interest opportunity.
- Provide recommended events for non-exempt employee development to the College Professional Development Committee for the annual calendar published by Organizational and Professional Development.

B. Roles and Responsibilities Non-Exempt Professional Development Working Group

1. In order to promote equitable representation, the Non-Exempt Professional Development Working Group shall be composed of non-exempt employee representation from each campus location, as well as from the District Office and District Maintenance and Security. The Working Group chairperson serves as a non-campus representative. Fifty percent of the Working Group’s membership will be designated by AFSCME. The balance shall be designated by the Chief Human Resources Officer from interested non-exempt employees to ensure representation from each campus, the District Office and District Maintenance and Security. Representatives will serve a two year term. Terms may be renewed based on representative’s interest to continue.

Attendance is required to continue participation as a working group member. A
representative with three (3) unexcused absences and with more than four (4) consecutive excused absences will be replaced.

The Non-Exempt Professional Development Working Group shall schedule monthly meetings to monitor the program and to review and approve requests for professional development funds. Meetings may be cancelled if fund requests are not submitted during that period. A request for funds may be moved to the agenda of the next meeting if the working group requires more information.

A quorum is not required for decisions regarding fund approvals to be made. However, at least five members of the working group must be present for action to be taken on any item.

In July of each fiscal year, the Working Group shall report prior fiscal year activity, as well as current year information, on funding approved for all eligible non-exempt employees. The working group, through Human Resources, will also provide a report on the activity of this fund in July of each year to the Chief Human Resources Officer, with a copy to the Executive Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration.

2. The Working Group Chairperson, appointed by the College’s AFSCME Officers, shall preside at meetings, and present any and all revisions to the guidelines of Section VI recommended by the working group. The Chairperson may delegate duties to another Working Group member to act as Chair Designee in his/her absence. An ex-officio member will be assigned by the Chief Human Resources Officer to assistant the Chair of the Working Group.

3. The Chief Human Resources Officer or designee will serve as ex-officio member to the Working Group.

C. Non-Exempt Professional Development Enrichment Fund Criteria

Beginning each fiscal year, Pima Community College reserves no less than $100,000 annually for regular employees in classified non-exempt positions. Any unused balance remains in the fund and carries forward to the next fiscal year.

Employees are eligible to receive up to $2,000 in professional enrichment funds on a yearly basis and every other year for out-of-state conferences. The maximum expenditure per employee per fiscal year cannot exceed $2,000.

To insure an equal access to these monies throughout the entire fiscal year, the funds will be divided proportionally to equate $50,000.00 for education costs and $50,000.00 for travel for in-state and out-of-state conferences. Working Group will monitor use monthly. All requests for consideration will be on a first come, first serve basis based on availability of funding.

Based on availability of funds, in-state travel may take precedence over out-of-state travel for the same conference, should the same conference be offered in-state.
Any funds left at the end of the fiscal year shall be pooled and made available to either education costs or travel to assure full disbursement of Professional Development Funds.

Applications are required to show how the request is related to the employee’s career interest (individual development plan) or as part of the employee development plan (performance evaluation). Human Resources will confirm this if required (no employee shall be required to submit their performance evaluation to the working group). Forms and procedures are available on the College’s Intranet under Human Resources.

Professional development enrichment funds are to be used solely for expenses outlined in this policy statement. They may be used to cover the pre-approved expenses in the following areas:

1. **Formal Education**: An employee is reimbursed the cost of tuition, fees and textbooks for a credit course from a regionally accredited institution within the United States, or an international institution that has an established relationship with Pima Community College excluding the $10 registration fee for courses taken at Pima Community College.

2. **Conferences, Workshops and Seminars**: Dues, registration fees and travel expenses; travel outside of the United States, if approved by the work group:
   a. Reimbursement for approved travel in conjunction with professional development activity is subject to the College’s Travel Policy. A Travel Request Form must be completed and processed for all travel. Refer to the College’s Travel Policy 4.1.5 for re-payment and cancellation.
   b. International travel outside North America requires approval by the Chancellor, after the work group has approved the application for fund use.

3. **Certifications and accredited coursework** beyond formal education will be reviewed on an individual basis, excluding degrees and certifications from religious and non-accredited institutions.

4. **Books and Supplies**: Required textbooks and supplies as outlined in the course syllabus for a credit course at a regionally accredited institution within the United States, or an international institution that has an established relationship with Pima Community College. Payments are on a reimbursement basis only. Textbooks and supplies that are not required for the course including musical instruments, athletic equipment, audio-visual equipment, computers and similar equipment are not acceptable for reimbursement. Book purchases are deducted from the employee’s available $2,000.00 eligibility.

**D. General Rules and Procedures for Application**

To be eligible for payment from this fund, the professional development activity must be initiated by the employee, must be related to the employee’s declared career path or current job at the College or as a clearly stated expression of interest that is defined and declared in
the employee’s professional development plan. This must be supported by the employee’s supervisor and follow the guidelines and procedures as stated in this policy.

The working group reserves the right to reject any application for funds that fail to clearly demonstrate appropriate use of individual enrichment funds to develop the employee in their current career/job or a position in the employee’s development plan as part of their annual evaluation. An incomplete application or an application that does not clearly state the objectives of the employee will be returned to the employee for his/her completion of the missing information.

Mandated training required by the College is expensed from departmental budgets and not through this program. A department decision to approve professional development funding for an employee should not assume work group approval of the request for individual enrichment funds and cannot be processed without the approval of the working group.

1. From available funds, completed requests approved for professional development funds are funded on a first come-first served basis.

2. Classified regular non-exempt employees who have completed their initial hire probation period are eligible to participate in professional development activities funded by the program.

3. The request for non-exempt professional development fund form must be completed by the employee and signed by the employee and his/her immediate supervisor. A complete request includes adequate information, attached supporting documentation and the required signatures. An incomplete request will be returned to the applicant. Once completed, the request may be resubmitted for consideration during the next monthly working group meeting; however, funding may not be available at a later date if approved for other employee use.

4. Requests must be submitted to the Professional Development Working Group Chairperson no earlier than July 1.

5. The working group considers requests only during the monthly meeting. A schedule of meetings is available through any member or by contacting Human Resources.

6. Funds approved for formal education expense will be reimbursed three weeks after the end of the course if the requester has provided an official grade report of “C” or better.

7. The working group shall review all requests and either accept for consideration or reject in accordance with these provisions. In those instances where the Working Group finds it cannot make a fair and knowledgeable decision based on the information completed, more information may be requested of the applicant, their supervisor or Human Resources.

8. Employees will be notified electronically within 10 working days of the decision for approval or reason for denial by the working group chair or their designee following the
9. Employees not completing the professional development activity as approved in the application may be required to repay all or part of the professional development fund. Pursuant to 41.4 of the College’s Travel Manual, all employees are responsible for total repayment of the travel funds due to cancellation.

10. Employees requesting money from Professional Development Enrichment Funds must be currently enrolled in a class from an accredited higher education institution in the United States. An employee granted book funds for a class which did not result in a “C” or better, may be required to reimburse the fund and will be disallowed further access to these funds for the same class. An employee approved for book or supplies reimbursement funds for a credit course which did not result in a “C” or better will not be issued reimbursement.

11. A non-exempt employee who has been denied use of professional development funds may appeal the decision by submitting a request to the Chief Human Resources Officer or designee for reconsideration by the working group. If the reconsideration by the working group still results in a denial of the request, the appeal will be forwarded to the Chief Human Resources Officer.

12. All requests, applications and decisions must be in accordance with these policies.

13. Questions may be directed to any member of the working group.

14. An employee who voluntarily applies for and is selected for an exempt position within the fiscal year will not be eligible to utilize the awarded Professional Development Funds. Failure to notify the Working Group will result in the employee repaying the funds.

E. Roles and Responsibilities in Administration of Non-Exempt Professional Development Enrichment Fund

1. Human Resources shall have overall responsibility for monitoring the accounting and management of funds and for policy compliance. At the request of the Working Group Chair, Human Resources will assist in accessing information to fulfill the duties of the Chairperson.

2. The Working Group Chair shall be responsible for the accounting and management of the Non-Exempt Professional Development Enrichment Fund. The Chair is responsible for verification of employee status as non-exempt, regular, and the $2,000.00 use limit. The Chair will keep a running two-year log of employee fund use and prepare an annual report on fund use each fiscal year.

3. The Working Group may reject any application for funds that fails to clearly demonstrate appropriate use of individual enrichment funds to develop the employee in their current career/job or position in the employee’s development plan as part of their annual
evaluation. Appeals are directed to the Chief Human Resources Officer.

4. The Annual Report from the Non-Exempt Professional Development Working Group, prepared each July by the Chair, will be provided by the Working Group Chairperson to the Chief Human Resources Officer or designee and the Executive Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration. The report will include:

- Beginning fund balance,
- A detailed list of expenditures,
- Employee name,
- Amount of request,
- Purpose of request,
- Date of approval,
- Amount of approval, and
- Ending fund balance

5. The working group shall develop and distribute any forms necessary to implement this policy. Human Resources shall post all forms and directions on the Pima Community College website for employee use.

F. Other Sources of Funding

An employee's receipt or pursuit of additional sources of funding, including the employee's application for or receipt of Federal student financial aid, shall not impact the employee's eligibility for professional development funding pursuant to this policy. Funds awarded pursuant to this policy, however, should be required to be disclosed on any application for Federal financial aid or to the relevant financial aid office as estimated financial assistance or as a resource related to financial need. Proper disclosure is the obligation of the employee.

G. Educational Leave

1. After completing one year of service, any regular employee upon formal request may be granted a leave of absence of three days without pay, per diem or transportation cost for educational purposes to attend conferences, seminars, briefing sessions, or other functions of a similar nature that are intended to improve or upgrade the individual's skill or professional ability. A supervisor may deny the request for good reason.

2. Paid Educational Leave

Funding for up to two paid one semester educational leaves per year from College reserves may be used to complete a Bachelor, Master or Doctoral Degree from an accredited institution or a certification recognized by the industry or a professional organization. Funding of educational leave shall not exceed two semesters per fiscal year, in the aggregate. Request for a paid education leave must be approved in advance by the employee’s Supervising Administrator and the Non-Exempt Professional Development Working Group. Since the intent of this educational leave is to provide time away to focus on education, the employee approved for this leave may not work in any capacity during this time. See APPENDIX G.
3. **Long-Term Educational Leave**  
One year of educational leave without pay may be authorized for up to ten regular non-exempt employees providing the employee has three or more years of service to the College. The request must be made in writing to the employee’s Executive Administrator who may deny any leave that creates an undue hardship on the department. Employees taking educational leave must attend an accredited educational institution on a full-time basis. A transcript must be submitted to Human Resources at the end of the leave, and prior to returning to the position.

**H. Career Development**

The College and non-exempt employees recognize the need and shared responsibility for development and training to meet the College’s workforce requirements. The College agrees to the principles of career and professional development to include such components as identifying job families, career paths, employment-related training needs, and developmental assignments. As part of this shared responsibility, the College will make available a variety of professional development opportunities to employees.

In line with this recognition, current regular employees will be provided the opportunity to fill lead and acting assignments within the work unit before the College advertises those openings outside the work unit and/or College.

**I. Participation in Development**

Within the limits of providing service to our students, non-standard work schedules, including flexible schedules, should be coordinated to provide employees release time for participation in College sponsored professional development classes, workshops and other training opportunities during hours of operation (See: Personnel Policy Statement for College Employees, Section III. I. Educational Benefits/Tuition Waiver for information pertaining to credit courses). If a professional development opportunity is offered outside the normal work schedule, a request to modify the work schedule does not have to be considered.