



# **FINANCIAL AFFAIRS**

**ATHENS STATE UNIVERSITY**

## **Practices and Procedures Manual**

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**SECTION 1**

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**MISSION STATEMENT**

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The Office of the Vice President for Financial Affairs serves as the steward of administrative and financial resources necessary to support the mission of the University. The Office is responsible for the development, allocation, and administration of the institutional budget and the recording and reporting of University financial activities in compliance with regulatory requirements. Through seven administrative units/sub-units:

- Business Office
- Purchasing
- Human Resources
- Physical Plant & Maintenance
- Auxiliary Services
- Security
- Grants and Restricted Programs Accounting
- Risk Management

The Office of the Vice President for Financial Affairs is committed to the achievement of the following goals:

- 1) assure institutional fiscal viability
- 2) implement sound practices and procedures regarding financial, human resources, facilities, and security functions
- 3) provide customer-oriented services to students, faculty, staff and other stakeholders.

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**SECTION 2**

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**GENERAL INFORMATION**

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**A. Scope of Operation**

Organizationally, the Office of Financial Affairs, Purchasing, Human Resources, Auxiliary Services, Security, Grants and Restricted Funds Accounting, Risk Management, and Physical Plant & Maintenance are centralized under the Vice President for Financial Affairs.

The Vice President for Financial Affairs reports directly to the President of Athens State University.

**B. Internal Control**

It is the intention of Athens State University to affect a plan of organization within the Office of Financial Affairs whereby an employee's duties are so arranged and records and procedures so designed as to make it possible, given the limited number of employees, to exercise effective accounting control over assets, liabilities, revenues, and expenditures. Under this system, the work of the employees is subdivided so that no single employee performs a complete cycle of operations. Moreover, under this system, the procedures to be followed are definitively laid out and require proper authorization and computer security clearance for all actions and reactions to take place.

**C. Services**

The Office of Financial Affairs provides the following services to students, administration, faculty, staff, and other outside constituents:

- All Human Resource functions, including advertising, benefits, and payroll
- All Purchasing functions, including bids, purchase orders, and vendor maintenance, including petty cash
- All Student Financial functions, including tuition receipts, refunds, scholarship disbursements, and Title IV disbursements
- All Accounts Receivable functions, including student receivables, general receipts, employer tuition assistance invoicing, and inter-campus invoicing
- All Accounts Payable functions, including travel reimbursements, vendor remittances, contractual services, and maintenance contracts
- All accounting functions related to grants and restricted funds
- All management accounting functions, such as budget monitoring and control, financial statement preparations, journal ledger monitoring and maintenance, and bank account reconcilements
- All function related to compliance and risk management
- Oversight and control of all auxiliary services
- All maintenance and upkeep of University buildings and grounds, and oversight and control of all furniture and equipment to include inventory maintenance
- Engagement and oversight of all construction, renovations and improvements of University facilities and grounds as well as campus security

**D. Hours of Operations**

The Office of Financial Affairs is open for business Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. Office hours are extended as necessary to meet the needs of the University constituents.

**E. Confidentiality**

Personnel in the Office of Financial Affairs have access to sensitive financial and personal information pertaining to students and employees. It is our responsibility to protect the privacy of all concerned.

Student and employee home telephone numbers, addresses, or academic and financial information may be released only with written permission from the student or employee. Requests from banks, loan companies, or other businesses for salary and employment history must be in writing.

**F. Public Access Policy**

Athens State University is a state-owned institution under the direction of the Athens State University Board of Trustees as created by state legislation. As such, our records are open to public inspection. Requests from off-campus groups or individuals to view budget, salary, or other financial documents must be referred to the President for written approval.

**G. Statement on ADA Compliance**

The Office of Financial Affairs actively supports our students and employees with disabilities. To this end, the Office of Financial Affairs will scrupulously uphold the regulations set forth in the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1992.

Specifically, the Office of Financial Affairs will provide assistance to any employee or student as requested. If assistance cannot be readily provided, we will refer the individual to the ADA Accessibility Student Services Specialist. Also, we will protect the privacy of students and employees by maintaining strict control over record(s) access.

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**SECTION 3**

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**FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT**

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Athens State University's Financial Management Policy requires that the University maintain a system of sound financial management to ensure that funds are used only for mission-related purposes and are in compliance with accepted financial management procedures, University policies and state and federal laws and requirements. The current practice of the University is to maintain at least 4 months operating reserves. In addition, the University reconciles all bank accounts monthly. As established in Section 5, the University conservatively invests funds in securities and investments authorized by the **Code of Alabama 1975** and the approved University Investment Policy. This procedure establishes investment goals that ensure liquidity to fund current obligations in a timely manner. The University requires proper approval for all transactions and maintains adequate checks and balances over all cash transactions.

An independent external annual audit of the University's financial statements is performed in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA). For federally funded grants and contracts, the independent auditor uses the Coordinated Audit Approach described in the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Compliance Supplement. As part of the audit process, the auditors test the adequacy of the University's internal controls to ensure the safeguarding of assets and integrity of financial data.

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**SECTION 4**

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**BUDGETS AND FINANCIAL REPORTING**

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**A. Operating Budgets**

The approved University budget is the formal plan for financing the academic and support programs for the fiscal year beginning October 1st of each year and ending on September 30th. The budget is prepared prior to the beginning of each fiscal year and is approved by the Board of Trustees in advance of its implementation.

**B. Fiscal Budget Procedures**

Annually, the chair of the Budget Advisory Committee (BAC) initiates the budget process. The budget process usually starts in the spring during the month of April. Sometimes the process is started later due to the timing of the legislative session since a large portion of the operating budget is comprised of state appropriations. The Budget Advisory Committee consists of the following members:

1. Vice President for Financial Affairs – Chair
2. Assistant Vice President for Financial Affairs
3. Presiding Officer – Faculty Senate
4. Presiding Officer – Staff Senate
5. Faculty Representative – College of Business
6. Faculty Representative – College of Arts & Sciences
7. Faculty Representative – College of Education
8. Faculty Representative – Library
9. Staff Representative – Financial Affairs
10. Staff Representative – University Advancement
11. Staff Representative – Academic Affairs
12. Staff Representative – Student Services
13. Staff Representative – Information Technology

\* The Clerical Support staff for the Office of Financial Affairs serves as Secretary for the Budget Advisory Committee.

The faculty and staff positions shall be three-year terms with selections for the respective colleges rotating off in a staggered format.

The charge to the committee is as follows:

- Conduct annual budget hearings in an open and collegial manner
- Facilitate development of a budgeting process that integrates campus strategic planning and goals with the budget planning and recommendation process
- Make recommendations concerning departmental budget requests
- Make recommendations concerning a proposed tuition and fee schedule
- Make recommendations concerning reductions of expenditures in times of pro-ration

- When budget cuts are a necessity due to pro-ration or other reasons, the committee will make every attempt to avoid across the board cuts as this has been proven to not always be the most efficient way to operate. Attempts should be made to identify and recommend cuts to areas where the cuts would not be as detrimental and thus avoiding cuts to essential programs/areas
- Advise the President during the fiscal year regarding significant or unanticipated events that have a significant effect upon the campus budget allocations
- The BAC will operate in an advisory and recommendation mode only
- The BAC will recommend a budget to the President's Cabinet (President and Vice Presidents) where decisions on the BAC recommended budget will be made with the final budget submitted to the Board of Trustees for approval

The first step involves the Chair convening the BAC to discuss the upcoming budget process. Subsequent to the meeting of the BAC, notice will be given to all department heads that the budget process is beginning and that they will be receiving a budget packet that will give them the opportunity to present their needs at a budget hearing to be held in the near future. At this time, they are also encouraged to solicit input from their employees in the various departments as to operational and position needs and to use that information as well as their short and long range plans in formulating their formal budget request.

Once notification has been given that the budget process has begun, the Chair of the BAC will submit to each Department Head/Dean/Vice President a budget packet that includes: 1) a cover sheet memorandum which describes what is enclosed in the budget packet and discusses dates the budget hearings will be held, 2) the following forms: Employee (Position) Budget Worksheet; Operational Budget Worksheet; and a Critical Needs Worksheet.

The BAC will conduct budget hearings with the respective departments as scheduled and the appropriate Vice President of the department should attend along with the College Dean and/or Department Head. The BAC Chair provides information about the upcoming budget such as known increases in retirement costs and other fixed increases in expenditures that will have an effect on the budget and available funds. Minutes will be taken of the budget hearings by the Clerical Support staff for the Office of Financial Affairs.

During the hearings, each budget request is discussed along with the current year budget for that department and the short-range plan for that department for the upcoming year. These items will be discussed and compared with that department's budget request. The department head will officially submit their written budget requests.

At the conclusion of all departmental budget hearings, the BAC will consider all departmental requests and formulate a recommended budget for the University, along with a list of unfunded requested positions and unfunded critical need item requests. These lists of unfunded items, along with the BAC's recommended

budget are then presented to the President's Cabinet by the Chair of the BAC. Together the cabinet will review the entire budget, the requests for positions and the requests for critical need items, and make decisions on whether to adopt the BAC recommended budget or may make decisions to change the recommended budget. The BAC only makes recommendations; all decisions regarding the budget are made by the President and the President's Cabinet.

Once decisions have been made on which items to fund, the Vice President for Financial Affairs ensures that the data entry of the adopted budget is consolidated into the formal budget of the University and submits the document to the Athens State University Board of Trustees for approval at the summer meeting. Subsequent to board approval, the departments are notified of their budget amounts for the upcoming fiscal year.

**C. Budget Amendments**

The Athens State University budget presents in terms of dollars the funded programs and plans of the University for the budget year and the estimated income by sources necessary to fund these programs and plans. The budget is the primary instrument of fiscal control and must contain all income and expenditures of the University. The original budget consists of estimates made prior to the actual period to which they apply. As conditions change, periodic revisions to these budget estimates may be required. No expenditure may be made on the basis of an amendment request until the amendment is approved. Budget amendments must be approved by the Vice President for Financial Affairs. Amendments that decrease the overall funds available must be authorized by the President. Amendments are reported to the Board of Trustees at quarterly Board meetings.

**D. Budget Operations**

It is the responsibility of each administrative head to determine the appropriate account when expending funds and to ensure that the budgets under his/her jurisdiction are not over-obligated or over-expended. To assist administrators with management of their accounts, budget status reports and organizational detail reports are available through the University's administrative software. Additionally, the Business Office provides support and assistance for units needing to review the status of their budgets.

**E. Personnel Adjustment in Budgets**

On occasion, it may become necessary to make adjustments in personnel and budgets. The President may permit salary adjustments for faculty and staff when such would be in keeping with increased responsibilities for those concerned or other factors such as Compensation Analysis data.

**F. Financial Reporting**

The University's fiscal year ends on September 30th. Financial Statements are prepared annually on the accrual basis of accounting. An independent external annual audit of the University's financial statements is performed in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA). For federally funded grants and contracts, the independent auditor uses the Coordinated Audit Approach described in the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Compliance Supplement. Audited financial statements, audit reports and management letters are presented to the Board of Trustees.

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**SECTION 5**

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**ACCOUNTING AND FINANCE**

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**A. Financial Statements**

As established in Section 4, The University's fiscal year ends on September 30th. Financial Statements are prepared annually on the accrual basis of accounting. Audited financial statements are submitted to the Board of Trustees each fiscal year upon completion of the audit.

**B. Financial Reporting**

Athens State University's financial accounting practices and procedures follow the generally accepted accounting principles of Fund Accounting as prescribed by the National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO), the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) and the Financial Accounting Standards Board (FASB). It has been necessary to amplify certain of these procedures in order to comply with Alabama Statutes and State Regulations. A complete and comprehensive set of accounts, including general ledgers and other subsidiary records are maintained through the use of data processing equipment. Financial statements are available at the close of each fiscal year, and analytical statements are prepared for management purposes, both on a recurring and special basis.

**C. Source of Funds**

Funds for operating Athens State University come from three main sources:

- General Appropriations from the State of Alabama
- Collections made by the University for Tuition, Sales, Services and other activities incidental to the primary functions of the University
- Federal, State, and local grants

The President is authorized to apply for available federal funds, to approve applications for available federal funds when appropriate, and to be the signatory agent to accept federal funds on behalf of the University and the Board of Trustees, and to make appropriate changes in State plans and programs in order to comply with federal laws and regulations relating to the funds.

**D. Depositories**

The President is also authorized to select the depository of funds for the respective institution, subject to the approval of the Board of Trustees. The President shall determine the primary financial institution, or banks, where funds are deposited. Financial institutions must be insured by FDIC/FSLIC and must be designated in the Security for Alabama Funds Enhancement (SAFE) program.

**E. Investments**

The University invests its available financial resources in securities and investments in accordance with the **Code of Alabama 1975**, Section 16-32-2, Sections 27-1-8 and 27-1-9, and Sections 27-41-1 through 27-41-41. These laws

provide that Universities may invest in the same type instruments as allowed by Alabama law for domestic life insurance companies. This includes a wide range of investments, such as direct obligations of the United States of America, obligations issued or guaranteed by certain federal agencies, and bonds of any state, county, city, town, village, municipality, district or other political subdivision of any state or any instrumentality or board thereof of the United States of America that meet specified criteria.

The University's investment policy permits investments in the following: 1) U.S. Treasury bills, notes, bonds and stripped Treasuries; 2) U.S. Agency notes, bonds, debentures, discount notes and certificates; 3) certificates of deposit (CD's), checking and money market accounts of savings and loan associations, mutual savings banks, or commercial banks whose accounts are insured by FDIC/FSLIC, and who are designated a Qualified Public Depository (QPD) under the SAFE Program; 4) mortgaged backed securities (MBS's); 5) mortgage-related securities including collateralized mortgage obligations (CMO's) and real estate mortgage investment conduits (REMIC) securities; 6) repurchase agreements; and 7) stocks and bonds which have been donated to the institution.

The Board of Trustees has given the President the authority to designate one employee as treasurer/custodian of funds to be responsible for receiving and disbursing all institutional monies. This person shall also be responsible for the day-to-day activities and functions relating to cash and cash management and for establishing a cash management and investment program for institutional funds. The President has designated the Vice President for Financial Affairs as treasurer/custodian of funds.

**F. Tuition and Fees**

The Board of Trustees has the authority to set tuition and fee rates based on the recommendations by the President. In accordance with the Code of Alabama 16-64-4, Athens State shall charge each undergraduate student who is registered as a nonresident a minimum of two times the resident tuition rate charged by the institution. Furthermore, the Board of Trustees shall have the right to extend resident tuition rates to students who reside in any county within 50 miles of the main campus of the institution. The University also complies with other exceptions under the Code of Alabama for military personnel and for off-campus offerings on military bases.

**G. Petty Cash**

Often it is necessary to make small purchases on behalf of the institution when it would be inefficient to prepare a purchase order. To meet this need, a petty cash fund has been established. Receipts must be provided to substantiate use of the cash. Petty cash funds are only for the purpose of infrequent purchases of **\$100** or less. Petty cash purchases must be approved by the appropriate Department Head and the Assistant Vice President for Financial Affairs before reimbursement can be made. Reimbursement for purchases will be made only for the cost of purchase **less sales tax**. Athens State University is tax exempt and therefore, cannot reimburse sales tax, with the exception of reimbursements made out of agency funds.

**H. Capital Assets**

Athens State University has adopted the Federal guidelines on the capitalization of fixed assets. In accordance with **Federal Code 31 U.S.C. 3511**, all assets in excess of \$5,000 will be capitalized as fixed assets for accounting purposes. The University will maintain an inventory of all fixed assets, both capitalized and non-capitalized.

**I. Institutional Debt**

The University's use of debt plays a critical role in ensuring adequate funding for the facilities plan as well as providing a cost-effective source of funding for other purposes. By linking the objectives of its debt procedures to its strategic objectives, the University ultimately increases the likelihood of achieving its mission. The Strategic Plan of the University establishes University-wide priorities as well as University-wide and divisional programmatic objectives. The University maintains a facilities plan to support these priorities and objectives. All debt issued by the University must be authorized through a resolution by the Board of Trustees.

**J. Gifts and Bequests**

Each department or area of the University must assure that all gifts and contributions are properly channeled through and/or reported to the Vice President for University Advancement. The President of the University is authorized to accept gifts on behalf of the University.

Additionally, the Athens State University Foundation, an autonomous, private, not-for-profit corporation, receives and administers gifts and contributions for the benefit of Athens State University and its students. The Foundation is recognized as a 501(c) (3) organization by the Internal Revenue Service; contributions and other gifts made to the Foundation qualify as charitable deductions for the donor to the full extent allowed by law. All contributions, including in-kind goods and services, are directed to the Athens State University Foundation. The use, administration and disposition of contributions are exclusive to and under the control of the Foundation. The Athens State University Foundation maintains appropriate policies and procedures regarding the acceptance and administration of all gifts and contributions.

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## SECTION 6

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### PURCHASING AND ACCOUNTS PAYABLE

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The University does not discriminate in its purchasing practices. The University strives to obtain the best products at the lowest possible price.

#### A. Categories of Purchasing

The University's procurements of supplies and services are governed by Alabama Act No. 2021-296 and Alabama Act No. 2022-357, as amended, except where stated therein, and those laws should be read in conjunction with these rules and procedures. Those acts repealed laws that governed purchasing by State agencies prior to October 1, 2022. These new laws require that the University establish procurement policies, procedures and rules addressing various items.

All purchases will now fall into 3 categories determined by the amount of the purchase:

- Category A: Purchases less than \$5,000
- Category B: Purchases from \$5,000 - \$24,999
- Category C: Purchases \$25,000 and greater

Purchases of less than \$25,000 are considered Category A and B - Small Purchases and will be procured under the following rules (and for purposes of Ala. Code § 41-4-134, this Rule establishes \$25,000 as the amount for supplies and services below which small purchase procedures may be used for procurement):

#### **Category A: Purchases less than \$5,000**

- Reasonable effort should be made to ensure that the best quality items are procured at the lowest possible cost.
- When goods and services are available through an existing purchasing contract with a state agency or approved purchasing cooperative, vendors through those sources should be utilized first, if practicable.
- When possible, a quote or other documentation should accompany a Purchase Order Request to facilitate auditing of the purchase and for appropriate record keeping.
- Organization Dues and Professional Memberships will always be handled as a Category A purchase.
- Professional Services (attorneys, auditors, architects, etc.) may be handled as a Category A purchase unless it is determined by the Vice President for Financial Affairs that it would be more beneficial to the University and the public interest to utilize Category C in procuring such professional services.

#### **Category B: Purchases from \$5,000 - \$24,999**

- Written quotations shall be solicited from no fewer than two entities, and such quotations should include the date and the amount of each item quoted. These quotes shall be attached to the Request for Purchase Order.

- Awards shall be made to the business offering the lowest quotation that is acceptable to the University.
- When goods and services are available through an existing purchasing contract with a state agency or approved purchasing cooperative, vendors through those sources should be utilized first, if practicable, and no additional quotations will be necessary.
- If the supply or services is available from only one business, the sole source procurement method set forth in Section D (below) shall be used even if procurement is a Category B purchase under these rules.

**Category C: Purchases \$25,000 and greater**

- [See Section 9 of this manual](#)

The following purchasing procedures apply to all the categories (Category A, Category B, and Category C) discussed above:

**B. Purchase Requisition Procedure**

**The institution is responsible for the payment of purchases made only through the approved purchase procedures.** The following procedures should be followed for the acquisition of all materials, supplies, equipment, repair, rent services, and other obligations of the institution of \$500 or greater. In most cases, purchases between \$100 (see sub-section I below) and \$500 should follow the normal purchase requisition process; however, there may be instances where this would not apply. Under NO circumstances should purchases be made of \$500 or greater without a purchase order.

- A standard Purchase Order requisition form (see Section C) is required on all purchase requests \$500 or greater, with the exception of certain maintenance contracts, other contractual services, utilities, and certain travel.
- Purchase order requests should be **typed** on the required form and must include all necessary information to clearly describe the purchase.
- The department making the request is responsible for verifying that the vendor they wish to purchase from is an active vendor in the University accounting system. If the vendor is not active, the requesting department should have the vendor complete an Athens State Vendor Form W-9. The completed Form W-9 should be submitted with the completed purchase order request.
- The purchase order request form should originate from and be prepared by the department wishing to make the purchase. It should contain the vendor's name and number (or completed Athens State Vendor Form W-9 attached), a listing of the items requested, giving a full description, catalogue name, part number, size, weight, estimated cost, and other pertinent information.
- The department making the request is responsible for verifying that encumbered funds are available in the appropriate budget unit.
- The purchase request must be approved and signed by the appropriate director and/or college dean, Vice President or department head.
- Purchase requests exceeding **\$20,000** must be approved by the President of the University.

- The purchase request is then submitted to the Business Office for the Business Manager or their designee to verify funds, and then an official purchase order will be issued on behalf of the University.

**C. Purchase Order Process**

- A purchase order **MUST** be issued **BEFORE** a purchase is made.
- A properly executed purchase order constitutes a contract which is binding to both the institution and the vendor. All purchase orders, adjustments, cancellations, and/or revisions to purchase orders must be in writing from the Business Office.
- Any modifications to the originally issued purchase order must be approved and handled through the Business Office.
- Purchase order route of less than \$20,000:
  - Requests are submitted to the Business Manager for verification of funds and budget account.
  - A purchase order is created by the Business Office with digital signature.
- Distribution of purchase orders less than \$20,000:
  - Vendor's copy. The Business Office will email a copy to the requestor. It is the requestor's responsibility to provide the vendor with the executed purchase order or purchase order number.
  - Receiving copy: The Business Office will email a copy to the University shipping and receiving department.
  - Accounts Payable copy: The original purchase order request along with a file copy of issued purchase order is sent to Accounts Payable.
- Purchase order route of greater than \$20,000:
  - Requests are submitted to the Business Manager for verification of funds and budget account.
  - Requests are forwarded to the President's office for approval.
  - Purchase order is created in the Business Office without digital signature.
  - Vice President for Financial Affairs signs purchase order.
- Distribution of purchase orders greater than \$20,000:
  - Vendor's copy. The Business Office will scan and email a copy to the requestor. It is the requestor's responsibility to provide the vendor with the executed purchase order or purchase order number.
  - Receiving copy: The Business Office will scan and email a copy to the University's shipping and receiving department.
  - Accounts Payable copy: The original purchase order request along with a file copy of issued purchase order is sent to Accounts Payable.
- Agency fund purchase orders follow the same procedures previously mentioned; however, the requestor will receive an email copy of the original request with an agency purchase order number assigned. The number begins with the letter A and is located on the bottom left hand side of the form. It is the

requestor's responsibility to provide the vendor with the executed purchase order or purchase order number.

- Purchases must not be made unless an official purchase order is issued following the above procedures. Emergency purchases are discouraged. Each area should make every effort to plan ahead and anticipate needs. Authorization to make emergency purchases should be limited to the Vice President for Financial Affairs or the Business Manager, and, in limited cases, to the University President, in order to maintain control of purchasing and the budget. **A legitimate emergency should exist before deviating from standard procedure. See Section 9 of this manual.**

**D. Sole Source Vendors**

Sole source procurement is not permissible unless a required supply or service is available from only a single supplier. A requirement for a particular proprietary item does not justify a sole source procurement if there is more than one potential bidder or offeror for that item. The following are examples of circumstances which could necessitate sole source procurement:

- where the compatibility of equipment, accessories, or replacement parts is the paramount consideration;
- where a sole supplier's item is needed for trial use or testing; and
- where a sole supplier's item is to be procured for resale.

The request for a procurement to be made as a sole source shall be made, in writing, to the Vice President for Financial Affairs using the established Sole Source Procurement Form.

**E. Disclosure Statements and W-9 Forms**

**Act 2001-955** requires a disclosure statement to be completed and filed with all proposals, bids, contracts, or grant proposals to the State of Alabama in excess of \$5,000. The State of Alabama shall not enter into any contract or appropriate any public funds with any person who refuses to provide information required by this act.

Pursuant to **Act 2001-955**, any person who knowingly provides misleading or incorrect information on the disclosure statement shall be subject to a civil penalty of ten percent (10%) of the amount of the transaction, not to exceed \$10,000. Also, the contract or grant shall be voidable by the awarding entity.

**Definitions as Provided in Act 2001-955:**

- **Family Member of a Public Official** – The spouse, a dependent, an adult child and his or her spouse, a parent, a spouse's parent, a sibling and his/her spouse of the public official.
- **Family Relationship** – A person has a family relationship with a public official or public employee if the person is a family member of the public official or public employee.

- **Person** – An individual, firm, partnership, association, joint venture, cooperative, corporation, or any other group or combination acting in concert.
- **Public Official and Public Employee** – These terms shall have the same meaning ascribed to them in Sections 3-25-1(23) and 36-25-1(24), Code of Alabama 1975, except for the purposes of the disclosure requirements of this act, the terms shall only include person(s) in a position to influence the awarding of a grant or contract who are affiliated with the awarding entity. Notwithstanding the foregoing, these terms shall also include the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, members of the cabinet of the Governor, and members of the Legislature. Section 36-25-1(23), Code of Alabama 1975, defines a public employee as any person employed at the state, county or municipal level of government of their instrumentalities, including governmental corporations and authorities, but excluding employees of hospitals or other health care corporations including contract employees of those hospitals or other health care corporations, who are paid in whole or in part from state, county, or municipal funds. For purposes of the chapter, a public employee does not include a person employed on a part-time basis whose employment is limited to 50% of the part-time employee’s income.

Section 36-25-1(24), Code of Alabama 1975, defines a public official as any person elected to public office, whether or not that person has taken office, by the vote of the people at state, county, municipal level of government or their instrumentalities, including governmental corporations, and any person appointed to a position at the state, county, or municipal level of government or their instrumentalities, including governmental corporations. For purposes of this chapter, a public official includes the chairs and vice chairs or the equivalent offices of each state political party as defined in Section 17-16-2, Code of Alabama 1975.

**F. Control and Inventory of State and School Owned Supplies and Equipment**

The University maintains control over all assets through inventory management guidelines and procedures. Neither supplies nor equipment owned by Athens State University shall be used for personal gain or other purposes by an Athens State University employee or other individuals. No individual shall remove equipment from the campus without clearing such actions with the Property Manager. The Property Manager maintains an annual inventory of equipment. Any person assigned the responsibility of a piece of University equipment will be expected to deposit that equipment with the Property Manager prior to ceasing employment with the University. Detail guidelines and procedures and appropriate forms are maintained by the Property Manager.

**G. Disposal of Tangible Property**

In accordance with Ala. Code § 41-16-123(1)(j) and in agreement with Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs Surplus Property Division, the University may dispose of surplus property as needed.

The President and Vice President for Financial Affairs shall certify the description of the property and the condition of such property, shall give justification in writing for disposal, shall estimate the value of such property, and shall keep such certification as part of the permanent record of the school.

The University uses the GovDeals online auction process to dispose of items, and may on occasion donate surplus items to local public schools or public entities. Detail guidelines and procedures and appropriate forms are maintained by the Property Manager.

**H. Contracts**

The President and Vice President for Financial Affairs are the only individuals approved to execute contracts on behalf of the University. The term contracts include, but are not limited to, equipment leases, contractual services, and University memberships and collaborations.

All contracts that obligate the University to expend \$250,000 or more (or are reasonably expected, when entered into, to involve such an expenditure over the term of the contract) must be approved in advance by the Board of Trustees, or by its Executive Committee, prior to being entered into by the University.

[\(University Contract Management Policy\)](#)

Any agreements or contracts not executed by the President or Vice President for Financial Affairs will be considered null and void and will not be considered an obligation of the University.

**I. Petty Cash**

As discussed in Section 5 of this manual, it is often necessary to make small purchases on behalf of the institution when it would be inefficient to prepare a purchase order. To meet this need, a petty cash fund has been established. Receipts must be provided to substantiate use of the cash. Petty cash funds are only for the purpose of infrequent purchases of **\$100** or less. Petty cash purchases must be approved by the appropriate Department Head and the Assistant Vice President for Financial Affairs. Reimbursement for purchases will be made only for the cost of purchase **less sales tax**. Athens State University is tax exempt and therefore cannot reimburse sales tax, with the exception of reimbursements made out of agency funds.

**J. Technology Purchases**

In order to eliminate the duplication of hardware/software/services and to better plan technology implementation requirements, all technology related purchases including computers, printers, projectors, network devices, software, cloud services, cloud storage, applications/services related to or used in conjunction with Banner, instructional technology resources, academic software applications, etc. must be initiated through the “Employee ITS Services Request Form” on the MyAthens portal. An ITS or ATLAS representative will contact the requester to discuss the details of the request further.

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## SECTION 7

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### ACCOUNTS RECEIVABLE AND STUDENT FINANCES

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**A. Tuition and Fees**

University procedures prohibit extending credit to students. If situations occur that cause a student account to show a balance, the student is immediately placed on hold and not allowed to register for future semesters until the balance is paid. Students may be removed from classes for a balance due not paid within 21 calendar days. The Code of Alabama states that the in-state tuition rate can be extended to students who reside outside of Alabama in a state and county within fifty (50) miles of a campus of Athens State University. The out-of-state tuition rate applies to all out-of-state students who do not meet the aforementioned criteria. The out-of-state tuition rate shall be a minimum of two times the in-state rate and applies to traditional and blended courses offered by the University. Student fees are not subject to the out-of-state tuition rules.

**B. Tuition Payments**

Athens State University accepts cash, checks, American Express, Discover, MasterCard, and Visa for tuition payments. A student may make a tuition payment by taking advantage of any of the five payment methods listed below:

- **Online** - An eCheck or credit/debit card transaction via the online method. The online payment method is available 24-hours a day with immediate updates to the student's account.
- **Mail** – A check made payable to Athens State University in U.S. dollars may be mailed.
- **In Person** - Payment may be made at the University Cashier Office, located in Founder's Hall between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Monday thru Friday, by cash, check, or credit card.
- **After Hours** - Place check in an envelope and place payment in the drop box located outside the University Cashier Office.
- **Fax** - Credit card information may be faxed to the University Cashier Office at (256) 216-3301. Faxed information will not be processed if the following is not included:
  - 16-digit credit card number
  - Expiration date
  - ASU Student ID Number
  - Complete billing address of cardholder
  - Signature
  - Telephone number
  - Credit card security code

**Students are responsible for paying their outstanding balance by the payment due date whether or not a billing notice is received. Athens State University DOES NOT accept payment by telephone or e-mail.**

**C. Tuition Payment Plan**

The University partners with a third-party provider to offer students a payment plan option. The Automatic Payment Plan breaks down tuition into affordable monthly payments. Full payment must be received by the final scheduled payment date. There is an enrollment fee but no interest is charged. Payment options are flexible.

When utilizing the payment plan, students must have a minimum of 35% of their balance paid on or before the first day of class. Full payment must be received by the final scheduled payment date. If a student's scheduled payment is dishonored a reattempt will be scheduled. However, two dishonored payment attempts will result in the termination of the payment plan agreement and the entire account balance will be due immediately to Athens State University. If the balance is not paid in full within 48 hours following the final reattempt, the university may remove the student from all classes and no credit will be given for classes. Furthermore, the student will no longer have the option to enroll in the payment plan for future terms. All dishonored payments are subject to a return payment fee by Athens State in addition to any charges assessed by the payment plan provider.

**D. Returned Checks**

Athens State University assesses a service charge when notified that a check or electronic ACH payment has been dishonored and places the student account on hold. Upon receipt of returned instrument, a certified letter is mailed notifying the signatory that a service charge has been imposed and that if the matter is not cleared within ten days from the date of the letter, that it is the university's policy to file for collection through the court under **Act No. 80-200, S. 317**. The amount charged is in accordance with the published schedule of fees.

Payments for returned instruments and electronic ACH payments may be made in the form of cash, credit card, money order, or cashier's check. **No personal checks are accepted for returned instruments.** The University **cannot** accept partial payments for returned instruments.

If the matter is not resolved within the aforementioned time frame, the University will then file paper work with the District Attorney's Office of Limestone County for collection. Once the paper work has been filed with the DA's office, Athens State University must cease collection efforts and not accept payment for items in which paper work has been filed.

After the second returned check, the Office of Financial Affairs will not accept a personal check for future tuition payments.

**E. Third-Party Contract**

Athens State University accepts third-party authorizations for tuition payments once a completed authorization document is received.

- A completed document of authorization can be a purchase order, tuition assistance form, or contract on company letterhead. This document must contain the following information before it's considered complete:

- A *specific* description of fees, charges, and the amount to be assumed by the agency, such as tuition, technology fee, application fee, or late registration fee. **No credit will be granted for any fees unless specified.**
- The student's name and ASU ID/Social Security number
- The semester or term covered by the document
- The billing address
- The signature and telephone number of the authorizing official
- Federal Tax ID (recommended)

Please note that a tuition assistance contract will not be accepted if it restricts payment or **is in any way conditional.**

- The completed document of authorization must be submitted at the time of registration to the Business Office.

**IMPORTANT:** Once a tuition assistance contract is posted to the student account, the amount assumed by the agency is deferred to the agency account. No exchange of money has taken place at this time. ASU reserves the right to reinstate all unpaid tuition assistance invoices back to the student account. Please note that the students are ultimately responsible for all charges posted to their accounts.

**F. Refund Rules**

In accordance with Athens State University's educational mission, Policy Number III.11, issued July 21, 2014, establishes the requirements and standards used for refunds of tuition and fees by the University when a student withdraws completely or partially during a term. The Standards are based on comparable practices at other institutions of higher education and are in compliance with federal regulations when applicable.

For the purposes of the policy the "first day of the term" is defined as the first day classes are offered within any term configuration, including, but not limited to, full terms, split terms, mini terms, and weekend terms.

- **Refund Schedule**

- **Before the first day of the term**

A student who drops one or more classes will be refunded 100% of the tuition and fees associated with the dropped class(es).

- **On or after the first day of the term**

For full- and half-term classes, a student who drops one or more classes within 8 calendar days beginning with the first day of the term will be refunded 100% of tuition and fees related to the dropped class(es).

For weekend and mini-term classes, a student who drops one or more classes within 4 calendar days beginning with the first day of the term will be refunded 100% of tuition and fees related to the dropped class(es).

- **After the refund period**

A student who drops one or more classes after the 8<sup>th</sup> calendar day for full- and half-terms or after the 4<sup>th</sup> calendar day for weekend and mini-term classes will be due no refund of tuition and fees.

- **Refund in Compliance with Federal Regulations**

The University complies with federal regulations relative to the refund of tuition and other fees and the return of funds for Title IV (financial aid) recipients.

- **Refund for Alabama National Guard and Reservists Called to Active Duty**

Students who are active members of the Alabama National Guard or reservists or who are active duty military shall receive a full tuition refund at the time of withdrawal if such student is called to active duty in the time of national crisis or is unable to complete the term due to other active duty orders or assignment to another location.

- **Federal Refund Policy**

Federal financial aid students receiving aid and **withdrawing from all of his or her classes prior to the 60% point in the term**, are required to immediately repay any unearned federal aid dollars to the program providing those funds.

The following formula is used to compute aid to be returned:

$$\text{Days Enrolled} * \text{Title IV Aid Awarded and Disbursed} = \text{Aid Earned}$$
$$\text{Aid Disbursed} - \text{Aid Earned} = \text{Aid to be Returned}$$

Financial Aid and payments made by the student or on their behalf in excess of University charges will be processed as a refund to the student. The Office of Financial Affairs will process all refunds.

The President of the University has the authority to make exceptions to the refund policy in the event of the death of a student or of a family member or other catastrophic event requiring the student to withdraw from the University.

A refund is subject to deductions for any indebtedness to the University, including payments under Title IV student aid programs.

**G. Drop Process**

The Office of Financial Affairs will drop students for non-payment 7-10 calendar days from the start of each session (Full, 1<sup>st</sup> half, 1<sup>st</sup> weekend, 2<sup>nd</sup> weekend, 3<sup>rd</sup> weekend, etc.) during a term. Dates that drops will occur can be located on the University's website under the important dates section.

Students may also be dropped at any time that a balance has remained on their account for 21 calendar days or more unless payment arrangements have been

made with the Business Office. A non-payment hold will be placed on the student account until the balance has been paid in full. Credit will not be given for classes that have been dropped for non-payment.

A student who does not attend any classes, as determined by the attendance verification process at the beginning of the semester, is considered not be enrolled for the semester. This means that the student's tuition and fee charges and financial aid are canceled for the semester.

**H. Balance Due**

Students who have a balance due shall be notified by electronic mail initially within seven business days of the account balance and a minimum of monthly until the end of the term or until the balance is paid in full. Any student who has a balance due will have a hold placed on their account, which will remain until the balance is paid in full. A hold will prevent a student from making changes to their account, receiving official transcripts, and also receiving their diploma. Students should contact the Office of Financial Affairs concerning a non-payment hold.

**G. Uncollectible Debt**

The President of the University is authorized to review and submit to the State Attorney General's office for approval the cancellation of an uncollectible debt incurred at the institution. The President shall report all approved cancellation of uncollectible debt to the Board of Trustees.

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**SECTION 8**

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**TRAVEL PROCEDURES**

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The practices and procedures regarding travel by Athens State University employees have been developed in accordance with Alabama law and Internal Revenue Service regulations and guidelines. These policies cover University employees, students and others who travel on approved, official University business.

**A. Transportation**

Athens State University has vehicles available in the motor pool for official travel essential to the operation of the institution. The use of rental cars must be justified and approved prior to the travel.

Drivers of all owned, hired, or borrowed vehicles used in the everyday operation of Athens State University on official school business approved by the President must have a valid Alabama driver's license and have an acceptable driving record.

The accident and arrest record of such drivers, which is on file at the State Department of Public Safety, is subject to review and approval by the President or designee. Disapproval of such driver experience records shall constitute adequate grounds for transfer to non-driving duty or dismissal.

**B. Scheduling of Vehicles**

Faculty and staff members may schedule the use of institutional vehicles for authorized and approved institutional business by calling the Security office during regular business hours. Keys to all vehicles and reservation sheets are located in the Security office. The motor pool is located in the parking lots on the east and west sides of the ASU Security Office. Prior to scheduling a vehicle, faculty or staff must be assigned a unique driver personal identification number (PIN) used for the fueling of vehicles, complete driver safety training and undergo a motor vehicle records check. This PIN number is issued by either the Security Office or Business Office. Faculty and staff are responsible for confirming or obtaining a PIN number prior to scheduling a vehicle. ***Only Athens State employees may drive University owned vehicles.***

Under certain circumstances, higher priority institutional needs may cause the use of a vehicle to be delayed or canceled. When considering priority of usage, favorable consideration will be given to those individuals traveling the greatest distance.

The person using the vehicle is responsible for returning the vehicle in good condition, (remove all trash and personal items, etc.). No smoking is allowed in University owned vehicles and no animals are to be transported. All vehicle maintenance issues and malfunctions should be reported to the Security Office immediately. Vehicles should be promptly returned to the motor pool parking lot with at least 1/2 tank of gas. Keys and gas receipts must be returned to either the Security Office, or the Security Office drop box.

**C. Credit Cards**

Athens State University uses WEX Fuel cards for all University vehicles on institutional business. These cards are located inside the vehicle (usually in the glove compartment). Each vehicle has a unique credit card, and it cannot be used without a personal identification number (PIN). PINs may be given to approved faculty and staff by the Security Office or Business Office. WEX Fuel cards are accepted at most major gas stations. The WEX Connect app may be downloaded to a smart phone. This will navigate to the nearest gas station that will accept the credit card. Lost or stolen cards must be reported immediately to the Business Office. Individuals are responsible for misuse of University owned credit cards. Receipts for fuel purchases should be turned in to the Security Office when the car is returned.

**D. In-State Travel**

The President is authorized to approve in-state travel for institution employees or students traveling on institution-related activities. Reimbursement shall be made in accordance with applicable state laws. The President has delegated approval to all Vice Presidents and/or their designees.

Travel expense statements should be submitted promptly for budgetary reasons. With the exception of fiscal year end travel claims (see below), the University considers two months from date of travel to be reasonable time for employees to submit travel reimbursement claims. Travel reimbursement claims received by the Office of Financial Affairs after two months may be disallowed.

Employees traveling on grant funded programs must properly report and submit statements on or before the end of the particular program's grant year.

**For all programs, August and September travel reimbursements should be received prior to the end of the first full week of October.**

In-state travel reimbursement claim forms are available on the Office of Financial Affairs webpage.

The following rules and regulations govern in-state travel:

- If the travel is for attending a convention, conference, seminar or other meeting of a state or national organization of which the University or the individual IS a dues paying member, all actual and necessary expenses in addition to actual expenses for transportation shall be reimbursed. If lodging other than the conference host hotel is used the maximum amount of reimbursement will be the lesser of actual expenses or the host hotel rate per night for single accommodations. The reimbursement procedures for Out-of-State Travel (Section E) will apply.
- For all other in-state travel including travel to meetings of an organization of which the University or individual is NOT a dues paying member, per-diem allowance is used in lieu of subsistence.

No travel allowance shall be paid for a trip of less than six hours duration. For travel which does not require an overnight stay, the traveler shall be paid a meal allowance of \$12.75 for a trip from 6 to 12 hours duration; and an allowance of \$34 for more than 12 hours but not overnight. Pursuant to Memorandum 2007-FIS-215 dated December 7, 2007, partial day per diem payments are considered income and are subject to federal, state, FICA and Medicare taxes.

- For travel requiring an overnight stay, the traveler shall be paid a per diem allowance for each full day or fraction thereof for the duration of the trip. For travel that only requires a single overnight stay the rate will be \$85 per day. An overnight stay would represent 2 per diem units,  $\$85 \times 2 = \$170$ . Travel that requires a stay of two or more nights the rate will be \$100 per day. Under normal circumstances overnight per diem will not be paid for locations within a 60-mile radius of the Athens State Campus. In extenuating circumstances, the President may approve a waiver to this procedure in advance of the travel.
- Conference registration fees can be requested to be paid prior to travel by submitting a purchase order request for the registration through the normal purchase order process.
- Documentation providing proof of attendance must be included. This might be the conference/meeting registration confirmation, the daily meeting agenda, or name tag. **This should be attached to the reimbursement packet to ensure prompt reimbursement.**
- Reimbursement at a set rate per mile will be made to employees traveling by private car at state expense. This rate is established by the Internal Revenue Service.
- When, for traveler's personal convenience or through the taking of leave, there is an interruption of travel or deviation from the direct route, the per diem in lieu of subsistence allowed will not exceed that which would have been incurred on uninterrupted travel by the most economical usually traveled route.
- Under no circumstances will per diem be allowed for an employee at the official station or base.
- For employees traveling in private automobiles, a current Google Map or similar document must be attached to receive reimbursement for mileage. If travel involves more than one city, indicate route taken, for example, Montgomery – Tuscaloosa – Birmingham. Record all vicinity mileage as such and, if it exceeds 20 miles on any day, indicate major points of travel covered.
- When the payment of cash is necessary for miscellaneous expenditures on expense accounts, receipts will be required as follows:
  - Operating expenses of state-owned automobiles, such as gasoline, oil, etc.
  - Repairs or expenses of state-owned automobiles. Receipts must be

itemized.

- Postage in excess of a set dollar limit.
  - Shipments, freight or express.
  - Tolls for tunnels and bridges.
  - Miscellaneous emergency expenditures.
  - Transportation fares showing tax has been reduced.
  - Registration fees.
- Receipts will not be required for meals and lodging; however, it would be wise to keep lodging receipts in your personal files; or if you desire, they may be attached to your travel claim.
  - Tips will not be reimbursed unless unusual in nature and explained.
  - Receipts will not be required when the disclosure of the identity of the traveler would be detrimental to the State's interest.
  - Storing privately owned vehicles is a reimbursable item of expense when the traveler is on official business for the State. Receipts are required.

**E. Out-of-State/In-State Dues Paying Member/Student Travel**

The President is authorized to approve out-of-state travel for institution employees or students traveling on institution-related activities. Reimbursements shall be made in accordance with applicable state laws. Out-of-state travel approval forms are available on the Office of Financial Affairs webpage. Requests for In-State Dues Paying Member Travel must have proof of membership attached and Student Travel requests should be accompanied by the appropriate student travel forms.

Upon receiving approval from the President for out-of-state travel, a copy of the approval form should be retained by the traveler and the original approved copy should be forwarded to the Office of Financial Affairs. A purchase order will be generated and emailed to the traveler. A copy of the purchase order should be submitted with the travel reimbursement form upon completion of the travel.

Travel reimbursement claims should be submitted upon completion of the travel in a timely manner for budgetary purposes so that expenditures are recorded in the same year that they are budgeted. As stated for in-state travel, the University considers two months from date of travel to be reasonable time for employees to submit travel reimbursement claims, except for claims for August and September of each fiscal year.

Employees traveling on grant funded programs must properly report and submit statements on or before the end of the particular program's grant year.

**For all programs, travel reimbursement claims for August and September must be received by the end of the first full week of October.**

The out-of-state reimbursement claim form is available on Office of Financial Affairs webpage.

Institutional travel outside the State of Alabama is reimbursed differently than in-state travel.

- Actual costs for commercial transportation and hotel accommodations are reimbursed in total and detailed receipts should be attached. The University does not reimburse fees for the use of travel booking sites such as Travelocity, Priceline, Resevationdesk.com, Expedia, etc. The use of these sites is discouraged for University travel due to complexity in receiving a detailed receipt.

Air Transportation – As per state guidelines only economy/coach fares are allowable when traveling on commercial airline for official University business. First Class or Business Class fares are not allowable. Upgrades and/or any extras or personal choices are not covered by the University. Examples include but are not limited to Preferred/Choice seats, Early Boarding, Stand-by boarding, trip insurance, etc.

Lodging costs are reimbursed at single rate only and reimbursement for internet access is not allowed. If the employee chooses accommodations other than the preferred accommodations provided for the conference, meeting, etc., the reimbursement made will not exceed the amount required for the preferred accommodations.

- Meals are reimbursed in one of two ways and travelers must determine which method of reimbursement for meals is to be used: actual or per diem. Using both on the same travel form is not allowed.
  - Actual costs for meals may be reimbursed if total of daily meals exceed \$59; however, the traveler **must** provide itemized receipts for all meals that indicate what was purchased, date, name and location of the restaurant, and the number of persons served. Meals are to be necessary and reasonable for the location and individuals will not be reimbursed for alcoholic beverages.
  - The traveler may submit meal expenses of up to \$59 per day without receipts using the daily per diem per meals as follows \$14 for breakfast, \$18 for lunch, and \$27 for dinner. If meals are provided to the employee, the \$59 per diem allowance is reduced by the applicable amount for each meal provided. Breakfast will only be allowed if travel begins at 6:00 a.m. or before, and a dinner meal will be allowed only if the traveler returns to base after 6:00 p.m.
- Mileage will be paid for travelers that use their personal vehicle, when a State vehicle is not available. Reimbursement will be made at the rate set by the Internal Revenue Service. This includes travel from base to airport.
- Receipts are required on out-of-state travel for the following:
  - Motel/hotel lodging
  - Registration fees

- Meals that exceed \$59 per day
  - Operating expenses, such as gasoline or emergency repairs
  - Copy services, etc.
  - Parking fees, taxi fees, and miscellaneous expenses.
- A copy of the purchase order generated from the travel request **must be attached to the reimbursement packet to ensure prompt reimbursement.**
  - Documentation providing proof of attendance must be included. This might be the conference/meeting registration confirmation, the daily meeting agenda, or name tag. **This should be attached to the reimbursement packet to ensure prompt reimbursement.**

**Out-of-state travel approval forms are estimates only. Sources of funds must be identified on the approval form. If the source of funds is not specifically identified or are partially identified on the approval form, employees will only be reimbursed based on the amount specifically identified. All other expenses will be paid out-of-pocket by the employee incurring the travel costs.**

**F. International Travel**

Travel is considered international when it occurs anywhere outside the United States or its territories.

Travel Claim Forms - Request for reimbursement for international employee travel should be submitted on the reimbursement form for Out-of-State travel expenses. All costs listed on the travel claim must be recorded in U. S. currency and the exchange rate stated on the claim form.

Currency exchange fees may be claimed only when you are required to convert to/from U. S. currency. You may not claim reimbursement for losses due to currency conversion.

Request for reimbursement for travel expenses must be filed on the reimbursement form for Out-of-State travel expenses form within two months of travel. Receipts and other documentation of the total cost of the trip must be submitted along with the travel reimbursement form. Documentation must include information detailing meals included in the registration fee. This might be the conference registration information or the daily meetings schedule. Any expenses paid by a third party should be noted on the form.

Travel Approval - Before using federal contract or grant funds to travel internationally, employees must gain prior approval from the sponsoring or granting agency unless originally approved in the contract or grant.

Actual lodging expenses will be reimbursed but must be determined to be reasonable and pre-approved. Meals and incidental expenses will be reimbursed at the current federal M&IE rate for the destination. Receipts are not required. The U. S. Department Office of Allowances publishes foreign per diem rates for

lodging and M&EI. Current rates may be viewed at the following website address: [http://aoprals.state.gov/content.asp?content\\_id=184&menu\\_id=78](http://aoprals.state.gov/content.asp?content_id=184&menu_id=78).

Reimbursement for insurance for international travel or medical coverage must have prior approval from the Vice President over the traveler's area. All other guidelines governing Out-of-State travel also govern international travel.

The University does not reimburse fees for the use of travel booking sites such as Travelocity, Priceline, Resevationdesk.com, Expedia, etc. The use of these sites is discouraged for University travel due to complexity in receiving a detailed receipt.

**G. Non-Employee Travel**

Those individuals and companies that have contracted with the University to provide professional services as defined by IRS regulations are independent contractors (IC). If the agreement with the IC provides for a fee plus travel expenses, reimbursement is made in accordance with the contract signed by the parties but may not exceed the limits stated in the Out-of-State travel section.

**H. Student and Recognized Student Organization Travel**

Student travel must be conducted in accordance with the [Student Travel](#) policy. All reimbursement for Student Travel will follow the guidelines set forth for Employee Travel in section E: Out-of-State Travel. Employees accompanying students will be governed by the normal In-State and Out-of-State travel guidelines.

**I. Candidate Interview Expense Travel**

Approval at the Dean/Director level or above must be obtained to permit payment of expenses incurred in connection with interviewing applicants for University positions classified as exempt. All job interview candidates must conform to transportation, meal and lodging guidelines listed below. The following should be considered to ensure that allowing reimbursement is in the best interest of the University:

- Job market supply and demand for skills of the prospective employees
- Incentive for prospective candidates to interview for the position with or without reimbursement
- Other reasons unique to the college or school

Consideration may be given to partial reimbursement, but all candidates must be given the same reimbursement consideration. Reimbursement for travel expenses of spouses of finalists for Vice President level positions and above may be authorized. There are occasions when employees are required to interview applicants during the meal period. Reimbursement for the cost of such meals including tip is allowable. Itemized receipts are required and no alcoholic beverages will be reimbursed. The candidate's name and title of the unfilled position and explanation for holding the interview over the meal period must be provided.

## Guidelines for Candidate Travel Reimbursement

Description	Reimbursement Policy
<b>Airfare</b>	Actual cost (coach/business class only)
<b>Hotel</b>	Actual cost per day (2-night maximum)
<b>Mileage</b>	Mileage rate allowed by the Internal Revenue Code for income taxes in accordance with state statute
<b>Auto rental</b>	Actual cost up to \$40 per day (2 days maximum)
<b>Parking</b>	Actual cost up to \$20 per day (2 days maximum)
<b>Food</b>	Actual cost up to \$50 per day (2 days maximum, Itemized Receipts required, No alcoholic beverages will be reimbursed)
<b>Notes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Receipts are required</u> for each type of travel reimbursement</li> <li>• <u>Total</u> expenses for any candidate will not exceed \$1,000 per interview. This limit may be waived at the discretion of the university president.</li> <li>• Travel expenses will not be paid to interviewees living within a 75-mile radius of the university campus.</li> <li>• No reimbursement may be made to an applicant who has been offered the position and declined.</li> </ul>

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**SECTION 9**

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**PURCHASES \$25,000 AND GREATER**

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The University's procurements of supplies and services are governed by Alabama Act No. 2021-296 and Alabama Act No. 2022-357, as amended, except where stated therein, and those laws should be read in conjunction with these rules and procedures. Those acts repealed laws that governed purchasing by State agencies prior to October 1, 2022. These new laws require that the University establish procurement policies, procedures and rules addressing various items.

The University maintains the appropriate controls over compliance with the above referenced legislation and other applicable laws (including the Alabama Public Works Law). The office of the Vice President for Financial Affairs oversees all purchases and reviews each request for purchase order to ensure compliance with the appropriate laws.

This Section 9 shall apply to Category C purchases (see Section 6). These include purchases of goods and services for \$25,000 or more. It shall not apply to purchases and contracts for public works, or for purchases and contracts that are excepted from competitive bidding by law.

All purchases made by the methods discussed in this Section 9 must also follow the procedures in Section 6(B)-(J) of this manual and reference the appropriate procurement file number.

For purposes of this section, a "solicitation" means an Invitation for Bids, a Request for Proposals, or any other document issued by the University for the purpose of soliciting bids or proposals for the procurement of goods or services.

Each solicitation issued by the University shall provide that any bid or proposal may be rejected in whole or in part when in the best interest of the University.

The University may use one of the following four methods of solicitation:

- A. Competitive Sealed Bidding
- B. Competitive Sealed Proposals
- C. Sole Source Procurement
- D. Emergency Procurement

**A. Competitive Sealed Bidding**

The Invitation for Bids is used to initiate a competitive sealed bid procurement.

At a minimum, the Invitation for Bids shall include the following:

- instructions and information to bidders concerning the bid submission requirements, including the time and date set for receipt of bids, the address of the office to which bids are to be delivered, and any other information relevant to bid submission;
- the purchase description, delivery or performance schedule, and such

inspection and acceptance requirements as are not included in the purchase description; and

- additional terms, conditions and evaluation factors, including warranty and bonding or other security requirements, as applicable.

The Invitation for Bids may incorporate documents by reference provided that the Invitation for Bids specifies where such documents can be obtained.

In each case, bidding time will be set to provide bidders a reasonable time to prepare their bids. The University's standard practice is that a minimum of 14 calendar days shall be provided unless a shorter or longer time is deemed necessary for a particular procurement.

The Invitation for Bids shall provide a form which shall include space in which the bid price shall be inserted and which the bidder shall sign and submit along with all other information required by the Invitation for Bids to be submitted.

Bid Samples and Descriptive Literature may be required, as defined below:

1. "Descriptive literature" means information available in the ordinary course of business which shows the characteristics, construction, or operation of an item which enables the University to consider whether the item meets its needs.
2. "Bid sample" means a sample to be furnished by a bidder to show the characteristics of the item offered in the bid.
3. Bid samples or descriptive literature may be required when it is necessary to evaluate required characteristics of the items bid.
4. Unless bid samples or descriptive literature are requested or allowed by the Invitation for Bids, they cannot be considered or evaluated.

Every Invitation to Bid (or a Notice of the Availability of Invitation for Bid) shall be posted in the University's Purchasing Department and on the University's website at [www.athens.edu](http://www.athens.edu).

In addition, where the University is aware of multiple potential bidders, Invitations for Bids (or Notices of the Availability of Invitations for Bids) may be mailed, electronically transmitted, or otherwise furnished by the University to a number of potential bidders for the purpose of securing competition. Notices of Availability shall indicate where, when, and for how long Invitations for Bids may be obtained; generally describe the supply or service; and may contain other appropriate information.

Pre-bid conferences may be conducted to explain the procurement requirements. They shall be announced to all prospective bidders known to have received an Invitation for Bids. Nothing stated at the pre-bid conference shall change the Invitation for Bids unless a change is made by written amendment.

A transcript of questions, answers and any clarification of specifications from the pre-bid conference shall be provided to all prospective bidders known to have received an Invitation for Bids.

Amendments to Invitations for Bids, if any, shall be sent to all prospective bidders known to have received an Invitation for Bids. Amendments shall be distributed within a reasonable time to allow prospective bidders to consider them in preparing their bids.

Bids may be withdrawn by written notice received in the office designated in the Invitation for Bids prior to the time and date set for bid opening.

Any bid received after the time and date set for receipt of bids is late. No late bid or late withdrawal will be considered unless received before contract award, and the bid or withdrawal would have been timely but for the action or inaction of University personnel.

Upon its receipt, each bid and modification shall be time-stamped, but not opened, and shall be stored in a secure place until the time and date set for bid opening.

Bids shall be opened publicly, in the presence of one or more witnesses, at the time, date, and place designated in the Invitation for Bids. The name of each bidder, the bid price, and such other information as is deemed appropriate shall be read aloud or otherwise made available. Such information also shall be recorded at the time of bid opening; that is, the bids shall be tabulated or a bid abstract made. The names of required witnesses shall also be recorded at the opening.

Bid correction or withdrawal by reason of an apparent, inadvertent mistake is permissible but only to the extent it is not contrary to the interest of the University and the fair treatment of other bidders.

“Minor informalities” are matters of form rather than substance evident from the bid document, or insignificant mistakes that can be waived or corrected without prejudice to other bidders; that is, the effect on price, quantity, quality, delivery, or contractual conditions is negligible or non-existent. The University may waive such informalities or allow the bidder to correct them, depending on which is in the best interest of the University.

The bid is to be awarded to the lowest responsible and responsive bidder whose bid meets the requirements set forth in the Invitation for Bid. The Invitation for Bids shall set forth the requirements which will be used to determine the lowest responsive bidder.

The Invitation may require the submission of bid samples, descriptive literature, technical data, other material, or onsite presentations.

Appropriate documentation of all steps of the bid process will be made part of the procurement file.

## **B. Competitive Sealed Proposals**

When Competitive Sealed Bidding is either not practicable or not advantageous to the University, Competitive Sealed Proposals may be utilized when approved by the Vice President of Financial Affairs.

Factors to be considered in determining whether competitive sealed bidding is not practicable or not advantageous include:

1. whether the contract needs to be other than a fixed-price type;
2. whether oral or written discussions may need to be conducted with offerors concerning technical and price aspects of their proposals;
3. whether award may need to be based upon a comparative evaluation as stated in the Request for Proposals of differing price, quality, and contractual factors in order to determine the most advantageous offering to the University. Quality factors include technical and performance capability and the content of the technical proposal;
4. whether the primary consideration in determining the award may not be price: and
5. if prior procurements indicate that competitive sealed proposals may result in more beneficial contracts for the University.

The Request for Proposals shall be prepared in accordance with the guidelines for Invitations for Bids stated above, provided that it shall also include a statement that discussions may be conducted with offerors who submit proposals determined to be reasonably susceptible of being selected for award, but that proposals may be accepted without such discussions.

Proposal preparation time shall be set to provide offerors a reasonable time to prepare their proposals. A minimum of 14 calendar days shall be provided unless a shorter time is deemed necessary for a particular procurement as determined by the University.

The manner in which proposals are to be submitted, including any forms for that purpose, may be designated as a part of the Request for Proposals.

Public notice shall be given by distributing the Request for Proposals in the same manner provided for the distribution of an Invitation for Bids stated above.

Pre-proposal conferences may be conducted in the same manner as pre-bid conferences, stated above. Any such conference should be held prior to submission of initial proposals.

Amendments to Requests for Proposals may be made prior to submission of proposals.

Proposals may be modified or withdrawn prior to the established due date.

Proposals shall not be opened publicly but shall be opened in the presence of one or more University officials. Proposals and modifications shall be time-stamped upon receipt and held in a secure place until the established due date. After the date established for receipt of proposals, a Register of Proposals shall be prepared which shall include for all proposals the name of each offeror, the number of modifications received, if any, and a description sufficient to identify the supply or service offered. Proposals and the Register of Proposals shall be open to public inspection only after award of the contract. Prior to award, proposals and modifications shall be shown only to University personnel having a legitimate interest in them.

The Request for Proposals shall state all of the evaluation factors (and subfactors), including price, and their relative importance. The evaluation shall be based on the evaluation factors set forth in the Request for Proposals. Numerical rating systems may be used but are not required.

The University may conduct discussions with responsible offerors who submit proposals determined by the University to be reasonably competitive for award to assure full understanding of, and responsiveness to, the solicitation requirements. Offerors shall be afforded fair and equal treatment with respect to any opportunity for discussions and revision of proposals. Revisions of proposals may be permitted after submissions and prior to award for the purpose of obtaining the best and final offers. In conducting discussions, there may not be disclosure of information derived from proposals submitted by competing offerors. In such cases, the University shall establish a common date and time for the submission of best and final offers. Best and final offers shall be submitted only once; provided, however, the Vice President for Financial Affairs may make a written determination that it is in the University's best interest to conduct additional discussions or change the University's requirements and require another submission of best and final offers. Otherwise, no discussion of or changes in the best and final offers shall be allowed prior to award. Offerors shall also be informed that if they do not submit a notice of withdrawal or another best and final offer, their immediate previous offer will be construed as their best and final offer.

Contracts shall be awarded to the responsible offeror whose proposal conforms to the solicitation and is determined in writing to be the most advantageous to the University, taking into consideration price and the evaluation factors set forth in the request for proposals.

Minor informalities shall be treated as they are under Competitive Sealed Bidding.

### **C. Sole Source Procurement**

Sole source procurement is not permissible unless a required supply or service is available from only a single supplier. A requirement for a particular proprietary item

does not justify a sole source procurement if there is more than one potential bidder or offeror for that item. The following are examples of circumstances which could necessitate sole source procurement:

- where the compatibility of equipment, accessories, or replacement parts is the paramount consideration;
- where a sole supplier's item is needed for trial use or testing; and
- where a sole supplier's item is to be procured for resale.

The request for a procurement to be made as a sole source shall be made, in writing, to the Vice President of Financial Affairs using the established Sole Source Procurement Form.

#### **D. Emergency Procurement**

An emergency condition is a situation which creates a threat to public health, welfare, or safety such as may arise by reason of floods, epidemics, riots, equipment failures, or such other reasons. The existence of such condition creates an immediate and serious need for supplies or services that cannot be met through normal procurement methods and the lack of which would seriously threaten:

- (a) the functioning of University;
- (b) the preservation or protection of property; or
- (c) the health or safety of any person.

Emergency procurement shall be limited to those supplies or services necessary to meet the emergency and approved by the Vice President of Financial Affairs.

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**SECTION 10**

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**GRANTS AND CONTRACTS**

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Athens State University accepts Federal, State, Local, and private grants to assist in funding activities that are in accordance with the University's mission. The Office of University Advancement provides oversight for all University grants. A grant approval form has been established that requires various levels of approval prior to submission of a grant. **This form must be completed prior to grant application and include the signatures of the following individuals:**

- Grant Writer (if other than the Office of University Advancement)
- Appropriate Department Head/Dean
- Division Vice President
- Vice President for Financial Affairs
- Vice President for University Advancement
- Provost
- University President

The grant approval form is initiated by the person or persons seeking funding in conjunction with the Office of University Advancement. Once **all** signatures have been obtained, the grant application will be submitted to the appropriate granting agency by the Office of University Advancement.

Post-award procedures require that all grants received by the University be administered by the Business Office and are subject to the Business Office practices and procedures manual in the same manner as other University funds. The Business Office establishes the appropriate account in which the activity will be captured. All disbursements and receipts are executed in accordance with guidelines established in the grant agreement. All accounting activity is reconciled annually by the Business Manager. The Vice President for Financial Affairs and the University President are the only individuals authorized to sign grant agreements that obligate the University.

The Office of University Advancement is happy to work with any faculty or staff member in identifying and submitting grant applications.

Please direct all questions regarding this process to: [grants@athens.edu](mailto:grants@athens.edu).

Receipts and disbursements are included in the scope of the transactions included in the University's annual audit. The University accounts for indirect costs in accordance with the requirements as set forth in each grant agreement and in accordance with 2 CFR 200.414.

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**SECTION 11**

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**AUXILIARY SERVICES AND AFFILIATED ORGANIZATIONS**

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The University has assigned oversight of all auxiliary services to the Vice President for Financial Affairs. The University's current auxiliary operations are bookstore operations, cafeteria services, coffee shop operations, vending and print vending services, print shop operations, and the Center for Lifelong Learning. The University selects vendors through the competitive bid process. The University strives to function with the auxiliary service operations as a whole operating on a self-sustained basis.

All affiliated organizations and corporate entities are required to have a written agreement/contract with the University in order to conduct business. This agreement/contract shall specify the specific role and purpose of the organization as it relates to the University.