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RELEASED TIME FUNDAMENTALS
May 2010

1. **Basic purpose.** The basic purpose of a released time account is to hold state funds that an administrator can use to replace duties (often teaching) from which employees (usually faculty or academic professionals) will be released temporarily to do other work (often grant-related research). In this context, an administrator is a department head, program director, dean, or vice president who manages work assignments and has fiscal responsibility for the unit in question.

   Any money added to a released time account from another account must be obligated to a specific employee's set of duties to be released at a specific salary rate during a specified time frame. The amount added must be proportional to the fraction of the normal job description from which the employee is to be released. For example, the standard rate for releasing an academic year appointee from teaching is 1/24 of the academic year salary per credit.

   Frequently, the responsible administrator replaces the duties by spending less than the amount added to the released time account for that purpose. Doing so leaves residual funds in the account. Therefore it is useful to think of released time accounts as consisting of two categories: *obligated funds* (scheduled to be spent on replacing documented duties that are to be released) and *unobligated residual funds* (left over after replacing the duties). For every released time account, there should be a rigorous accounting of these two categories.

2. **Restrictions.** For released time funds to accrue, there must be documentable effort expended on a project during its performance period and documented duties from which an employee has been released. Obligated funds must be used for the documented purpose during the performance period of the project or grant that generated them.

   Unobligated residual funds may be used only to pay salaries and benefits, including graduate assistantship stipends and benefits, at the direction of the responsible administrator. These funds may remain in the department's account after the performance period of the generating project or grant and are not subject to biennial use-it-or-lose-it restrictions.

3. **Control.** Control of any released time account resides with the administrator who manages employees' work assignments and who therefore is responsible for replacing their duties. Control does not reside with the employees whose time has been or will be released.

   The affected dean or director, affected vice president, and president are responsible for ensuring that all uses of released time accounts are legal and consistent with the university's regulations, mission, and priorities. Where consistency is in doubt, these administrators may direct specific uses of a department's unobligated residual funds, even if these uses differ from what the department's faculty prefer.

   In particular, the accumulation of large sums of unobligated residual funds can be problematic, especially in departments or colleges where there is a pressing need for funding to support graduate education or temporary instruction. Deans and directors have a duty to monitor department- and college-level released time accounts as part of the array of resources available to meet these two high-priority needs as well as other needs.

This brief summary leaves uncovered many nuances and details. Further guidance is available from the Office of Research and Economic Development for grant- or contract-related transactions related to released time.