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March 29, 2024

TO: Deans, Department Chairs, and Center Directors

FROM: Lisa Tannock, MD
Associate Provost for Faculty Advancement

RE: Wethington Awards: Policy and Procedure for 2023-2024

This memorandum provides guidance and instructions for the Wethington Awards program for 2023-2024. Colleges and graduate program centers are encouraged to participate in the Wethington Awards program. Nominations are due to the office of the Associate Provost for Faculty Advancement by **5:00 PM, May 6, 2024**. Email the completed spreadsheet to facultyadv@uky.edu. In the email subject line, please enter 'Wethington Award – your college name.'

The Wethington Awards program serves five purposes that are linked to our efforts to move the University toward national prominence:

- increase the number of applications to extramural funding agencies;
- increase the level of grant and contract funding;
- provide enhanced opportunities for graduate student and postdoctoral training;
- enhance the level of indirect costs revenue for redistribution and investment; and
- facilitate the recruitment and retention of research-oriented faculty.

This memorandum provides a summary of this program in a question-and-answer format. It replaces all prior announcements regarding the Wethington Awards program.

Who is eligible for Wethington Awards?

All full-time faculty, division chiefs, chairs, center directors, or administrators below the level of dean (*e.g.*, associate and assistant deans) in Regular, Special, Research, Extension, Library, Lecturer, or Clinical Title Series who were employed all or part of the fiscal year in departments, centers, or divisions are eligible. Collaborators (at UK or elsewhere), consultants, postdoctoral fellows, postdoctoral scholars, emeriti faculty, graduate students, visiting scholars, post-retirement appointees, and staff are not eligible. Deans and other University-wide administrators at the level of dean or above are also ineligible. Any questions as to eligibility should be directed to the Provost, whose decision on eligibility will be final. Faculty must be employed at the University in order to receive an award (*i.e.*, faculty who resign June 1 during the fiscal year in which awards are made on June 30 will not receive an award). Neither, however, can units exclude a faculty member who is eligible for an award on June 30 simply because he or she resigned effective the following July 1.

Are units required to participate in the Wethington Award program?

Units are **not** required to participate. Units are encouraged to use at least 10% of their salary reimbursement funds generated on extramural grants and contracts for these awards.

What level of award is possible?

Faculty are eligible for awards up to a maximum of \$50,000 in the current fiscal year (2023-2024), from all sources, with the proviso that unit budgets, inclusive of these awards, must be balanced. If, in the current economic environment, exceptions to this maximum are needed, please contact Associate Provost Dr. Lisa Tannock.

What is meant by the statement in the preceding section that "unit budgets, inclusive of these awards, must be balanced"?

It means that the unit's projected fund balance must be positive or break-even. We recognize that units will not know their final fund balance until late July, well after the June 30 payout on awards. The point here is that units wishing to participate in this program must take reasonable precautions to ensure that the Wethington Award program will not result in a negative fund balance at the end of the fiscal year. For this reason, [May 31 payments are encouraged](#).

In addition, the unit budget(s) from which these payments are made must have appropriate expenditure authority to cover the expenditures of the account(s) inclusive of the awards.

Can units give as many Wethington Awards as they would like?

Yes.

When will Wethington Awards be made?

The Awards will be made once per year on June 30, at the latest. [May 31 payments are encouraged.](#)

What funds are used to support the Wethington Award program?

Units may use [salary reimbursement funds](#) generated through shifting of general fund salary costs to extramural grants and contracts (*i.e.*, ledger 4 accounts). Units may not use salary savings funds, nor may they use state funds budgeted for current operating expenses. Salary reimbursement funds for the Wethington Awards cannot be generated from salary amounts covered by endowment or gift accounts. Any questions about the use of other funding sources should be directed to the Associate Provost for Faculty Advancement's office.

Please note the following definitions:

1. *Salary reimbursement funds* are defined as funds that are generated by moving faculty salary expenses normally paid from state funds to extramural grants and contracts. Some departments may have faculty whose salaries are not fully funded by state funds and for whom these salary reimbursement funds are needed as an integral part of the unit budget. These units may elect not to participate in the Wethington Award program.
2. *Salary savings funds* are defined as those state funds generated in the course of a fiscal year by the resignation, retirement, death, or various types of leaves of a faculty or staff member.

What about benefits?

The units will be responsible for the cost of benefits associated with the award amount. The miscellaneous tax is charged to all wages.

Who will oversee the selection of award recipients?

Faculty have primary appointments in colleges or graduate centers. The colleges and the graduate centers will be responsible for setting the criteria used to select awardees among faculty with primary appointments in their units – ordinarily this oversight responsibility falls to the unit that houses the individual's assignment and supplies the position funding. Some colleges may elect to delegate the responsibility for setting the criteria to departments or divisions that may develop individualized criteria for the selection of awardees. The colleges and graduate program centers will be responsible for overseeing the financial impact of the Wethington Awards program on their budgets.

What is the administrative process for selecting awardees?

Each year, the deans or graduate program center directors will submit to the Provost the following: [1] the specific criteria used to select faculty and the algorithm used to compute the award, [2] a proposed list of nominees and the amount of the award, and [3] the salary reimbursement for each nominee. If there is no change in the selection criteria, the deans or their designee may simply notify Jennifer Haynes in the Associate Provost's office that the process and algorithm for calculating awards in FY23 will be used again in FY24. The Associate Provost's office circulates a standard spreadsheet for completion by the dean and the college business officer. [This spreadsheet will be due in the office of the Associate Provost for Faculty Advancement by May 6, to give ample time for review and resolution of any issues.](#)

This award program is designed to recognize the success of individual faculty in contributing to the University's research program by competitively obtaining extramural funding. The criteria for the selection of nominees must include, at a minimum, evidence of scholarly productivity and excellence such as:

- number of grants submitted and funded as PI or co-PI;
- percent of salary funded from grants;
- refereed publications and quality of journals;
- training of graduate students or postdoctoral fellows;
- regional or national awards;
- patents or commercialization activity.

Each unit will develop their own criteria for the selection of faculty and the algorithm for recommending the award amount. The primary responsibility for determining the award amount rests with the unit which houses the individual's assignment and funding. For example, a department or center may elect to give every faculty member, who published five refereed papers and who generated salary reimbursement funds, 10% of the total salary reimbursement pool in the Department. On the other hand, another department or center may choose to give awards of \$20,000 to each faculty member who graduated at least one Ph.D. student and who generated more than 30% of his/her salary on grants and contracts. Chairs and center directors must discuss the criteria with their faculty, develop a clearly articulated statement as to the criteria that the unit will follow, and apply it uniformly to the faculty in the unit. Units are free to change their criteria from year to year but should communicate these changes to their unit faculty well in advance.

What is the administrative process for making Wethington Awards?

Once the dean or graduate program center director has established the criteria and worked with the business officer/department administrator to calculate the amounts of the awards, the business officer or department administrator should prepare payroll documents prior to the payroll deadline for May or June, depending upon which month the award is being paid. There are two options:

- Prepare a one-time payment form for each recipient, or:
- Create a new assignment for each recipient using the Temporary Faculty title.
(Note: This choice does not necessitate the completion of a new DOE version.)

OTHER FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What if a faculty member is hired during the year and meets the unit's criteria for an award?

This is an issue for the chairs and center directors to resolve. For new faculty, it would be reasonable to pro-rate the Wethington Award or modify the algorithm used to calculate the amount of the award for the months of service.

What if a faculty member leaves the University during the year?

As mentioned earlier, faculty who leave before the June 30 award date will forfeit the award.

What if a faculty member resigns from the University as of July 1, one day after the pay-out is scheduled?

The faculty member is still eligible for the award if he or she is employed by the University on June 30.

What if a faculty member resigns from the University as of July 1, leaves Lexington on April 1, but has less than the required number of terminal vacation days to reach the June 30 date?

The faculty member will forfeit the award. Again, the principle is that faculty will receive an award, assuming they are eligible based on the Provost's and unit's criteria, if they are employed by the University on June 30 of the fiscal year in which the awards are made.

What if a mistake is made and a faculty member is inadvertently deleted, underpaid, or overpaid?

Faculty who are deleted from the master list but who qualified under the guidelines and unit's criteria in a particular year will receive an award the following year. Professor Smith was employed at the University on June 30, 2023, and should have received a \$3,000 Wethington Award. She was not included on the approved list. The unit will be responsible for making an award to Dr. Smith on June 30, 2024, even if she is no longer employed at the University.

Faculty who are underpaid regarding Wethington Awards on June 30, 2024, will receive an award the following year. Professor Jones was employed at the University on June 30, 2023, and received a Wethington Award of \$4,000. However, it is later discovered

that a grant awarded to Dr. Jones was not counted in computing his award. If it had been included, he would have received \$4,500. The unit will be responsible for making a \$500 award to Dr. Jones on June 30, 2024, even if he is no longer employed at the University.

Faculty who are overpaid regarding Wethington Awards on June 30, 2024, will keep the overpayment. The units are responsible for tracking the salary reimbursements and applying the algorithm to distribute the funds. Mistakes that favor the faculty will be the unit's responsibility.

The general principle that we will follow is that these awards will be an annual process; this process should not be a continuous cycle of changes and corrections that occupy considerable administrative time after the June 30 award date.

What if a faculty member is involved in grants and contract activity across different units?

As stated earlier, the responsibility for Wethington Awards resides in the unit holding the primary appointment for the faculty member. Nevertheless, faculty may have PI or co-PI status on grants and contracts in a unit where they hold a secondary appointment.

In those cases where one unit will make no awards and a second unit wishes to make an award, the appropriate deans and graduate program directors should resolve how they will proceed. For example, John Doe has a secondary appointment in a Center that will give Wethington Awards and a primary appointment in a College that will not give awards. The director and the dean agree that Professor Doe will be nominated for a \$5,000 award, funded on salary reimbursement in the Center.

In those cases where two or more units will make awards, the appropriate deans and graduate program directors should resolve how they will proceed so as not to exceed the \$50,000 annual cap. The Provost's Office will "roll up" a master list of all awardees and will notify deans or center directors if there are problems.

The Associate Provost for Faculty Advancement's office should be contacted, *before the deadline date*, only if some accord cannot be reached among units making awards to a specific faculty member. The Provost will make a final decision in the absence of an agreement among the units.

What if a faculty member does not want to receive a personal reward but wants to utilize these award funds to support his or her scholarly activities?

Faculty members who choose to use these funds for research support may accomplish this by requesting that a portion of the award be budgeted within the appropriate operating unit for the purposes requested. Faculty may also choose to make gifts to the University through the Development Office in support of projects other than their own. This needs to be communicated in writing (email is sufficient).

Does the Wethington Award program have any implications for consulting or overload activities?

No. The Wethington Award program is part of the University awards program distributed from the Provost Office and therefore does not pertain to faculty consulting and overload policies.

What if a faculty member generates a significant amount of fee income through activities such as teaching credit/non-credit extension courses? Are these faculty eligible for the Wethington Awards?

The unit would need [1] to request the Provost's approval to use fee income for this purpose, unless the unit had other salary reimbursement funds available that it might distribute (*i.e.*, the unit could "trade" fee income for salary reimbursement funds); and [2] apply the unit's algorithm uniformly to the faculty in the unit (*i.e.*, everyone generating fee income in this unit is treated the same). Finally, in gaining the Provost's approval, it is important to remember that this award program is designed primarily to recognize research contributions of faculty members.

How will benefits be handled? Will units make a non-recurring transfer to the benefits object code? Does this amount have to come from the salary savings or can it be transferred from operating expenses?

The salary reimbursement funds must pay for the benefits, as explained in the guidelines. Salary savings or current expenses are not appropriate sources for either the Wethington Award payment or the associated benefits.

When is the list of nominees due under this program?

The list of nominees is due to the office of the Associate Provost for Faculty Advancement on, or before [May 6](#), to allow ample time for review.

Will this program encourage more faculty to become co-PIs than in the past simply so they could qualify for Wethington Awards?

A co-PI is not an honorific title. Any faculty, who serves as a co-PI and charges a portion of his or her salary to a particular grant or contract, must be able to document that he or she is making a contribution commensurate with the effort charged. If more faculty participated in a substantive way on more grants and contracts than in the past, this would help achieve the intended outcomes listed on the first page of this memorandum.

Since only PIs and co-PIs are eligible, will these awards generate tensions between the faculty and those doing the work, such as graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, and staff who are not eligible?

This is a faculty award program designed to increase the University's extramural grant and contract funding. It is not a general, University awards program. Faculty members are the key individuals who develop ideas and write proposals for extramural funding.

If faculty develop intellectual property to which staff or students have made a direct intellectual contribution, all names should be listed as inventors when these ideas are disclosed to the Intellectual Property Committee. These inventors may participate in any royalty or income generated from this intellectual property. Please see Administrative Regulation AR 7:6 for details (prior AR11-1.1-3).

Should there be standardization across colleges as to what percentage will be used and what criteria will be used to determine who gets the awards? Some colleges may be in a financial position whereby one can pay a greater percentage than another. Will the absence of standardization discourage collaboration among faculty in different colleges?

The circumstances are too diverse across the colleges for standardization to be a viable option. Even within some colleges, we expect that different departments or divisions may have different criteria. It is very important, however, to have equity in decisions that occur for the faculty within a department, center, division, or unit. This policy should not discourage collaboration.

Are faculty in the Research Title Series, who are expected to generate 100% of their salaries from grants and who cannot therefore generate any salary reimbursement, eligible to receive an award?

Faculty in the Research Title Series do not generate salary reimbursement funds. However, these faculty are eligible for the awards. They contribute to the research environment of their units, and they should be rewarded according to the algorithm used by their units. The funding for their awards would come from the pool of salary reimbursement funds available to the entire department or unit.

Is it correct to assume that the Wethington Awards will not figure into the 3/9ths earnings of a faculty member's summer salary (for those who are on nine-month appointments)?

Yes. These are awards, not salary.

Will the process of tracking salary reimbursement become problematic for faculty who are on many grants and whose FES and percentage of salary reimbursement changes periodically?

Departments will need to have a tracking mechanism for all of the changes to FES and the impact on salary reimbursement dollars. In the absence of accurate advance information about awards that might change the calculation, the awards should be based upon the data in the system as of the end of April. (Note: Once an award is made, mistakes in favor of the faculty member will not be correctable. That is, units cannot demand faculty repayment if the unit later discovers a mistake in their accounting or the application of the algorithm.)

Will units be able to use enrichment funds provided by the Office of the Vice President for Research (VPR)?

No. The enrichment funds are provided for research infrastructure needs and cannot be used for faculty salaries or Wethington Awards.

rev Mar 2024 jnh