

**Mobile Communications Equipment and Related Services for University Business
New Policy Effective January 2012**

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS - URBANA-CHAMPAIGN CAMPUS

- 1. Question:** Will current cell phones and Internet data cards being used by employees and purchased through CITES have to be turned in to those offices?

Answer: Assuming employees have not received an exception to continue to use cell phones and Internet data cards purchased through CITES, they must return equipment and data cards to their unit by January 1, 2012, unless they wish to purchase the equipment from the University (see next question). Units may (1) follow the existing University Equipment Disposal Methods guidelines (<http://www.obfs.uillinois.edu/equipment-management/equipment-disposal-methods/>), which includes the requirement to ensure data is removed (per guidelines at <http://www.obfs.uillinois.edu/cms/One.aspx?portalId=909965&pageId=1017389>) or (2) turn equipment into CITES. CITES will surplus the equipment on behalf of the unit. An equipment drop box is available in the CITES Service Request Management office at DCL 1110.

- 2. Question:** Can I buy my phone from the University?

Answer: Yes. The University has received a waiver from the State of Illinois to allow this. Phones may be purchased by contacting your unit business office for information about cost. The cost of the phone to the employee will be calculated using a straight-line depreciation over four years. For example, if the original cost of the phone was \$100, and the phone is one year old, the cost to the employee is \$75. If it is two years old, the cost is \$50, etc. Employees should make arrangements with their unit business offices and make checks payable to the University of Illinois.

- 3. Question:** If I purchase the phone, is there paperwork I need to complete?

Answer: If the initial cost of the phone is over \$500 and, therefore, tracked in Banner in the fixed asset system, a disposal request needs to be completed in FABWEB. If the initial cost of the cell phone is less than \$500, no other paperwork is required.

- 4. Question:** Can I transfer my University cellular phone number to my personal cellular phone plan? If so, how?

Answer: Yes, all carriers have agreed to the transfer of the phone numbers to **employee's** personal cell phone plans. At UIUC, CITES will be scheduling events on campus where major carriers will provide information to employees regarding transfer of phone numbers.

- 5. Question:** What is the minimum contract period if I choose to convert to a personal cell phone plan from the same carrier I am receiving service from through the University?

Answer: An employee may assume the University's existing contract with a service provider. The contract period will depend upon the selected carrier and the individual employee situation. Additional information is available through CITES.

6. Question: I will be receiving a stipend; will it be considered taxable income?

Answer: Yes. Employees may claim any business-related expenses on their personal income tax returns. Please note that the stipend may not be grossed-up by the unit for tax purposes.

7. Question: Will the stipend count towards SURS contributions?

Answer: No.

8. Question: Will the stipend count toward the SURS 6% rule?

Answer: No.

9. Question: My researchers frequently hire staff (non-faculty) that is required to carry cell phones. Will the policy apply to sponsored project employees?

Answer: Yes. The policy applies to all University employees. However, a unit may request an exception to this policy by filling out the Exception Request form, receiving all necessary approvals and submitting it to the Office of the AVP at UIUC as noted in policy.

10. Question: My unit pays for a full-time employee's Internet access. The employee's headquarters are outside of Illinois, and the majority of the employee's work is done online. We pay a pro-rated portion of the monthly fee based on the number of hours the employee works per month. Does the new policy apply to this service?

Answer: Yes. The new policy includes Internet service plans, which means Internet access cannot be paid for by a unit unless approved by the college-level executive (where allowable) or approved via the Exception Request form process. A unit may request an exception to policy by filling out the Exception Request form, receiving all necessary approvals and submitting it to the Office of the AVP at UIUC as noted in policy.

11. Question: The policy permits college-level executives (Deans, Vice Chancellors or Associate Vice Presidents) to approve employee stipend for employees whose job requires mobile communications equipment and data or internet service if the employee works in one of the defined areas of the policy. One of the conditions is "faculty who frequently travel on University business." **How is this defined?**

Answer: The intent of the policy is to allow stipends to only faculty who spend significant time off-campus, particularly those who need to remain in communication with staff on-campus on a continuing basis or research collaborators at other universities or entities. Examples include extension faculty and faculty with grants where the work requires them to spend close to 100 percent of their time off-campus. Faculty who travel to conferences and meetings will continue to be reimbursed for business-related mobile communications and data/internet expenses through the travel reimbursement process. NOTE: Stipends for staff who travel frequently on University business and are not in one of the four qualified groups in the policy will need to be approved via the Exception Request form.

12.Question: Will stipends that were originated for employees under the pilot program all be ended prior to the effective date of the new policy?

Answer: The Office of the AVP at UIUC (or the UA ER/HR office for UA appointments) will send a spreadsheet to each unit that has employees currently receiving stipends. The unit will indicate if the stipend can continue, and under which category of the policy the stipend is allowed for the employee. The unit will also indicate the amount of the stipend, which may remain the same or may need to change due to the new maximums in the policy. All other existing stipends will be deleted with the last pay period of calendar year 2011. The unit will return the spreadsheet, along with any necessary Exception Request forms, to the Office of the AVP at UIUC (or the UA ER/HR Office) for review and approval. The Office of the AVP at UIUC will then forward those spreadsheets to the Human Resources offices who will handle any required changes.

13.Question: Will employees who are currently receiving full or partial reimbursement for data or internet services be required to receive stipends instead?

Answer: Reimbursements for mobile communications and/or Internet expenses will no longer be allowed, other than for those incurred while in travel status. If the unit wishes to continue to assist the employee with data or Internet expenses, the unit will need to initiate a stipend for the employee, following the requirements of the policy.

14.Question: Will exceptions be permitted for the maximum annual dollar amounts by type of service?

Answer: No. The stipends are not intended to fully cover the cost of service for personally owned mobile communications devices or for Internet service. It is assumed there is personal as well as business use of the devices/services, and units should ensure stipends do not allow the employee to fully cover the cost of the equipment and services.

Occasionally, faculty will receive grants that require the use of high-speed data where such charges are allowable under the terms of the grant, and they will be charged to the grant. In such cases, the allowable stipend amounts may be insufficient. In these grant-funded situations only, the faculty member should contact the Office of the AVP at UIUC to determine the best means of meeting their needs. Please note that it is rare that telecommunications costs can be charged to grants since these costs are typically recovered through the Facilities and Administration (indirect cost) rate.

15.Question: If a federal grant allows/requires service for cell phones to be charged to the grant, how should this be handled?

Answer: Most federal grants do not permit telecommunications costs to be charged to grants since these costs are typically recovered through the F & A (indirect cost) rate. However, in cases where such costs are permitted, an employee stipend should be requested. Prior to the implementation of the new Mobile Communications and Related Services Policy on January 1, 2012, a Mobile Equipment/Services and or Internet Services Stipend or Purchase Exception Request form should be completed and submitted to the Office of the AVP at UIUC. Subsequent to January 1, 2012, all completed forms should be submitted to Sr. Director of the Grants and Contracts, Post-Award Office, who will verify that the service is required under the terms of the grant and forward the approved form to the Human Resources Office for processing.

16.Question: What does it mean to have mobile communications equipment and related service plans for groups of employees for University business purposes? How are groups different than individuals?

Answer: Group equipment is not assigned to any one individual, but is used by various individuals on duty at a given time. Some employees in service units with multiple shifts, such as Facilities or Housing, need to be able to communicate with their central offices as they go from location to location conducting their work. However, in the case of group phones, the employee turns in the mobile communications equipment at the end of the shift, and the equipment is used by the next employee on the shift. Such phones typically do not leave the campus, although there are some cases where group equipment is used in the field.

17.Question: What is the process for requesting college-level chief executive approval for the purchase of mobile communications equipment and related service plans for groups of employees who will share the equipment for University business purposes?

Answer: The college-level chief executive can provide approval for the purchase of group equipment and service plans per the policy. See the [Transition Plan and Details For Urbana-Champaign Campus](#) document for specific information about how group equipment and service plans should be requested.

18.Question: Does the new policy apply to pagers or two-way radios?

Answer: No, the policy does not apply unless the device can be used both as a two-way radio/pagers and a cellular device. In those instances, all requirements of the new policy apply.

19.Question: For employees who work in one of the following areas: Advancement, Information Technology, Public Safety and Faculty who Travel Frequently on Business, how do you submit a stipend request through the Human Resources Front End (HRFE) for approval of college-level chief executives (Deans, Vice Chancellors, or Associate Vice Presidents)?

Answer: Complete the appropriate form for these employees (available at <http://www.obfs.uillinois.edu/cms/one.aspx?portalId=909965&pageId=959190>) and process as a HRFE transaction following the job aid available at https://nessie.uihr.uillinois.edu/pdf/hrfe/hrfe_addjob_cellstipend.pdf.

20.Question: When an employee has been approved for a stipend via the Exception Request process, how does the unit process the stipend?

Answer: The unit will process the stipend as a HRFE transaction following the job aid available at https://nessie.uihr.uillinois.edu/pdf/hrfe/hrfe_addjob_cellstipend.pdf. The unit attaches the Exception Form as evidence of the approval of the exception.

21. Question: If an employee receives a stipend to defray the cost of a service contract for personally-owned mobile communications equipment (such as a cell phone or smart phone) and also uses that device for University business, would the data related to the phone calls and text messages received on or sent from that device – including those that are personal -- be subject to disclosure in response to FOIA (Freedom of Information Act) requests? If an employee receives a stipend to defray the cost of a

data contract for personally-owned mobile communications equipment and uses that device to send and/or receive e-mail on a University e-mail account, would the e-mails sent or received on the University e-mail account via that device – including those that are personal -- be subject to disclosure in response to FOIA requests?

Answer: Possibly. Once an employee receives a stipend to defray the cost of a service and/or data contract for personally-owned mobile communications equipment, there is always a risk that data related to phone calls, text messages, and e-mail messages sent from and/or received on that device could be subject to disclosure under FOIA. The definition of public record under FOIA is very broad and includes electronic communications regardless of the physical form of the communication. The FOIA specifies that public records relate to “the transaction of public business” and includes an exemption from disclosure related to personal privacy. However, recent revisions to the FOIA have narrowed certain exemptions and have strengthened the role of the Attorney General’s office in interpreting the application of the FOIA for all public bodies. Accordingly, it is difficult to predict whether data related to personal phone calls, personal text messages, and personal e-mail messages would ultimately be deemed to be protected from disclosure.

22.Question: What constitutes a college-level chief executive?

Answer: The policy defines the college-level chief executive as a Dean, Vice Chancellor, or Associate Vice President. If the unit is not within a college, approval usually must be given by the Vice Chancellor to whom the unit reports. If the unit is a University Administration unit, approval is obtained from the Associate Vice President to whom they report. Large research or administrative units at the Urbana-Champaign campus should contact the Assistant Vice President for Business and Finance for additional information about authorization for directors to serve as college-level chief executives for their units.

23.Question: Can I order cell phones or related equipment now?

Answer: It is not advisable to add new phones/equipment/service plans to be paid for with University funds at this time, given the new policy will go into effect in January. If you have a special need to purchase additional equipment or service at this time, please contact the Office of the AVP at UIUC.

24.Question: Can I terminate my service now?

Answer: Yes. Please contact your telecommunications unit coordinator to notify them; they will provide the information to CITES.

25.Question: Can I obtain an employee discount with the carriers if I transfer my service to my own personal account?

Answer: Most carriers provide discounts to University employees. For Cellular Phone Discount information, see the NESSIE Employee Benefits–Discounts and Other Services web page https://nessie.uihr.uillinois.edu/cf/benefits/index.cfm?Item_ID=1574&rlink=1. Carriers will be on campus to discuss transfer of service to a personal account and any associated discounts on December 1 and December 14. Refer to the CITES web page for details: <http://www.cites.illinois.edu/cellphone/newprovisioning.html>.

26.Question: If I do not request a stipend now and my duties change or if I am a new employee at the University, how do I go about requesting a stipend?

Answer: The unit will use the same forms, processes and approval levels to request a new stipend in the future that are being used for the transition period. The only difference subsequent to January 1, 2012, is that all requests for stipends to be placed on grants will be approved by Sr. Director of the Grants and Contracts Office, Post-Award, who will verify that the service is required under the terms of the grant and forward the approved form to the Human Resources Office for processing.

27.Question: What is the procedure to add a stipend for a faculty member when the unit wishing to add the stipend is not the home organization for the faculty member?

Answer: The executive officer from each unit should sign the form approving the stipend before the stipend request is entered into HRFE. It can be entered by the non-home unit, but will route to the home unit for approval.