

First Report of the IU President's Initiative to Reduce Administrative Barriers to Academic Excellence

February 1, 2017

President Michael A. McRobbie announced the President's Initiative to Reduce Administrative Barriers to Academic Excellence (PIRAB) and appointed a working group to implement the initiative on June 24, 2016. The President charged the working group with "conducting a systematic review of administrative policies and procedures in order to eliminate unnecessary or duplicative ones and to reduce the burdens they impose wherever possible." The President instructed the working group to report to him and to the entire IU community on its initial activities as of the end of 2016.

Following its appointment, the working group solicited input from all faculty and staff and, based on that input and prior IU surveys about administrative barriers, identified a list of initial priorities based on factors including the degree of burden imposed by a policy or practice, the breadth and impact of that burden, and the availability of solutions.

For every policy or practice added to this list, the working group partnered with the responsible unit to address the concerns it posed. While the working group has met every other week, the bulk of the work has been done by the staff in the responsible units. This is an on-going process and many of the issues the working group has identified are going to take more time to resolve fully. However, thanks to the cooperation, open-mindedness, and skill of the colleagues with whom we have worked, there has been tangible progress on a number of fronts, which this report summarizes.

The changes to policies and procedures described below are in effect as of February 1, 2017, unless otherwise noted.

Purchasing and Travel Reimbursement

A number of issues have been raised about purchasing policies and travel reimbursement policies and practices and the burden they place on faculty and staff. The working group is coordinating a wide-ranging review of these issues. As a first step towards simplifying and streamlining our travel reimbursement process, the university will no longer require receipts for travel expenses under \$75.00 except lodging as required by the IRS. *[While the review of purchasing and travel policies is on-going, the new receipt policy is in effect. The travel software is being reprogrammed; in the meantime, travel planners can use the "Missing Receipt" option.]*

Hospitality

Another area that has been the source of many comments is hospitality. One particular area of concern has been the requirement that a meeting must last four or more hours for food to be reimbursed with university funds. This requirement now has been eliminated and the working

group is coordinating with the Office of the Vice President for Finance/CFO to develop a new, more rational policy. *[The new policy should be in effect by May 1, 2017.]*

Similarly, university policy has prohibited university employees from serving alcohol in connection with university business, instead requiring that alcoholic beverages must be provided and served only by licensed caterers with an “off-premises” permit. This meant that any event, no matter how small or informal, if it involved any alcoholic beverage must be catered, thus substantially increasing the expense of such events. This requirement is being eliminated for smaller events, and efforts are underway to update university policy to reduce the costs of, and expand the range of options for, responsibly serving alcohol at university-sponsored events. *[The new policy should be in effect by May 1, 2017.]*

Sponsorships and Other Revenue Producing Activities

In an effort to enhance accountability, the university had considered implementing a policy requiring high-level review of all sponsorship agreements—even for everyday activities such as an external entity funding a coffee break at a conference. The breadth of this potential policy was the subject of a number of comments to the working group. It was determined that a review will only be required for sponsorships of \$10,000 or more.

Similarly, university activities that produce revenue in excess of \$1,000 have been subject to review by the Revenue Processing Committee. Many ordinary activities, such as charging for attendance at a conference, have been covered by this broad requirement, and compliance with it has not only consumed faculty and staff time, but also introduced delays. Effective immediately, the threshold for full committee review has been raised to \$10,000. This should reduce the number of revenue producing activities required to be reviewed by the committee by 38%. In addition, the Revenue Processing Committee will be distributing new applications for review more frequently and implementing electronic sign off for those that are routine and do not require a formal meeting/discussion.

The working group is continuing to look for ways to reduce the burden on faculty and staff who attract sponsorships or engage in other revenue producing activities on behalf of IU.

Residential Programs and Services

IUB has historically charged students in university housing with a \$600 fee if they break their housing contract to participate in a study abroad program. Beginning in 2017-2018, the university will waive that fee when an IUB student participates in a university-approved study abroad program. *[Waivers will be available beginning July 1, 2017.]*

Tuition Benefits

IU has long provided a tuition benefit plan for employees. The University has now established an employee benefit plan that allows up to \$5,250 in tuition benefits to be provided **tax free** for graduate tuition benefits. This will affect over 450 employees currently receiving graduate tuition benefits.

Taxable Fringe Benefits

By federal law, if IU gives faculty or staff tickets to athletic, musical, theatrical, or similar events, it must treat the value of those tickets as taxable income and withhold taxes accordingly. For some employees, however, attendance at an event is required as part of the employee's job duties, in which case the tickets are not taxable. In the past, the university has not always had consistent policies to distinguish between the two situations and, when withdrawing taxes has been required, has on some occasions withdrawn all of the additional taxes in a single pay cycle, resulting in substantially reduced paychecks for some employees.

IU has now clarified which employees are entitled to tickets on a non-taxable basis because their job duties require their attendance at certain athletic or performance events, and assured that for other employees who receive tickets that must be treated as taxable income, the taxes are withheld throughout the year and not in a single paycheck.

Common Identification Card

IU's seven campuses have used a variety of identification cards, none of which worked on other campuses and only one met the state requirements for an identification card. Following significant work by the Office of the Vice President for Information Technology/CIO, the Office of the Vice President for Finance/CFO, and units on every campus, in March the university will roll out a common card system on all IU campuses. The Crimson Card will be valid at any IU campus and a growing list of local merchants around the state. In addition to providing increased convenience for faculty, staff, and students, the move to a common card will provide operational cost savings and increased efficiency for the university. The new card will be more technologically secure, and because it meets state requirements, it also will serve as name verification when voting in Indiana. *[The Crimson Card will be available beginning in March; faculty, staff, and students must replace existing university IDs with the Crimson card by June 30, 2018.]*

New Employee Orientation

IUB, unlike IUPUI, has followed an ad hoc approach to new employee orientation, which has shifted the burden of orienting new employees to academic units and resulted in many new employees receiving insufficient or inconsistent information about IU employee benefits and responsibilities. Following consultation with the working group, Human Resources has recently begun providing new employees on the Bloomington campus with a half-day training and

orientation. The program will be constantly reviewed to ensure that IU is providing its employees with the appropriate and required information without overwhelming them on their arrival to IU.

Automatic Policy Review

IU has more than 400 policies. While the working group can spearhead reviews of some of the most burdensome of these, it is important that they all be reviewed regularly to ensure that they are still necessary, effective, and no more burdensome than necessary. IU Vice Presidents will now be expected to engage in an ongoing policy review cycle as indicated in UA-08 “Establishing University Policies,” to ensure that every policy is reviewed at least once every three years.

Respectfully submitted,

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