

Special Expense Spending Guidelines

Special Expenses

Special expenses are extraordinary expenses incurred in connection with work-related responsibilities or official functions not generally supported with public funds.

The most common special expenses include:

- Food
- Promotional items
- Clothing

Process

1. Determine if a Special Expense form is necessary by utilizing the Expense Guidelines chart below.
2. Complete the Special Expense form before the purchase is made or the service started.
3. Obtain all the necessary signatures, then submit to Business Services.
4. Business Services will review and make a determination within one week of the form arriving to their office unless the information on the form is incomplete or needs further clarification. If further information is needed, Business Services will work to make a determination within two weeks.
5. Make the purchase via Purchase Order, University purchasing card, or Employee Expense Report. A copy of the approved Special Expense form must be submitted with the appropriate documentation.

Authorization/Approval of Special Expenses

The president has delegated authority to the University Comptroller for approval/denial of special expense requests. Approval is required BEFORE any special expense or commitment has occurred.

If employees incur a special expense before approval, the payment may be denied, and the employee may be personally responsible for the payment.

Expense Guidelines

The following chart provides a guide to special expense eligibility defined in [Board Policy 5.20](#) and [System Procedure 5.20.1](#).

FOOD, BEVERAGES & RELATED ITEMS All food/beverages (meals, groceries, snacks, candy, beverages, etc.) require a Special Expense form. See examples below.	Special Expense Eligibility See Dining Services policies for on-campus food purchases.
• Meetings (routine) for staff of divisions, offices, or units	Not allowed
• Meetings/meals with members of boards, commissions, task forces, or workgroups of local, federal, state government officials	Yes. Effort should be made to schedule events to minimize the cost of meals and related expenses.
• Staff development/training/retreats	Yes, if part of the structured agenda AND necessary to sustain the flow of the meeting or retain audience.
• Hiring/search process	See HR search committee policies and process .
• University sponsored meetings, receptions for speakers, performers, commencements; conferences, etc. that have predominantly non-employees.	Yes
• University meetings (President's Address, Employee Award Ceremony, etc.)	Yes
• System-wide training sessions held on campus with an external party conducting the training	Yes
• Food or meals to be provided by the University per an executed contract.	Special expense form not required if stated in the contract and follows the Commissioner Plan rates. Meals should not be charged to a University purchasing card.
• Years of service events (all employees invited)	Yes, through HR only.
• Alcoholic beverages	Not allowed
• Employee parties- (holiday, retirement, office, etc.)	Not allowed

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CONFERENCES/TRAINING	Special Expense Eligibility
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tuition/registration is greater than \$1,000 	Yes, include conference/training agenda
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meals exceed maximum state allowances 	Yes, include conference/training agenda

GIVE-AWAYS	Special Expense Eligibility
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotional Items/Give-Aways- items given out at events and items used to promote the university (clothing, prizes, tokens of appreciation, etc) 	Yes, MSUM branded items must be purchased from a licensed vendor. A list of items must be included, where they will be given out and to whom. Items more than \$25 each require a Gift Reconciliation form to be completed.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gift Cards 	Yes. A Gift Reconciliation form must be completed regardless of the amount. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gift cards cannot be given in lieu of compensation for services. Gift cards given out to students may be reported to the Office of Scholarship & Financial Aid.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey incentives 	Yes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gifts to guest speakers (including items from MSUM Bookstore) 	Yes, if non-cash/non-negotiable item of nominal value

CLOTHING	Special Expense Eligibility
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All clothing: Faculty/staff/student clothing to include stoles/sashes/honor cords with the exceptions below: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Required clothing such as public safety uniforms, steel toe shoes, and other required clothing per union contracts Student athletic team uniforms (student only) Student club sport team uniforms (student only) 	Yes, and a list of names must be included. Also: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MSUM branded clothing must be purchased from a licensed vendor. Clothing may be taxable per IRS regulations. Uniforms are the property of the university. Include “Uniforms for students only” on all documentation.

ENTERTAINMENT/PROGRAMMING	Special Expense Eligibility
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Private Club memberships 	Not allowed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employee parties (holiday, retirement, office, etc.) 	Not allowed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programming- activities/events/supplies that are educational and have specified learning outcomes for the participants involved. 	Yes, activities must align with the University, department, and/or student organization’s mission or purpose statement.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Entertainment (anything that is NOT programming) 	Not allowed

OTHER	Special Expense Eligibility
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appliances (refrigerators, microwaves, coffee makers, etc) 	Generally not allowed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plants/Flowers 	Generally not allowed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Office decor 	Not allowed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personal items (tissues, paper products, food and entertainment, etc.) 	Generally not allowed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cards (e.g., thank you cards, greeting cards for various occasions, etc.) 	Generally not allowed. MSUM branded cards purchased through Marketing do not require a Special Expense form.

Special Expense Form

Prior Approval Required

Requestor: _____ Dept/Student Org: _____ Phone #: _____

1. Approval is requested for the following: (check all that apply)			
	Food/meals/refreshments		Registration/tuition for conference/training over \$1,000 per participant
	Gift card/Gift purchase- complete Gift Reconciliation for: -ALL Gift cards - Gift items over \$25		Programming: Student focused Campus-wide Departmental
	Give-Aways/Promotional Items- <i>provide list of items</i>		Full cost of meal that is part of a conference, etc.
	Clothing/Apparel- <i>provide list of names</i>		Other:
2. Conference, meeting, event information (if not applicable, skip to step 3)			
Name:		Date(s) & Times:	
Location:			
3. List the anticipated number of attendees from the following groups (if not applicable, skip to step 4)			
Students:	State employees*:	Non-State Employees/Community members:	
*List State employee names:			
4. How does this expense fulfill the mission/strategic priorities of the University or student organization? Describe how this is in the best interest of your student organization/department.			
5. Description of Expense(s)			6. Total Amount Requested
7. Funding source(s)		8. Payment method (check/complete all that apply)	
Cost center #	\$ Amount	PO #:	
		MSUM Purchasing Cardholder name:	
		Employee/Student Expense Report (reimbursement) name:	
		On campus charge (Sodexo, Marketing, Bookstore)	

Approvals - I certify that the above expenses comply with Minnesota State board procedure 5.20.1.			
			Not Approved:
			Approved \$ not to exceed:
Requestor	Signature	Date	
Budget Supervisor/Student Org Advisor/Director/Dean/VP	Signature	Date	
Office of Student Activities Approver (if applicable)	Signature	Date	
Karen Lester	Signature	Date	
MSUM Comptroller	Signature	Date	

Requestor will be emailed the signed form and is responsible for distribution. An approved Special Expense form must be attached to the form of payment (Expense Report, PO, PCard online transaction, etc).