

<b>Policies of the University of North Texas</b>	Chapter 14
8.5 Use of University Non-Wireless and Wireless Telephones, Telephone Lines, Fax Machines and Personal Computing Devices	<b>Chapter Name</b> Information Technology

**Policy Statement.**

The University establishes the following policy concerning: 1) the use of university telephones, telephone lines, fax machines, and computers for electronic messages for reasons other than official university business, 2) the use of university-provided or employee wireless telephones, and 3) the use of university-provided or employee-owned personal computing devices.

**Application of Policy.**

All Faculty, Staff, and Student Employees

**Definitions.**

None.

**Procedures and Responsibilities.**

**1. General Policy**

It is the policy of the University that university telephones, telephone lines, and fax machines are available for faculty, staff, and student employees to use in carrying out official university business. Except as provided below, long distance calls, transmissions, and electronic mail messages that are not related to official university business should be avoided. In addition, special rules for the use of cell phones and personal computing devices (PCD's), such as iPads, tablet computers, etc. that lack the full functional capability of standard desktop or laptop computers, are provided in section 4 below.

The placing and receiving of phone calls from university-provided phones, faxes, or electronic mail messages for reasons other than official university business should be very infrequent and are permissible only if proper supervisory approval is granted. Faculty, staff, and student employees should make every effort to minimize receiving calls, faxes, or electronic mail messages unrelated to university business while at work. Any faculty, staff, or student employee who abuses these privileges may be subject to disciplinary action under applicable university policies.

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Faculty, staff, and student employees may need to occasionally use university telephones, telephone lines, and fax machines for personal reasons. Normally, such use should not result in additional costs or damage nor hinder the day-to-day operation of an office. Incidental use of such equipment is not considered to be a misapplication of State property, and is permissible so long as it does not unduly interfere with the individual's assigned responsibilities or the normal functioning of an office. Use of such items is considered to be a misapplication of State equipment if it results in additional costs being incurred or damage to the equipment, hinders day-to-day operations, or is otherwise deemed to be excessive or inappropriate.

Responsible Party: Faculty, Staff, and Student Employees

## **2. Long Distance Personal Calls by Faculty, Staff and Student Employees**

Long distance calls include any call that is not local or free of charge to the University, including calls made via Metro lines. In instances where it is necessary to place a personal long distance call over a university phone, a personal telephone credit card must be used or the call must be collect or charged to a third party.

Occasionally a personal long distance call may occur by accident or may be necessary in the case of a personal emergency. When such a situation arises, the call (s) must be reimbursed promptly through the Purchasing and Payment Services Department, Special Payment Section (which acts as a neutral third party in the collection of such reimbursements). Long distance personal calls that are billed to the University should not occur routinely or on a regular basis; if so, regardless of the time of day, dollar amount, or the callers intent to reimburse the call (s), these long distance personal calls are strictly prohibited and may subject the faculty, staff, or student employee to disciplinary action under applicable university policies.

Telecommunications records are periodically reviewed by the UNT System Internal Audit Department for compliance with this policy and established accounting procedures.

Responsible Party: Employees and Purchasing and Payment Services Department, Special Payment Section

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### **3. State Telephone System Use**

Faculty, staff, and student employees may be held liable for the cost difference between a non-state telecommunications system call (e.g., regular long distance carrier like AT&T, Sprint, and Verizon) and a system call (e.g., TexAn network.) Calls placed using the main campus telephone system are automatically routed over the TexAn network or an alternative network (Metro, Premium, etc.). However, calls placed from off-campus locations (e.g., grant project sites, field/remote offices, etc.) where the University pays for the telephone services may require the dialing of a special code, in some circumstances, to access the TexAn network. Per University of North Texas Payment Services Division policy guidelines, all telephone services, both on-campus and off-campus, must be coordinated through the Telecommunications Department. Departments utilizing telephone services at off-campus sites will be provided with the proper dialing procedures and are responsible for informing their employees about these procedures.

Responsible Party: Telecommunications Department

### **4. Cell phones and personal computing devices (“PCD’s”)**

The purpose of this section is to establish a university policy regarding payments of allowances for the use of personal cell phones and PCD’s in conducting university business and, under limited conditions, for the provision of university-provided cell phones or PCD’s to employees. This policy is intended to provide an alternative to the need for many employees to carry two cell phones (for university and personal use), to simplify payments and associated record keeping, and to eliminate potential problems over personal use of university-provided cell phones.

#### **A. General Availability**

The University will provide an allowance for charges incurred as the result of an employee’s use of a personal cell phone for official business when the employee has an official state business need for the phone. The University will provide an allowance for charges incurred as a result of an employee’s use of a PCD for official business when the employee has an official state business need for the device, but an employee will be provided an allowance for only one data plan for either the cell phone/ personal digital assistant (PDA) or for a PCD.

Responsible Party: Telecommunications Department

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## **B. Basic Cell Phone/Data Plan Allowance**

The University will provide an allowance to regular retirement-eligible faculty and staff members for the use of a personal cell phone, cell phone with a data plan, or for a data plan for a PCD for official business purposes. Examples of official state business reasons why an employee may need a cell phone include but are not limited to: the employee travels frequently, the employee is frequently out of the office, the employee uses the phone on job sites where wired phones are not available, or the employee is a member of key personnel who are needed in the event of an emergency.

The employee's department head as well as the Dean or Vice President responsible for the department must approve the request for the allowance and provide funding for the allowance. To receive the allowance for a cell phone or a PCD or for the accompanying voice or data plan, the employee must complete a *Cell Phone/Personal Computing Device Allowance or Purchase Request form* justifying the need and sign the form indicating that he/she has read and understands this policy. The department head's signature on the form authorizes the Payroll Department to establish the allotment covering the allowance. The employee is eligible for an allowance for both a cell phone/PDA and a PCD, although only one data plan allowance can be issued to an employee.

The employee is responsible for contracting with a service provider for cell phone or personal computing device data plans, paying any initial plan charges, purchasing the cell phone or PCD itself, and paying the plan's monthly bills. The University will pay an initial allowance for the purchase of the telephone instrument or PCD equal to 50 percent of the purchase price of the instrument or device, but not to exceed \$150 for PDA's and PCD's and \$50 for non-PDA (cell phone) instruments. The employee must submit a purchase receipt or invoice itemizing the purchase price of the instrument. An employee is eligible to receive an allowance for the purchase of a cell phone and a PCD every 36 months if the employee chooses to upgrade his/her telephone instrument or PCD.

The University will provide a flat-rate monthly allowance, independent of the cell phone provider selected by the employee, of \$10 for text messaging (to replace a pager service), either \$20, \$30, or \$40 per month for employees using only basic voice services, and for the actual monthly charge for advanced data services or PCD data plans not to exceed \$40 per month. Employees requesting allowances or purchase allowances for advanced voice and data services or PCD data services must justify their request and show why their position at the University requires the advanced services.

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The allowance amounts shown above will be reviewed annually by the Telecommunications Department and may be adjusted to reflect changes in available rate plans and instrument costs.

The Telecommunications Department will send a list of persons receiving reimbursements under this policy to the Vice President to whom each person receiving a reimbursement reports annually. The Vice President is required to review eligibility and basic cell phone or PCD data plan allowances of employees on his/her lists and to verify the employees' eligibility for reimbursement by having the employees demonstrate that they are still utilizing cell phone or PCD data service for business purposes at the reimbursement level for which they are being reimbursed. (Employees may present copies of their cell phone bills to demonstrate continuing eligibility for cell phone allowances.) The certified lists must be returned to the Telecommunications Department by the deadline dates indicated on the forms, at which time the Telecommunications Department will notify the Payroll Department of employees whose reimbursements have been deleted. Changes to reimbursement rates must be submitted by the employees' departments on payroll authorization forms. It is the responsibility of the employee to inform the department head of any changes in his/her status or need for the use of the phone or PCD.

All monthly allowances and instrument/PCD purchase allowances will be paid as miscellaneous additions to the employee's regular paycheck and are subject to the Federal Insurance Contributions Act (FICA) and tax withholding. Employees may choose to detail their cell phone expenses as a business expense when filing income tax forms.

The cell phone or PCD acquired by the employee is considered to be the personal property of the employee and accordingly shall be used in any way the employee deems appropriate. Any service contract the employee might enter into regarding the acquisition or operation of the cell phone is personal to the employee. The University shall have no obligation or make any guarantees with respect to such contract to the employee or the service provider. The University will not reimburse employees for applications purchased for use on a PCD that is owned by the employee.

Responsible Party: Employees/ Telecommunications Department

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### **C. Exceptional Cell Phone or Personal Computing Device Allowance**

If an employee requires an allowance greater than the amounts provided under the basic cell phone/PCD allowance, then the employee must submit a completed *Exceptional Cell Phone/Personal Computing Device Allowance or Purchase Request form* to his/her department head giving detailed justification by itemizing the total cost of the requested plan, the total minutes available in the plan, identifying the number of minutes used for University business (highlighting calls on a current phone bill if possible) and specifying the percentage of the total bill that is being requested. **All requests for Exceptional Cell Phone Allowances must be approved by the Vice President for Finance and Administration or his/her designee.**

An employee will be eligible for a maximum of up to \$60 per month for basic voice services under the Exceptional Cell Phone allowance. Employees are also eligible for up to \$40 per month for an advanced data services/PCD data plan allowance and \$10 per month if they are using text messaging (to replace a pager service).

Once the request is approved, the *Exceptional Cell Phone/Personal Computing Device Allowance or Purchase Allowance form* the employee must re-submit the form annually to the employee's department head with the justification updated and a representative cell phone bill or PCD data plan bill attached. The request must be reviewed and approved by the department head. *Exceptional Cell Phone Allowance forms* are sent to the Telecommunications Department after approval by the Vice President for Finance and Administration. The Telecommunications Department will randomly audit a sample of those forms for accuracy of the calculations used to determine eligibility for the allowance authorized. It is the responsibility of the employee to inform the department head of any changes in his/her status or need for the use of the phone.

The employee is responsible for contracting with a cell phone or PCD data plan service provider, for paying any initial plan charges, for the purchase of the cell phone or PCD itself, and for paying the plan's monthly bills. The University will pay an initial allowance for the purchase of the telephone instrument or PCD equal to 50 percent of the purchase price of the instrument or device, but not to exceed \$150 for PDA's and PCD's and \$50 for non-PDA (cell phone) instruments. The employee must submit a purchase receipt or invoice itemizing the purchase price of the instrument. An employee is eligible to receive this allowance every 36 months if the employee chooses to upgrade his/her telephone instrument or PCD.

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The University will reimburse employees for applications purchased for use on a PCD that is owned by the University, if the application is needed for legitimate business purposes. The employee is responsible for purchasing the application(s) and requesting reimbursement for the purchase through normal reimbursement procedures.

All monthly allowances and instrument/PCD purchase allowances will be paid as miscellaneous additions to the employee's regular paycheck and are subject to FICA and tax withholding. Employees may choose to detail their cell phone/data plan expenses as a business expense when filing income tax forms.

The cell phone or PCD acquired by the employee is considered to be the personal property of the employee and accordingly shall be used in any way the employee deems appropriate. Any service contract the employee might enter into regarding the acquisition or operation of the cell phone/PCD is personal to the employee. The University shall have no obligation or make any guarantees with respect to such contract to the employee or the service provider. The University will not reimburse employees for applications purchased for use on a PCD that is owned by the employee.

Responsible Party: Employee, Telecommunications Department, VP Finance and Administration

#### **D. University-Owned Cell Phones/Personal Computing Devices and Plans**

The University will provide university-owned cell phones only for groups of UNT employees who have a demonstrated need for the frequent use of a cell phone. Examples of groups that might qualify for the issuance of a university-owned phone are groups responsible for infrastructure support (facilities, data communications, etc.,) key on-call personnel, and public safety personnel. Users are encouraged to utilize two-way radio-like cell phones, where possible, that do not have the capability to place or receive traditional cell phone calls. These instruments should, where possible, be distributed to employees on a daily basis and stored in secure locations on campus after normal business hours.

If there is a specific need to utilize traditional cell phones, the requestor is responsible for estimating the required number of minutes that will be required each month on the *University-Owned Cell Phone/PCD Request form*. The requesting department will pay for monthly plans for use of the phone in the conduct of University business. University-owned cell phones provided under this policy **may not be used for personal business**

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except in emergency situations. If such use results in excessive minute charges, the employee must reimburse the University for such charges. Plans selected under this option should include a reasonable estimate of the number of minutes that are expected to be used per month, and the employee's department head should review the phone usage annually to determine whether the phone is still needed for University business and determine if the most cost-effective plan is in effect.

Similarly, the University will provide a university-owned PCD only for groups of UNT employees who have a demonstrated need for the frequent use of such a device. Examples of groups that might qualify for the issuance of a university-owned PCD are groups responsible for development or support of services for that type of device (Web development, wireless networking, e-mail, etc.) Student employees, including graduate assistants and research assistants, may be issued PCD's under this policy when a specific business-related need to do so is identified. As with other employees who have been issued a PCD, the authorizing department authority should review the student employees' PCD data plan bills on a frequent basis.

To receive a university-owned cell phone or PCD, the employee must complete a *University-Owned Cell Phone/Personal Computing Device Request* form justifying the need and sign the form indicating that he/she has read and understands this policy. The department head and Dean/VP signatures on the form authorize the transfer of funds to the Telecommunications Department to pay for the phone and for costs of the cell phone or data service plan. Purchases of university-approved PCD's are the responsibility of the purchasing department. Any requests for a University provided cell phone or PCD must be approved by the Vice President for Finance and Administration.

The department head is required to review the eligibility of employees using university-owned cell phones or PCD data plans on an annual basis and to certify the continuing eligibility of the phone or PCD. Random audits of cell phone usage will be performed on an annual basis by the Telecommunications Department to ensure that the phones are being used only for official state/university business. It is the responsibility of the employee to inform the department head of any changes in his/her status or need for the use a university-owned cell phone.

**Responsible Party:** Department Heads/Telecommunications  
Department/Employees



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## E. Exceptions

Special circumstances of an employee's job responsibilities at the University may justify exceptions to the standard policy above. **Any exception to the policy must be approved by the Vice President for Finance and Administration.**

Responsible Party: Vice President for Finance and Administration

### References and Cross-references.

Article IX, Sec. 123 of the 1995 Appropriations Act

UNT Policy 1.2.9, [Ethics Policy, Number \( see Section 8, System Property and Services, Item 8.3, Telephones\)](#); and,

UNT Policy 1.7.1, [Performance Counseling and Discipline Policy, , \(see Section 3, Definition of Minor Rule Violations, Item 20, Engaging in excessive visiting, personal conversations, or use of the telephone for personal use\).](#)

UNT Policy 3.10, Computer Use

UNT Policy 6.1, University Mail Services Policy,(Section G, Personal Mail).

### Forms and Tools.

Cell Phone/PCD Allowance/Purchase Request form  
Request for a University-Owned Cell Phone request form  
Exceptional Cell Phone/PCD Allowance/Purchase Request form

Forms for this policy are available at: <http://telecom.unt.edu/>

Approved: 8/10/2010

Effective: 8/10/2010

Revised: