HOLIDAY ENTERTAINMENT AND GIFTS; PROPER USE OF GIFT CARDS

Holiday Entertainment and Gift Guidelines:

Individual departments may choose to use part of their entertainment budget during the holiday season for a group celebration either at a campus location or at a restaurant. With respect to the giving of gifts during the holidays, however, here are some guidelines to consider:

**Departmental Bonuses:** The WWU Christmas party is the official holiday celebration for WWU employees. Bonuses are distributed University-wide through direct deposit in coordination with this event. No other bonus is to be provided to employees from departmental funds. De minimis* departmentally funded gifts may be given in connection with holiday celebrations, especially to student workers who do not participate in Christmas bonuses. However, these holiday gifts should consist of non-cash items such as food, inspirational, or practical items, with a nominal value ($25 or less).

**Gift Cards Prohibited:** Gift cards (or other forms of cash or near-cash) are not to be used in connection with holiday-related entertainment unless the source for the gift was derived from personal funds.

**Other Christmas Gifts:** Any gifts exchanged between employees are to be purely voluntary, and gifts are only allowed to be top-down or peer-to-peer. Such gifts would be purely personal expenses. Individual employees should not give a gift to their supervisor as this can create pressure for others within the department to do the same, or worse, this could create a quid pro quo appearance or environment. Department supervisors should not discriminate between employees or give lavish annual gifts to their employees, as this could damage employee relations (within or outside the department).

**Proper Gift Card Usage:**

Gift cards may be purchased with University funds only in the following situations:

1. As part of an event where a non-employee group (e.g., prospective students) is participating in a competition or drawing, and the combined gift card amount is less than $250. (Non-Taxable).
2. To reward WWU stakeholders (including volunteers, visitors and non-employee WWU students) for acts of non-remunerable kindness in the amount of $25 or less. (Non-Taxable)
3. For emergency student aid (e.g., for food and other urgent living expenses) in coordination with the Student Financial Services department. (Non-taxable).
4. For significant work-related achievements by an employee. This should only be done with approval from the appropriate Vice President, and in coordination with payroll for tax reporting. Receipt of a gift card should be a rare occurrence, as a reward for a job extraordinarily well done. No $25 congratulatory gift cards to all department employees, please. (Taxable).

Gift cards purchased with university funds not meeting the above criteria will be charged to the personal account of the employee who purchased or authorized the purchase of the cards. If in doubt, please contact the Controller’s Office at x2104 for pre-authorization.


The law does not specify a value threshold for benefits to qualify as de minimis. The determination will always depend on facts and circumstances. The IRS has given advice at least once, in 2001, that a benefit valued at $100 **did not** qualify as de minimis. Examples of Excludable De Minimis Fringe Benefits: All of the following may be excludable if they are occasional or infrequent, not routine: • Personal use of photocopier (no more than 15% of total use) • Group meals, employee picnics • Theater or sporting event tickets • Occasional coffee, doughnuts, or soft drinks • Flowers or fruit for special circumstances • Local telephone calls • Traditional birthday or holiday gifts (not cash) with a low FMV • Employer-provided local transportation, etc.