

Release Time Distribution (RTD) Policy
College of Education and Human Development
Effective July 2012

Purpose

RTD is intended to be a reward and incentive for full-time instructional faculty who have a substantial portion of their annual salary supported by external funding (i.e., the message communicated by RTD funding is intended to be “thank you and please continue to bring external funding to the College”). It is *not* intended for faculty who were hired to fill a grant-funded position or for faculty who are obligated by their job description to seek external funding.

Source and Uses of Funding

RTD is simply a portion of the salary the College would have paid to the faculty member had it not been paid by an external sponsor (or sponsors). Yet it is not salary. It is money that is put in a “professional spending account” and available only to the faculty member who earned it. The funding can be used for any professional expenses deemed appropriate within the general purchasing rules of the College, University, and Commonwealth of Virginia (e.g., approved travel, technology, wage support, professional dues and subscriptions, etc.). Because the source of RTD funding (i.e., salary savings) is part of the state-appropriated fiscal year budget, it cannot be carried forward from one fiscal year to the next. That is why an RTD award must be spent within the fiscal year it is awarded, following fiscal year spending guidelines.

Eligibility – Who

Full-time tenured, tenure-track, and term instructional faculty are eligible unless they were hired with a contractual requirement that their salaries be partially covered by external funding.

Research, professional, and administrative faculty are not eligible unless a waiver is provided by the Dean or by the Senior Associate Dean on his/her behalf (only possible if the case clearly conforms to the purpose of RTD).

Eligibility – When

Eligible faculty receive RTD funding when at least 20% of their academic year salary (or 20% of the 9-month equivalent fiscal year salary for 12-month faculty) is paid from grants or contracts on which they serve as the PI or co-PI. The funding can be from one source or multiple sources. (Note that the 9-month conversion factor for 12-month faculty is 9/11ths, not 9/12ths.)

Eligible faculty who meet the 20% salary coverage requirement but are not serving as a PI or co-PI also receive RTD, but only at half the normal reward level (on the assumption that the entrepreneurial effort required to acquire the funding came primarily from the PI/co-PI).

To avoid having faculty artificially “pile up” grant salary coverage in a single year of a multi-year budget (thus violating effort reporting rules), faculty with multi-year grants may sum salary coverage percentages over the multiple years of the grant (e.g., whereas 7% salary coverage would not qualify for RTD in a single-year grant, 7% each year for 3 years in a multi-year grant WOULD qualify when the 3rd year of the grant is initiated).

How RTD is computed

The basic concept is that, instead of 100% of the salary savings going to the College, 40% of the salary savings are returned to the PI after subtracting out the replacement cost needed to staff the courses that the PI is not teaching due to their faculty role and time “released” from teaching to fulfill their grant obligations.

(NOTE: the up-front “cost of adjunct replacements” subtraction assumes III-C matrix level of adjunct pay.)

The RTD formula is thus applied as follows:

UT = University Teacher faculty role (base 4-4 teaching load)

US = University Scholar faculty role (base 3-2 teaching load)

UR = University Researcher faculty role (base 2-2 teaching load)

TT = tenure-track faculty in their initial 3-year contract (base 2-2 teaching load)

UT/US covers 20-34% of salary on grants

RTD = 40%* of salary savings after subtracting out 2 course adjunct replacement**

UT/US covers 35-49% of salary on grants OR
*UR/TT covers 20-34% of salary on grants****

RTD = 40% of salary savings after subtracting out 3 course adjunct replacement

UT/US covers 50%+ of salary on grants OR
UR/TT covers 35-49% of salary on grants

RTD = 40% of salary savings after subtracting out 4 course adjunct replacement

UR/TT covers 50%+ of salary on grants

RTD = 40% of salary savings after subtracting out 5 course adjunct replacement

*Non-PIs who meet the percentage thresholds defined above receive 20% (rather than 40%) of the salary savings after subtracting out the cost of adjunct replacement faculty.

**For those in the US and UR roles, the adjunct replacement subtraction is based on a 3-3 starting point because the budget model used to insure the affordability of this reward is based on the teaching load in place for all tenure-line faculty when the RTD formula was first created in the early 1990s. (Note that faculty in a UR role are free to switch to a US role if that is, overall, a more advantageous fit for their circumstances.)

*** Modification in the formula for this italicized group only: the adjunct replacement subtraction is reduced by \$2000 for Assistant Professors and by \$1000 for Associate Professors. This modification is necessary because the formula does not yield an adequate incentive for faculty with high adjunct replacement costs relative to their salaries and amount of salary covered by grants.

Essential Information Related to Effort Reporting

The percentage of time a faculty member allocates to grant activity within an academic year (or fiscal year for faculty on 12-month contracts) MUST be an accurate representation of the actual effort expended. If effort reporting requirements create a circumstance where no RTD reward is earned but arguably some kind of recognition *should* have been earned from an equity perspective, the PI should discuss this concern with the Dean or Senior Associate Dean.