



University of Kentucky
College of Social Work

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Memorandum

Date: January 15, 2026

To: CoSW Faculty and Staff

CC: CoSW Administrative Team, Business Office, HR

From: J. Jay Miller, Dean

RE: Professional Membership and Conference Funding Support

This memo is intended to provide information pertinent to professional membership and conference attendance. Information contained in this memo corresponds with previous communications pertaining to the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) findings associated with the University of Kentucky (UK).

As most are aware, the College of Social Work (CoSW) provides substantive support for professional activities. We have been, and remain, committed to ensuring we provide resources to develop our people.

That said, recent policies and protocols emanating from the United States OCR, and the UK Offices of the President and Provost, necessitate the need for the implementation of additional criteria for utilization of professional development funds.

Per new guidelines, as a general rule, CoSW cannot allocate funds for professional memberships or conference attendance associated with groups/organizations that have not been deemed mission-critical. UK Legal has published a list of 400 mission-critical organizations. If an organization is on the mission-critical list, CoSW may utilize funds to support conference attendance and membership. To receive support, individuals should be presenting academic work or be taking part with the organization in a professional capacity deemed appropriate by CoSW.

In addition to the list of 400 mission-critical organizations, UK Legal has published a list of 1,200 organizations in which CoSW may be permitted to provide support for attendance/membership. If the organization is on the list of 1,200, the faculty/staff member must present academic work or be otherwise involved in a formal academic capacity to be eligible for financial support. In these instances, CoSW must adhere to the following guidelines:

- Funding for membership is restricted unless membership is *required* to present academic work. Please note that a discounted registration is not sufficient rationale for supporting the membership.
- CoSW must document this as an academic freedom exception and include relevant information associated with the academic work.

The list of organizations and their current status can be accessed via the following site:
https://pres.uky.edu/sites/default/files/2025-12/uk_ocr_report.pdf

Effective immediately, all financial support for travel to conferences will undergo a compliance review. Here are a few points for general guidance:

- Conference travel may only be approved for faculty presenting academic work OR participating in the conference on behalf of CoSW, in an academic or administrative capacity.
- Staff travel to conferences for specified *training* may be considered on a case-by-case basis.

For efficiency, this review will occur as part of the routine Purchase Request (PR) submission process. Andrea Deweese, CoSW Chief Wellbeing Officer, has been charged with ensuring the use of all professional development funds, including start-up funding, adhere to the guidelines set forth by UK.

We will continue to monitor developments associated with the OCR. As well, we continue to work with UK Legal regarding the designation of mission-critical organizations. As soon as we are able, we will revisit the parameters set forth above.

If you have any questions, pertaining to the use of your professional development (I³) or start-up funds, please contact Andrea Deweese.

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