

Personal Use of University Resources

OVERVIEW

(*RCW 42.52.160*)

(*WAC 292-110-010*)

State officers and state employees are obligated to conserve and protect state resources for the benefit of the public interest, rather than their private interests. Responsibility and accountability for the appropriate use of state resources ultimately rests with the individual state officer and state employee, or with the state officer or state employee who authorizes such use.

A University employee may not use state resources under her or his official control, direction, or custody for private benefit or gain of the employee or any other person.

The use of state resources related to the conduct of official business is permitted. The use of state resources for any purpose other than official state duties is governed by state law (*RCW 42.52, Ethics in Public Service; WAC 292-110-010, Use of State Resources*). These laws provide for the personal use of state resources under limited circumstances. This policy sets forth the guidelines for permissible, limited, and prohibited uses of state resources regardless of the type of state resource.

Applicability

This policy applies to all state resources, including any person, money, or property. It applies to computers, technological resources such as network bandwidth, and mechanical and nonmechanical devices.

The prohibitions regarding the use of public resources do not apply to the use of public resources to benefit another person as part of the officer's or employee's official duties.

REPORTING VIOLATIONS

See *BPPM 10.22*.

RESOURCE USE

Specifically Prohibited

The following private uses of state resources are specifically prohibited:

- Any use for the purpose of conducting an outside business.
- A use for the purpose of supporting, promoting, or soliciting for an outside organization or group unless provided for by law or authorized by the University President or designee.
- Any campaign or political activity (*BPPM 20.35* and *WAC 504-33* and *WAC 504-35* govern the use of University facilities, equipment, or services used for political activity).

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- Specifically Prohibited (cont.)**
- Commercial uses such as advertising or selling.
 - Any illegal activity.
 - Any use in violation of University policy.
 - Any personal use of state property that has been removed from state facilities or other official duty stations, even if there is no cost to the state.

Qualifications

Use of state resources pursuant to requirements in this section is subject to the following qualifications and limitations:

- A University employee may not use state resources for the purpose of assisting a campaign for election of a person to an office or for the promotion of or opposition to a ballot proposition. Such a use of University resources is not authorized by this rule and is specifically prohibited by *RCW 42.52.180*, subject to the exceptions in *RCW 42.52.180(2)*.
- A University employee may not make private use of any state property that is consumable such as paper, envelopes, or spare parts, even if the actual cost to the state is de minimis.

Occasional/Limited Use

University employees may make occasional but limited personal use of state resources if each of the following conditions are met:

- If the use is not specifically prohibited or subject to qualifications and limitations noted above.
- There is little or no cost to the state.
- The use of state resources does not interfere with official duties.
- The use is brief in duration, occurs infrequently, and is the most effective use of time or resources.
- The use does not disrupt or distract from the conduct of University business due to volume or frequency.
- The use does not disrupt other University employees and does not obligate them to make personal use of state resources.
- The use does not compromise the security or integrity of University information or software.

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Occasional/Limited Use (cont.)

Within the conditions outlined above, employees are expected to make wise and efficient use of the resources. For example, if an employee needs to send a brief message to their home using either telephone or e-mail, the employee should choose the method that imposes the least cost and disruption to official University business.

Use of Computers,
Electronic Communications,
Internet

A University employee may use University computers and other University-owned equipment to access computer networks or other databases, including the Internet and electronic communications, provided such use conforms to ethical standards indicated above under [Occasional/Limited Use](#), and the use is not prohibited above under [Specifically Prohibited](#).

Promoting Effectiveness/
Job Skills

University officials may authorize a personal use of state resources that promotes organizational effectiveness or enhances the job-related skills of a University employee.

REIMBURSEMENT

In general, a University employee may not make private use of state resources and then reimburse the University so there is no actual cost to the state. However, in some limited situations, such as officers or employees working at remote locations, a system of reimbursement may be appropriate. Any system of reimbursement must be established by the University in advance and must result in no cost to the state. To be valid under this rule the reimbursement system must be approved by the State Ethics Board in advance and in writing.

COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGIES

Technologies that may create an electronic record include, but are not limited to, electronic mail, facsimile transmissions, social media (e.g., Twitter, blogs, wikis), instant messaging, text messaging, and voice mail. An electronic record is reproducible and is therefore not private. Such records may be subject to disclosure under the public disclosure law, or may be disclosed for audit or legitimate state operational or management purposes. (WAC 292-110-010 (4))

The University may review electronic communications made on University-owned equipment in accordance with the *Privacy* subsection of Executive Policy *EP4*.

See also *BPPM* 90.03.