



Seattle Colleges Spending Freeze Directive

9/21/2026

Seattle Colleges Spending Freeze Directive

Due to continuing budget constraints, it is necessary to reassess hiring, travel, equipment and purchasing expenditures and implement temporary restrictions. This includes purchasing and hiring processes that were approved prior to the completion of this freeze directive. These restrictions align operations with leadership and Board of Trustee intent to reduce Seattle Colleges spending, as outlined in the approved FY27 Operating Budget.

While we seek to immediately reduce FY27 (the current fiscal year) expenses, the strategy below will focus primarily on operating budget savings but will also impact hiring practices for all positions regardless of funding source. “Freezes” are defined as a halt on previously authorized and future spending in a specified category and are utilized to realize savings.

Effective immediately, Seattle Colleges will implement a freeze on personnel, travel, services contracts and equipment purchases as detailed in this memo. These restrictions will remain in effect until they are explicitly removed.

HIRING AND OTHER PERSONNEL COSTS

Seattle Colleges may not fill a new or vacant position supported, in whole or in part, by operating budget funds. Examples include Fund 001 (State Allocation), Fund 149 (Tuition) and Fund 146 for Running Start and International Programs revenues. Limited exceptions are described below.

The hiring freeze applies to all regular and non-permanent hiring, including permanent, temporary, interim assignment/appointment, acting, project-based, and other limited-duration appointments. It applies whether an individual is hired into an established or budgeted position, temporarily performs the duties of an existing position, or is hired to perform services without being assigned to a specific established or budgeted position. The freeze applies to both external hiring and internal hiring, appointment, and assignment.

All active searches for positions supported at any percentage by operating budget funding will be suspended. An “active search” means a position or other hiring action that has been approved through ctcLink and posted for recruitment, is currently accepting applicants or under committee review, and for which an offer has not yet been accepted.

If approval is granted to post and fill a position or make another covered hire, the opportunity must first

be **posted as an internal-only recruitment for a minimum posting period of 10 days**, regardless of its funding source, appointment type, or whether it qualifies for an exception described below. If the internal-only recruitment does not produce any finalists, District executive leadership (Chancellor and Presidents) may clear the recruitment to proceed externally. A recruitment may not be opened externally unless the required internal-only recruitment has concluded without any finalists, and District executive leadership has authorized the external posting.

Other personnel costs subject to the freeze include: stipends, sabbaticals (beyond faculty stipends required under the collective bargaining agreement), *exempt non-represented* salary reevaluations, and reassigned time.

This freeze on hiring and other personnel costs does not apply to positions*, hiring actions*, or expenses that are:

- Funded exclusively through self-support or revenue-backed programs that are operating at a profit, including, but not limited to, private or federal grants, often found in but not limited to grants & contracts, Fund 145/146; auxiliary services, Fund 570; student activity fees, Fund 522; lab fees, Fund 148; or State Board-approved capital projects; or
- Explicitly required by a collective bargaining agreement; or
- Necessary to protect life or public safety.

Limited exceptions for a position or other covered hiring action may be granted only after review by all three College Presidents and final approval by the Chancellor. Regardless of the basis for approval or exception, every approved position or other covered hire remains subject to the internal-only posting requirement described above.

*Temporary part-time faculty, Student, and Work Study hiring is exempt from the exception request and approval process described in this section. This exemption applies only to the requirement to obtain approval for an exception to the hiring freeze and does not create an exemption from any otherwise applicable collective bargaining agreement, college, district, budget availability, Human Resources, student employment, financial aid, or instructional hiring requirements.

If filling a position or making another covered hire affects the operating budget, the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) will track the associated commitment against the reduction targets established by the Board of Trustees.

EQUIPMENT PURCHASES

Seattle Colleges suspends equipment purchases bought with operating budget funds, with exceptions as stated below. Note, the FY27 operating budget contained a 5% reduction in funding for equipment, goods and services, and other purchasing activities. Savings from this freeze serves to ensure that those new budget limitations can be achieved.

THE FREEZE ON EQUIPMENT PURCHASES DOES NOT APPLY TO EQUIPMENT:

- Funded exclusively by self-support or revenue-backed programs that are operating at a profit

including but not limited to private or federal grants (often found in 145), auxiliary services (570), student activity fees (522), lab fees (148) or state board approved capital projects;

- With a cost of less than \$10,000;
- Necessary for compliance or legislative mandate;
- Necessary to protect life or public safety;
- Necessary to protect data privacy and cyber security;
- Necessary to carry out the core functions of a program or unit, with president or chancellor approval.

Additional equipment purchases may be necessary per the discretion of the college president (for college budgets) or chancellor (for district/district-wide budgets). Due to the 5% reduction in funds available for equipment purchases, confirming with budget staff that funds are still available will be needed as part of an exception request.

Equipment includes furniture, equipment, and software with a useful life of more than one year and an individual unit value of \$10,000 or more (as noted in Section 75.70.10 of the State Administrative and Accounting Manual). The prohibition covers both purchases and leases of equipment). Splitting purchases during any fiscal period is not allowed and subject to audit exceptions.

NON-ESSENTIAL SERVICE CONTRACTS

Seattle Colleges suspends non-essential service contracts bought with operating budget funds, with exceptions as stated below. Note, the FY27 operating budget contained a 5% reduction in funding for non-essential service contracts so savings from this freeze serves to ensure that those new budget limitations can be achieved.

THE NON-ESSENTIAL SERVICES CONTRACTS FREEZE DOES NOT INCLUDE CONTRACTS, CONTRACT AMENDMENTS OR OTHER AGREEMENTS RELATED TO:

- Funded exclusively by self-support or revenue-backed programs that are operating at a profit including but not limited to private or federal grants (often found in 145), auxiliary services (570), student activity fees (522), lab fees (148) or state board approved capital projects;
- Necessary for compliance or legislative mandate;
- Necessary to protect life or public safety;
- Necessary to protect data privacy and cyber security;
- Necessary to carry out the core functions of a program or unit, with president or chancellor approval.

Additional service contract decisions may be necessary per the discretion of the college president (for college budgets) or chancellor (for district/district-wide budgets). Due to the 5% reduction in

funds available for equipment purchases, confirming with budget staff that funds are still available will be needed as part of an exception request.

TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS

Seattle Colleges suspends out of state travel bought with operating budget funds, with exceptions as stated below. Note, the FY27 operating budget contained a 5% reduction in funding for travel so savings from this freeze serves to ensure that those new budget limitations can be achieved.

Representation and participation in WACTC commissions and councils, and with SBCTC-provided professional development and meetings will still be supported.

For non-WACTC commission and council meeting participation, employees will be required to attend conferences or meetings remotely if the option is given for all travel (**in-state and out-of-state**). If the option is not given, president or chancellor approval is required in advance.

The number of attendees per department to any single event requires approval from the president or chancellor in advance.

International Program recruitment travel funded by international revenues requires Chancellor approval prior to submission for Travel Authorization.

THE TRAVEL FREEZE DOES NOT APPLY TO:

- Funded travel where the employee has been selected to present at a conference or workshop on a topic specific to their work for Seattle Colleges.
- Travel funded exclusively by self-support or revenue-backed programs that are operating at a profit including but not limited to private or federal grants (often found in 145), auxiliary services (570), student activity fees (522), lab fees (148) or state board approved capital projects.
 - **Important Note:** Travel funding offered widely from district-wide available funds, regardless of fund source, will require college president approval.
- Attendance by college and districtwide official representatives to WACTC Commissions and Councils (e.g. WSSSC, WEC, BAC, DEOC, etc.) is still expected.

Additional travel approvals may be necessary per the discretion of the college president (for college budgets) or chancellor (for district/district-wide budgets). Due to the 5% reduction in funds available for equipment purchases, confirming with budget staff that funds are still available will be needed as part of an exception request.



DOCUMENT CENTER

[Travel & Purchase Exception Requests – Fill out form](#)

Please note that hiring and other personnel costs are processed at an internal level by human resources and budget directors. Please work with your assigned human resources director regarding stipend and hiring requests.

Process flowcharts will be available on the Seattle Colleges website by the end of the week (9/25/26).

NEXT STEPS AND CONTACTS

To begin a request for exemption please refer to the following contacts AFTER receiving a written confirmation from your College or District Office budget director that the request is within budgeted funds and won't exceed those limits:

Travel: SCTravel@seattlecolleges.edu

Hiring/Personnel Costs: Contact your college Human Resources department.

Purchasing and Contracts: Angela Gurney at angela.gurney@seattlecolleges.edu

We appreciate your understanding and cooperation as we navigate these financial challenges while maintaining operational integrity and a focus on student success.



Document updated: September 18, 2026
Authors: D. Fogg, R. Rimando-Chareunsap