Meredith College recognizes that faculty and staff may experience hardships that require emergency financial assistance. The Employee Emergency Assistance Fund (the Fund) is a program available to assist eligible employees who are experiencing a personal financial crisis and who have exhausted all other avenues for obtaining assistance. The Fund, which is allocated to employees who demonstrate emergency financial need, is designed to provide limited assistance and is not a loan. It is designed to address an event or catastrophe that is sudden, unexpected, and critical, such as a family crisis, acute illness, natural disaster or fire. Funds are donated to the program through employee and non-employee generosity in support of employees during times of need.

Who is eligible for emergency funds?
All regular full-time and part-time employees of Meredith College (faculty and staff) who have been employed a minimum of one year. Employees do not have to be benefit eligible. Temporary employees are not eligible.

A family crisis can include situations involving the employee, their spouse, their legal dependant(s), or a parent for whom they are the primary caregiver.

What is considered an emergency?
Applications to the Fund must have a documented emergency situation that has caused a financial hardship. Applicants must have exhausted all other means of obtaining financial assistance for the situation. The crisis situation must be an event beyond the employee’s control. Examples could include fire, natural disaster such as flood or hurricane, theft or loss of essential property or primary residence, death within the immediate family, accident, illness, disability, etc.

Situations that are not eligible for consideration could include debt consolidation, litigation, poor financial planning, non-essential items (e.g., cable TV, cell phones, credit card payments, etc.), expenses related to vehicles/repairs, general dentistry, bail, garnishments, travel expenses for funerals, child care, or other expenses deriving from non-emergency situations.

How do eligible employees apply for assistance?
Employees are required to submit an application which identifies the emergency situation, as well as other options that have been considered to meet financial needs, and appropriate documentation to verify need to the Office of Human Resources.

Applicants are encouraged to submit all information they feel may be necessary to thoroughly evaluate their request. If the committee requests additional information, the employee has two weeks to provide the additional documentation. If it is not received within that time period, the employee must wait six months before being able to resubmit the request.
All requests shall be considered confidential and the employees name and all identifying information will be removed prior to forwarding to the Review Committee for consideration. Official documentation could include statement from physician, medical bills, fire report, death certificate, pay stubs that document loss of income due to illness, accident, etc. Requests may be fully funded up to the maximum limit or only partially funded.

Translators will be provided to assist employees during the application process, if needed.

**Who will decide if my application is approved?**
A committee of five appointed by the President will review all requests and decide whether the situation meets the requirements to be considered an emergency situation, and if so, will determine how much assistance will be approved. The committee should be comprised of a minimum of two faculty and two staff, with the fifth position being either faculty or staff. Members serve a minimum of two years and a maximum of four years. The committee shall select a Chair to facilitate the meeting. A representative from HR may serve as ex-officio.

**How long will it take to know if it is approved?**
Every effort will be made to review requests as soon as possible, given the urgency of the employee’s need. In most cases, a decision will be reached within three working days of the committee receiving all necessary information. In almost all situations, a decision should be reached before the end of ten working days.

**What happens after I have been approved?**
Once the request has been approved, the employee will be notified by phone, with written notification to follow. Checks will be made payable directly to the creditor on behalf of the employee and will be mailed or may be picked up by the employee. Every attempt will be made to process checks as quickly as possible. All checks represent a one-time payment. The funds are treated as taxable income subject to FICA and Federal withholding.

**What if my request is not approved?**
All decisions of the committee are final. The committee may review multiple requests at any given time and it may not always be possible to approve all requests given limited fund availability.

**How often can I apply?**
Employees may submit only one application within a six month period. No more than three applications may be submitted within the employee’s total term of employment.
Are there any limits to the amounts that can be requested?
Employee will be granted no more than documented amount needed, up to maximum limit of $2,000 within a 12 month period (the maximum amount may be increased given extreme extenuating circumstances). No more than one application may be submitted per crisis situation. The amount awarded to all applicants cannot exceed the available fund balance.

How can I contribute to the Fund?
Employees and non-employees may make contributions to the Fund by check or cash and by participating in various fund raising events. Employees may also elect to make contributions through pretax payroll deductions. Donations made to the general Employee Emergency Assistance Fund can be considered tax deductible / charitable contributions. Meredith College will provide receipts at year end for all monetary contributions. All funds will be maintained in a general accounting fund until need is identified.

Should fund levels not meet current needs, the Office of the Chaplain will include a reminder to make donations in the next issue of Community Concerns. Monitoring fund levels and determining appropriate fund raising opportunities will be the responsibility of the current committee.