

Conflict of Interest FAQs

1. Can residents and fellows be sponsored by industry for travel and meetings?

Example 1: Industry sponsors a national meeting that includes technical workshops, demonstrations of devices, and lectures by well-known faculty in the field. Residents attend at industry expense. The program cites this as an essential supplement to their learning and would be unaffordable for the UB program without industry support. Can residents accept funding from industry to attend this meeting?

Example 2: Industry hosts a surgical skills workshop in Buffalo. Bones, pig feet, skulls etc. are contributed by the company. UB invites trainees from other institutions. Under what circumstances would such a program comply or violate the terms of the policy?

Example 3: Our fellows attend academic meetings sponsored by professional associations. The meetings offer travel grants for fellows who present abstracts at the meeting. The travel grants are partially supported by industry and are applied for directly through the societies. Committees from each society decide on which fellows receive travel grants. These are high-quality academic meetings, with educational sessions that are free from commercial bias. Are these awards allowable under the COI policy?

Response: Industry may provide support for attendance at meetings (locally or outside of Buffalo) but the funds must be given as an unrestricted grant to the Department or sponsoring organization (e.g. a professional association, university affiliated institute), which selects the speakers, the residents and determines the amount of support provided. Industry funding may not go directly to individual trainees. Departmental faculty must be present to oversee and monitor the experience, to provide appropriate role modeling for professional relationships with industry and vetting of information provided by industry.

2. Can faculty be sponsored (partially or wholly) by industry to attend meetings?

Example: A device maker has national training centers in 3 locations across the U.S. Faculty pay tuition to attend multi-day workshops in which they practice procedures on animals and cadavers. The concentrated training is not available elsewhere. The tuition covers only a portion of the cost, the rest of which is paid for by the device maker.

Response: Industry may provide support for attendance at meetings for individual faculty. This support should be reported in annual COI disclosures from the university, hospital, or other sponsoring institutions. Patients should be informed about receipt of industry support (within the past one year) for a product that the faculty prescribes.

3. Can faculty be paid by industry to give promotional talks?

Response: Full time faculty are NOT permitted to give promotional talks for industry. Faculty may be engaged by industry to provide non-promotional CME presentations but this must be done outside of regular working hours. By definition, non-promotional, CME presentations must utilize slides and other materials that are solely created by the faculty member and do not include industry logos or other branded materials.

4. Can trainees be given textbooks by industry?

Example: Fellows receive textbooks from industry. Would it be acceptable for the program to receive the textbooks and distribute them to their fellows in lieu of industry delivering them directly to the individuals?

Response: Industry may NOT provide textbooks to a Department or its residents and other trainees. Educational materials for residents or students can be accepted only if industry is the best source of this information and the purpose is not to sell a product. Other acceptable educational materials are patient-related materials that are essential for proper use of a medication or device.

5. Can industry sponsor a Departmental breakfast, lunch or dinner meeting that is solely educational?

Example: A department or program hosts a quarterly education dinner meeting for community physicians, faculty, and residents and fellows. Industry has supported speaker fees and the meal. If industry provides an unrestricted grant to the Department or program, would this dinner meeting violate the terms of the policy?

Response: Industry may not directly provide food or speakers for meetings. If funding is provided as an unrestricted grant to the Department, the Department independently selects the speakers and the program, the Department arranges and pays for the meal and the speaker, and the Department follows ACCME guidelines, this program would be permitted by the COI policy.

6. Can faculty or trainees attend Industry-sponsored dinner meetings?

Example: Industry representatives invite residents fellows, and faculty attendings to a dinner meeting about their newest medication at the Buffalo Chop House. Is this allowable under the policy?

Response: Faculty, trainees, and students are discouraged from attending non-CME industry sponsored, promotional events. These must be outside of regular working hours and cannot interfere with clinical, educational, or other responsibilities. Invitations for trainees to industry sponsored activities outside the School should be provided to the department's Residency Training Director or director of medical student education who will decide whether to distribute the invitations to selected resident or students.

7. Can departments host breakfasts, lunch, or other meals during working hours for marketing purposes that are sponsored by industry?

Example: A program regularly holds luncheons for residents and staff during which pharmaceutical representatives present information on their products. The presentations reference industry sponsored research. Faculty attends to critique information. The meal does not exceed \$10 per attendee. What are the expectations for documenting or monitoring these sessions?

Response: The intent of the policy is to promote a thoughtful and defined approach to relations with industry. In line with this spirit, if this presentation included an educational component such as residents providing a critique of the information presented along with faculty summation remarks, this would be permissible. Faculty are responsible for ensuring that assertions made by industry follow evidence-based medicine principles and for identifying to residents when this has not occurred. Meals may not be directly provided by industry, although industry can make an unrestricted grant to the department, which may be used to provide a modest meal (\leq \$10 per person). Reporting, accounting, and tracking of unrestricted educational grants should be documented in the same manner as any other funds received by the Department.