MERCY UNIVERSITY
Office of the Provost

Guidelines for Catering of Meetings and Events

To ensure that Mercy University's financial resources are allocated appropriately and used in ways that best support the University's mission, strategic direction, and the needs of our students and faculty, the following guidelines should be followed when considering the use of Gourmet Dining for food and beverage orders at meetings and events.

The purchase of meals, snacks, or light refreshments for meetings **should be considered an exception, not standard business practice**, and should generally be avoided for routine internal meetings unless necessary. University funds may not be used to sponsor social events recognizing birthdays or similar personal occasions, nor to purchase gifts for such events. Using university funds for the costs of **alcoholic beverages will not be authorized** (unless in rare exceptions and never for student events).

Business meals and hospitality expenses are allowable only if they serve a documented university purpose, provide a benefit to the university, and are reasonable and properly documented.

Typical expenses that would likely be approved include:

- End-of-year celebrations, new student events, and beginning-of-year orientations hosting students for specific educational purposes, **serving only light refreshments, such as cake and lemonade**. Please avoid providing full meals, boxed lunches, or elaborate food offerings.
- Events recognizing faculty or staff achievements **serving only light refreshments.**
- Events that feature scheduled outside speakers, university guests, or consultants.
- Meetings and events that include an agenda requiring a working meal and cannot be scheduled at another time.
- Official functions such as seminars, retreats, workshops, orientations, and faculty or staff professional development events.
- Faculty Senate meetings with modest catering to support extended discussions or working sessions.
- Holiday gatherings, provided the event is reasonably modest, limited to one per year for each School, and the budget is approved in advance.

In cases where a purchase is necessary, the responsible party should ensure an accurate estimate of attendees to avoid over-ordering. They should also assess whether providing a meal is essential or if light refreshments such as cake and lemonade would be more appropriate.

All catering orders must be pre-approved and include a description of the gathering's business purpose, along with a list of attendees.

Research PIs are exempt from these requirements and will follow their own grant guidelines.