

# Bennington College Purchasing Policy

## Introduction

The Business Office is responsible for purchase order processing at Bennington College. Within guidelines described in this Purchasing Policy authorized department representatives may initiate purchases covered by funds approved in their budgets.

If you have any questions about this Purchasing Policy please contact the Controller at extension 4714.

## Acquiring Goods and Services

Depending upon the dollar amount of the item you want to purchase there are different methods you may use to secure the goods and/or services. The Procurement Value Table below shows the various methods for acquiring goods and services with explanations of each category following.

**Procurement Value Table**

Dollar Value	Petty Cash	Credit Card	Check Request	Purchase Order
< \$200	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
\$200 to \$999	No	Yes	Yes	No
\$1,000 to \$4,999	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
over \$5,000	No	No	Yes	Yes

## What's needed at each level?

### Purchases less than \$200

The College gives you three ways to purchase items totaling \$200 or less:

- Use a check request
- Use a company credit card
- Use your own cash or credit card, then to receive reimbursement:

1. Submit the original sales slip with an approved petty cash request form (please insure that general ledger codes are included) to the College Bookstore and our cashier will give you cash on the spot; or

2. Submit the original sales slip with a check request to the Business Office. A check will be sent to you within five business days. Please make sure to include the address that you want the check mailed to on the check request form. Check request forms may be found outside the Business Office on our bulletin board, or on the Bennington.edu website under "staff".

The decision on how to get reimbursed is entirely up to you. The bookstore is open daily Monday – Friday with hours matching the general business hours of the college.

*Remember that Bennington College is a tax-exempt organization and as such sales tax should not be charged for purchases made on behalf of the college. Tax exempt certificates may be obtained in the Business Office.*

#### **Purchases between \$200 and \$999**

A College credit card is expected to be used for all orders under \$1,000. For vendors that do not accept credit cards, some will allow you to charge your purchase to a Bennington account. In these situations, the supplier sends an invoice to the College and a purchase order is not required. Please stamp the invoice with the Bennington College invoice stamp, authorize with a department number and subcode, sign off on the charge and forward to the Business Office.

Purchase orders are not required for purchases under \$1,000. Exceptions are made for suppliers that insist on receiving a purchase order number. In instances where you need to issue a purchase order number for an order less than \$1,000 we recommend that you use your telephone extension followed by a sequential number so that you can keep track of your orders. For example in the Business Office we would issue purchase order numbers as follows 4458-01 (our extension – XX) for Brown Company; 4458-02 for Smith Incorporated 4458-03 for Acme Industries, etc.

By using your telephone extension, the Business Office will be able to figure out who ordered certain items by looking up the extension listed on the purchase order.

Should the vendor request a written purchase order you will need to fill out the purchase order in accordance with the procedures outlined later in the policy document.

### **Purchases over \$1,000**

A purchase order is required for purchases greater than \$1,000 that are not listed as categorically exempt (see below). We require purchase orders for budget control purposes and for the added legal protection that purchase orders provide. The \$1,000 threshold may be reached in one of the following three ways:

1. A single ordered item with a total cost (including freight) equal to or greater than \$1,000.
2. More than one item ordered at one time with a total cost (including freight) equal to or greater than \$1,000.
3. Multiple purchases to the same vendor against the same budget number that total \$1,000 or more in a fiscal year (also known as a “blanket order”).

For a step-by-step guide to creating a PO, see “Creating a Purchase Order” below.

### **Categories Exempt from Purchase Orders**

Certain categories are exempted from the purchase order requirement. These include:

- Honoraria and fees for entertainers
- Bank fees
- Fringe-benefit related costs
- Taxes and payments to government agencies
- Legal and audit fees
- Membership dues and subscriptions
- Insurance
- Inventories of food, books and clothing
- Utilities
- Fees for contracted services where the Business Office has a copy of the contract on file. Please note that our IT department *must* be involved in all contracts for IT hardware, software and services.

These expenditures should be processed for payment by stamping the invoice, coding it properly and signing off on the charges. Contact the Business Office if you have any questions as to whether or not your purchase will require a purchase order.

## Common Goods & Services

Certain items are coordinated and ordered by departments outside of your area of responsibility. If you need any items listed below please contact the appropriate department and follow the price guidelines listed earlier to see if a purchase order is required.

Please consult the following chart for a summary. This list is subject to change.

Computer equipment & peripherals	IT
Software	IT
Food supplies	Dining Halls
Copy Paper	Purchasing
Mobile phones	Telecommunications
Stationary (letterhead, envelopes, business cards)	Communications
Furniture & Furnishings	President's Office

## College-Wide Suppliers

The College contracts for certain commodities and services on a college-wide basis with particular suppliers. Please refer to the following chart for a summary and note that this list is not exhaustive – if you can find items cheaper than with one of the vendors listed below, please feel free to use that vendor.

Office supplies	WB Mason, Staples, Evans
Overnight shipping	Fed Ex/ mail room
Ground shipping	UPS/ mail room
Copiers (including all-in-one scanners/copiers)	Business Office/IT
Business cards	Communications

## Creating Your PO

To ensure that your purchase order is processed/approved as quickly as possible, be sure to:

- Provide a complete account number (include a department and subcode)
- Include as much information as possible, such as description of item(s), costs, shipping, payment terms and any other pertinent details on each purchase order. This will help us understand what the items are and why they need to be purchased.
- Enter estimated prices when actual costs are not known or indicate “not to exceed”
- Remember that some purchase orders, based on what is being ordered, may require approval of other College departments (such as requests for computer equipment or capital items).
- You will receive three copies of the PO after it has been approved by the EVP/CFO and Budget Manager.
  - The white copy may be mailed to the vendor
  - The pink copy comes back to the Business Office when the items are received and payment is to be processed.
  - The goldenrod copy is for you to keep
- The yellow copy will stay in the Business Office for tracking purposes.

**Furniture/Capital Project Requests:** If the item being ordered requires other than the most minor installation, the ordering department should coordinate with the Maintenance/Facilities Office on the installation **prior** to forwarding the purchase order to the Business Office. When the item is received please let maintenance-facilities know.

## **Special Types of Purchase Orders**

### **Blanket Purchase Order**

If you find yourself using a particular supplier many times during the course of the year for small dollar purchases, you may want to create a blanket purchase order.

By using a blanket purchase order, you are creating a mechanism to purchase many different items from one supplier that all get coded to the same account (i.e. office supplies).

Once you have an approved blanket purchase order in place your approved/coded invoices can be sent directly to the Business Office for processing as we have a copy of the blanket order on file.

### **Bid Guidelines**

When dealing with vendors under a bid process, it's important to conduct a fair and ethical process.

Here are some key points to remember:

- All vendors must be provided with the same information and deadlines to avoid any advantages for any vendor.
- No information on the bids submitted (especially price) may be disclosed to the other competing vendors except for the name of the company.
- You should not advise or suggest to any vendor the amount (price) that should be submitted.
- You should not allow any vendor to resubmit a bid unless all vendors may resubmit. (Resubmission bid requests must include all vendors.)

7/1/10