

PIEDMONT VIRGINIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

VIII – HUMAN RESOURCES / PERSONNEL POLICIES

VIII – 3.0 EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE POLICY

Policy #:	VIII – 3.0
Effective:	
Revised:	2/1/07 8/5/08 9/13/10
Responsible Dept.:	Human Resources

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for educational assistance to support the educational and continuous learning goals of PVCC employees.

Educational assistance is neither a guaranteed benefit nor an entitlement of employment at PVCC, and is limited by the availability of funds.

A. Definitions

1. Educational Assistance is financial support to employees for approved educational courses for the acquisition of job-related degrees, professional certifications, or licenses. It may be granted for a single course or combined with educational leave. The financial support shall consist of the cost of tuition and mandatory fees. In cases with educational leave, full pay, partial pay, or leave without pay may be provided.
2. Continuous Learning Courses (Opportunity Knocks) are credit courses offered at PVCC to employees at no cost (tuition waiver). The courses may be job-related or non job-related.

II. CONTINUOUS LEARNING BENEFIT/TUITION WAIVER (Opportunity Knocks)

Courses for tuition waiver through the Continuous Learning Benefit (Opportunity Knocks) must be credit courses offered by PVCC. In the event an employee does not complete a class or receives an unsatisfactory final grade, repayment options shall commence pursuant to the Educational Assistance Policy.

A. Eligibility

1. New and current full-time employees, hourly employees with 3 months of service and adjunct faculty with 1 semester of service are eligible to apply for tuition waiver under the Continuous Learning Benefit.
2. Adjunct faculty are eligible to apply for tuition waiver for courses taken in any semester in which they have an active teaching assignment.
3. This is an employment benefit and, therefore, it is intended to exclude student employees and work study students from eligibility. Persons whose primary status with PVCC is as a student, or who serve in positions designated as student positions, are not eligible for Continuous Learning Benefit under this policy.

B. Number of hours

1. Eligible employees will be allowed to take 1 credit course or a maximum of 6 credit hours per semester.
2. Private vocal or instrumental instruction is not included.

3. Employees who are not pursuing a degree may not displace regularly enrolled students in any class section. Class sizes will not be increased to allow for the enrollment of employees.

C. Approval

1. Employees must submit requests for continuous learning courses (Opportunity Knocks) prior to the start of the class.
2. Employees must complete the Opportunity Knocks request form and submit it to the immediate supervisor. The immediate supervisor should review requests carefully and consult with Human Resources on eligibility. The approval process proceeds from the immediate supervisor to the appropriate President's Staff member. Once approved the Opportunity Knocks requests are sent to Human Resources. A Human Resources representative will notify the employee that the request has been approved.

D. Registration

1. Employees may register for courses after receiving notification from Human Resources that the request has been approved.
2. Employees will follow PVCC registration guidelines.

E. Documentation

1. PeopleSoft will track the courses taken for reporting requirements.
2. Employees must submit grade reports to Human Resources upon completion of the course.
3. Original Opportunity Knocks requests and grade reports will be maintained in the employee's personnel file.

III. EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE WITHOUT LEAVE

Meeting eligibility requirements does not guarantee approval for receipt of educational assistance.

A. Eligibility

1. Full-time classified staff and teaching, professional, and administrative faculty are eligible for financial educational assistance under the policy.
2. New employees are immediately eligible for financial educational assistance under the policy.

B. Financial Assistance

1. Requests for financial assistance must be submitted each semester, even for multi-year programs.
2. The college will support employees on a reimbursement basis for the cost of tuition and mandatory fees for successfully completed coursework as follows:
 - (a) The benchmark for the maximum allowable reimbursement on tuition and mandatory fees for undergraduate and graduate courses will be based on courses offered at public Virginia institutions of higher education.
 - (b) No assistance will be provided for expenses other than tuition and mandatory fees (i.e. no assistance is provided for books, supplies, travel, or other related costs.
 - (c) Tuition for faculty and staff on restricted funding can only be paid from the restricted funds. Therefore, the grant administrator should be consulted on the eligibility of the employee for

payment of tuition and mandatory fees. For employees supported partially by restricted funding, the source of funds for the tuition assistance can be prorated accordingly.

3. Financial Educational Assistance will be awarded on a reimbursement basis, subject to:

(a) The satisfactory completion of the course. Satisfactory completion requires a grade "C" or higher for undergraduate courses and a grade of "B" or higher for graduate courses, or the minimum specified by the institution for graduate credit. In the event that a letter grade is not awarded for an undergraduate or graduate credit course, the designation of "Passed" is sufficient;

(b) Submission of the grade report, and

(c) A paid receipt verifying the cost to the employee

4. Financial assistance will be limited to six (6) credit hours per semester.

C. Course Approval Procedure

1. Employees should complete the form **VCCS-16-Educational Assistance Request** *and* either the **PVCC Educational Assistance Request** form to request approval from their immediate supervisor for educational assistance. The immediate supervisor should review requests carefully and consult with Human Resources on eligibility. The supervisor must forward requests to appropriate president staff member for further processing.

2. Employees are limited to not more than six (6) credit hours of course work per semester for educational assistance. The President may approve course work in excess of six (6) credit hours provided it is in the interest of the effective and efficient operation of the college.

3. The employee must submit documentation of acceptance to a degree granting program, including the entire program requirements, from an accredited institution if the class is part of a degree requirement.

4. The course must be job-related as determined by the immediate supervisor for classes not part of a degree program.

5. The approval process goes from the immediate supervisor to the appropriate President's Staff member to the President. The immediate supervisor and President's staff member decide whether to make a recommendation to the President for approval of the request. If a recommendation is not made, the reason must be stated.

6. The President will make the final decision on each request, based on the recommendation.

7. All approvals for educational assistance are subject to the availability of funds. If there are more requests for educational assistance than there is money budgeted:

(a) First priority will be given to previous college commitments (multi-year degree/award or education plans)

(b) Job-required courses

(c) Job-related courses

(d) Courses required for the completion of a degree

(e) Appropriate professional development

8. PVCC will commit to a multi-year degree or educational plan on a case-by-case basis. **The entire degree program requirements must be presented for consideration.** If a multi-year degree or educational plan is approved, the employee must sign the **Multi-Year Educational Aid Agreement** and remain with the college at least one (1) year after completing the degree/award/plan or repay the entire amount for all courses.

9. The employee will be notified in writing of the costs to be covered by the college and those to be borne by the individual, if any. HR will return copies of the requests and related documentation to employees. Original documents will be maintained in the employee's personnel file.

10. Educational and training commitments should be reflected in the annual performance planning and evaluation documents agreed to by the supervisor and employee each year.

D. Work Hours

1. Courses may not be taken during work hours if they are available during the employee's non-work hours.

2. For courses offered only during work hours, the employee's supervisor has the option of approving or disapproving the course. For courses taken during work hours, employees must use appropriate leave or, if approved by their supervisor, adjust their work hours.

3. Faculty are required to ensure that courses do not conflict with teaching and college responsibilities.

E. Payment

1. Employees pay the required tuition and fees and are reimbursed for the costs when the course is completed and appropriate documentation is submitted.

F. Additional Conditions

1. Employees receiving educational assistance for a degree/award or educational professional plan are required to repay the amount in full if they terminate employment at PVCC within one (1) year of completion of the course. For employees receiving a tuition waiver for a PVCC course, no repayment is required upon termination of employment.

2. PVCC will commit to a multi-year degree/award or educational plan. The employee must remain with the college at least one (1) year after completing the degree/award/plan or repay the entire amount for all courses.

G. Taxes

1. Taxes will be deducted from tuition reimbursements in accordance with existing federal and state policies.

2. Currently, reimbursements up to \$5,250 in a calendar year for courses that are job related or part of a degree program are not taxed.

3. Additionally, reimbursements above the \$5,250 may not be taxed if the education is deemed by the supervisor and approved by the President to be courses or part of a program that will maintain or improve skills needed in the job. This determination must be made in writing prior to the employee's registration in the class.

IV. EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE WITH LEAVE

A. Eligibility

Meeting eligibility requirements does not guarantee approval for receipt of educational assistance.

1. Classified employees should normally have completed at least three (3) years of service with the VCCS.

2. Teaching faculty, counselors, and librarians should normally be eligible for, or have received a multi-year appointment.

3. Administrative and other professional faculty should normally have completed a minimum of three (3) years of service in the VCCS.

4. The President may waive the eligibility requirements in the interest of the effective and efficient operation of the college. When eligibility requirements are waived, an explanatory justification statement approved by the President shall be attached to the VCCS-16.

B. Leave Approval Procedure

1. For educational assistance that includes educational leave with full pay, partial pay or without pay:

(a) Employees must request in writing educational assistance with paid or unpaid leave at least one semester prior to the start of the leave. The request should identify the length of time and the amount of pay being requested.

(b) The base salary in effect on the last workday prior to the period of educational leave will be used to compute the partial pay. The base will be adjusted for merit increases at the time the increases become effective for all state employees.

(c) The first day of the fall or spring semester will be the effective date when placing nine month faculty on educational leave with or without pay. The last day worked before the leave period start will be used for placing other employees on educational leave with or without pay.

(d) For educational leave, the college will prepare a letter stating the terms and length of the employee's leave. It will address the effect of the leave period on salary, benefits, retirement, and the timeframe to notify the college of the return to full-time employment.

(e) Employees receiving leave with pay must execute a promissory note for the total amount of salary to be paid and/or costs paid by the college. The note will be executed on the first day of the leave and interest will begin to accrue on the day study is terminated. The promissory note will be adjusted to reflect any merit increases which occur during the leave period.

(f) Educational leave with or without pay is limited to twelve (12) months. An extension of twelve (12) months may be granted by the president.

(h) Employees receiving educational leave with pay will be required to work a period twice that of the leave period.

II. EXCEPTIONS

Exceptions to this policy will be made only by the President.