

PIEDMONT VIRGINIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

VIII – HUMAN RESOURCES / PERSONNEL POLICIES

VIII – 3.0 EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE POLICY

Policy #:	VIII – 3.0
Effective:	July 1, 2019
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.

2. POLICY STATEMENT

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

3. DEFINITIONS

- Educational Assistance is financial support to employees for approved educational courses at other accredited colleges or universities for the acquisition of job-related degrees, professional certifications, or licenses. The financial support shall consist of all or a portion of the cost of tuition and mandatory fees.
- Continuous Learning Courses (Opportunity Knocks) are credit courses offered at PVCC to employees at no cost (tuition assistance). The courses may be job-related or non-job-related.

4. CONTINUOUS LEARNING BENEFIT/TUITION ASSISTANCE (OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS)

Courses for tuition assistance 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

- New and current full-time employees, hourly employees with three (3) months of service and adjunct faculty with one (1) semester of service are eligible to apply for tuition assistance under the Continuous Learning Benefit.
- Adjunct faculty are eligible to apply for tuition assistance for courses taken in any semester in which they have an active teaching assignment.
- 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

- Eligible employees will be allowed to take a maximum of six (6) credit hours per semester.
- Private vocal or instrumental instruction is not included.
- 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. Employees may not register until the first week of class unless they are pursuing a degree.

C. Approval

- Employees must submit requests for continuous learning courses (Opportunity Knocks) prior to the start of the class.
- 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

- Employees may register for courses only after receiving notification from Human Resources that the request has been approved. Employees may not register until the first week of class unless they are pursuing a degree.
- Employees will follow PVCC registration guidelines.

E. Documentation

- PeopleSoft will track the courses taken for reporting requirements.
- Opportunity Knocks requests will be maintained in the employee's personnel file.

5. EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

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

A. Program Criteria

1. Requests for educational assistance must be for courses that are job-related or are part of a degree program:

- Job Related. Education or training related to employees' current positions to meet one of the following objectives:
 - To provide training in the use of new or modified methods and equipment
 - To provide training in skills and knowledge required by changes in the employee's current position.
- Degree Requirement. Academic courses taken at regionally accredited institutions:

- To enable qualified administrative, professional and teaching faculty to attain advanced degrees for the maintenance of established standards of the college or to meet specific needs that have been authorized by the college.
- To enable classified employees to complete degree programs which will enhance job performance or support the college's mission.

B. Employee Eligibility for Educational Assistance

1. Full-time classified staff and teaching, professional, and administrative faculty are eligible for financial educational assistance under the policy.
2. New employees have a one year waiting period for financial educational assistance under this policy unless the college directs the employee to take a class.
3. Educational assistance 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 financial educational assistance.

C. Financial Assistance

1. Requests for financial assistance must be submitted for each semester.
2. Financial assistance will be limited to a maximum of six (6) credit hours per semester.
3. 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 college will pay the actual cost up to a maximum of \$500 per credit hour for graduate courses and \$250 per credit hour for undergraduate courses.
 - (b) The maximum for financial assistance is \$6,000 per year (fall/spring/summer semesters combined). Employees may be awarded the actual cost of a course, if the cost is less than the annual maximum.
 - (c) 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), which are included in the \$6,000 annual limit.
4. Financial 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. 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

D. Course Approval Procedure

1. Employees should complete the form **PVCC Educational Assistance Request** to request approval from their immediate supervisor for educational assistance. The immediate supervisor should review requests carefully and consult with the Human Resources Department on eligibility.

The supervisor must forward requests to appropriate president's staff member for further processing.

2. The supervisor should submit requests to the appropriate president staff member ***no later than July 1 for fall semester, December 1 for spring semester, and May 1 for summer semester.***

3. 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.

4. 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.

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

6. 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.

7. The president will make the final decision on each request, based on the recommendation.

8. The employee will be notified in writing of the costs to be covered by the college. The Human Resources Department will return copies of the requests and related documentation to employees. Original documents will be maintained in the employee's personnel file.

*** Note: Submission of the Educational Assistance Request Form does not indicate approval. You will receive written notification upon approval of the request.**

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

E. 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. For non-exempt classified employees, time spent in classes during normal work hours is considered hours of work for computing any overtime liability, unless leave is used.

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

F. 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.

G. 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.

2. For employees receiving tuition assistance for a PVCC course, no repayment is required upon termination of employment.

H. 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.

6. EXCEPTIONS

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