

# Central Virginia Community College

Date: January 15, 2007

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**Subject: Educational Assistance and Continuous Learning Program Policy**

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## **1. Purpose**

Central Virginia Community College is committed to supporting educational opportunities which promote the professional growth of our employees, which in turn enhances the effectiveness of the college. Educational assistance is designed to assist employees in gaining the competencies important to successful performance in their current positions and to promote the professional development of the college's workforce. This policy outlines eligibility requirements, payment options, procedures and guidelines for approval, tuition reimbursement information, and employee obligations under this policy.

## **2. Policy**

Contingent upon budgetary resources and pursuant to policies and procedures of the Virginia Community College System (VCCS), the college may provide support for employees to take classes that are directly job related, part of a degree program, and/or classes taken under the continuous learning program. The support will include educational assistance ranging from tuition waiver (no tuition cost) for continuous learning coursework, tuition reimbursement for other eligible coursework, and educational leave.

**DEFINITIONS:** **Educational Assistance** is financial support for approved educational courses or 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.

**Continuous Learning Courses** are courses offered at the community college to employees at no cost. The courses may be job related or non job related.

### **3. Procedures**

#### **Educational Assistance Programs**

##### **Eligibility Requirements**

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

1. Job Related: Education or training related to employees' current positions to meet one of the following objectives:
  - (a) To provide training in the use of new or modified methods and equipment.
  - (b) To provide training in skills and knowledge required by changes in the employees' current position.
2. Degree Requirement. Academic courses taken at regionally accredited institutions:
  - (a) To enable qualified administrative 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/System Office.
  - (b) To enable classified employees to complete degree programs which will enhance job performance or support the college mission.

##### **Employee Applying for Educational Assistance:**

1. New employees are immediately eligible to receive educational assistance for tuition costs. A new employee may be required to sign a promissory note.
2. All full-time salaried employees are eligible to participate.

**Employee Applying for Educational Assistance to Include Leave with Full Pay, Partial Pay, or Without Pay:**

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.

**Exceptions to Eligibility Requirements:**

1. The college president may waive or interpret the eligibility requirements in the interest of the effective and efficient operation of the college or interpret eligibility.
2. When eligibility requirements are waived or denied, an explanatory justification statement approved by the college president shall be attached to the VCCS-16 and maintained in the college files.

**APPLICATION PROCESS:**

**Educational Assistance without Leave:**

1. Submission of Requests: Employees must request education assistance prior to the start of class. Requests must be submitted on the VCCS-16, and signed by the employee and appropriate supervisors.

2. Degree Required Courses: If the class is part of a degree requirement, the employee must submit documentation of acceptance to a degree granting program that is regionally accredited. For classes not part of a degree program, the course must be job-related as determined by the supervisor.

**Educational Assistance for Leave with Full Pay, Partial Pay, or Without Pay:**

1. Submission of Requests: Employees must request in writing education 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.
2. Establishing Base Pay: The base salary utilized to compute the partial pay shall be the salary in effect on the last workday prior to the period of educational leave. The base will be adjusted for merit increases at the time the increases become effective for all state employees.
3. Effective date: The effective date to be used-when placing nine (9)-month faculty on educational leave with or without pay shall normally be the first day of the fall or spring semester. For other employees, it will be the last day worked before the leave period starts.
4. For educational leave, the college and the System Office 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 /System Office of the employee's return to full-time employment.
5. Promissory Note Required: Employees going on leave with pay will execute a promissory note. The promissory note will be adjusted to reflect any merit increases which occur during the leave period.
6. Length of Educational Leave: Educational leave with or without pay is limited to twelve (12) months. An

extension of twelve (12) months maybe granted by the college president.

## **CREDIT HOUR LIMITS and COURSE SCHEDULE:**

### **CREDIT LIMITS:**

Employees are normally limited to a maximum of six (6) credit hours of coursework per semester, with no more than three (3) credit hours during the employees normal work hours per semester. The college president may approve coursework in excess of six (6) credit hours provided it is in the interest of the effective and efficient operation of the college. Employees are limited to a maximum number of 12 credits per academic year (Fall through Summer II). **The maximum number of hours applies to continuous learning courses, tuition reimbursement, or a combination of both. All credits, including audited courses, will count toward the maximum allowance of twelve credit hours**

### **COURSES TAKEN DURING NORMAL WORK HOURS:**

- a. Classified employees are required to adjust their work schedule to fulfill their normal work hours per week. Adjustments may take the form of reducing an employee's work week, increasing the number of hours worked, requiring use of annual, compensatory, or overtime leave, or VSDP family and personal leave (for VSDP participants).
- b. Non-exempt classified employees: For non-exempt classified employees, time spent in classes during normal work hours is considered hours of work for computing any overtime liability.
- c. Faculty are required to ensure that courses do not conflict with teaching and college responsibilities

## PAYMENT OPTIONS

### Reimbursement:

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

**Tuition reimbursement will normally be limited to a maximum of one course (3 or 4 credits) per semester. Tuition reimbursement is subject to the availability of funds and is currently benchmarked with James Madison University in-state undergraduate and graduate tuition rate.**

### Up-Front Payment Promissory Note:

The college will pay for the course at the time of registration. The employee and the college will execute a promissory note for the amount of tuition and mandatory fees prior to registration for the class. Payment for tuition will be transmitted to the institution by check or IAT.

### Educational Assistance for Leave With Pay:

The employee and the college will execute a promissory note for the total amount of salary to be paid and costs paid by the state. The note will be implemented on the first day of the leave and interest will begin to accrue on the date study is terminated.

### Continuation Requirements

1. Any employee receiving educational assistance may be required to sign a continuation agreement.
2. Up-Front Payment for Educational Assistance: Employees will be required to work a minimum of an additional six months for assistance received.
3. Leave With Pay: Employees will be required to work a period twice that of the leave period.

## Repayment Provisions

1. If an employee does not successfully complete a course but remains employed within the VCCS, reductions in the employee's salary will be initiated to recover the cost of tuition and mandatory fees. The repayment schedule, not to exceed six months, will be initiated immediately.
2. An employee who does not return to the college which granted the leave with pay, or resigns prior to the completion of the promissory obligation, will pay the pro-rata portion of the note from existing leave balances or the final salary payment. If recovery of funds is not available from these sources, a repayment schedule with interest at the prime rate plus one (1) percent shall be paid with the final payment due within six months of the employee's last day of employment.
3. If an employee accepts employment with another Virginia state agency, a release from the promissory note may be obtained, providing that the employing institution reimburses in full by IAT (Inter-agency Transfer) the college which granted the leave with pay.

## **CONTINUOUS LEARNING PROGRAM**

### **Eligibility Requirements**

#### **Coursework**

Employees may take continuous learning courses only at the community college where they are employed. Therefore, courses covered by this program include only courses offered by CVCC. The course may be part of a degree program or for professional development.

## **Employee Applying for Continuous Learning Assistance**

Full-time instructional faculty, administrative/professional faculty, full time classified employees, wage employees, and adjunct faculty may take continuous learning courses. Wage employees whose primary status is as a student are not eligible for this program. This is an employment benefit and therefore it is intended to exclude students from eligibility.

### **Application Process**

Submission of Requests: Employees must request education assistance prior to the start of class. Requests must be submitted on the VCCS-16, and signed by the employee and appropriate supervisors.

## **CREDIT HOUR LIMITS AND COURSE SCHEDULE**

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- b. Non-exempt salaried classified employees: For non-exempt salaried classified employees, time spent in classes during normal work hours is considered hours of work for computing any overtime liability.
- c. Wage employees: Eligible wage employees taking a class must not record the hours in class as work time.
- d. Faculty are required to ensure that courses do not conflict with teaching and college responsibilities

## **COLLEGE RESPONSIBILITIES**

College presidents are delegated the authority to approve educational aid requests (Form [VCCS-16](#)) for their respective colleges.

Each college and the System Office will have an educational assistance and continuous learning policy. The policy shall be in writing and posted on the college website.

Colleges and the System Office will maintain documentation of employees receiving educational assistance and continuous learning assistance as required by state and federal regulations.

## **APPROVAL/REVISION DATES**

**Approved January 12, 2007 by President's Staff**