

College Operating Procedures (COP)



Procedure Title: Educational Benefits
Procedure Number: 05-0602
Originating Department: Office of Human Resources

Specific Authority:

Board Policy 6Hx6:5.02
Florida Statute 1012.865
Florida Administrative Code n/a

Procedure Actions: Adopted: 06/19/09; 08/17/09; 11/11/09; 8/9/10; 11/1/10; 07/18/17; 202/17/20; 1/31/2023

Purpose Statement: To establish a procedure that provides eligibility and educational requirements to receive an Florida SouthWestern Tuition Scholarship or Tuition Reimbursement

Guidelines:

Florida SouthWestern State College encourages its employees to obtain skills, knowledge and abilities that will increase the effectiveness of their performance in their present college position, as well as improve their opportunities for possible career advancement within the College. The tuition scholarship and tuition reimbursement programs are designed to support this philosophy.

I. Florida SouthWestern Tuition Scholarships

A. Employees are eligible to receive Florida SouthWestern tuition scholarships beginning with the semester following the completion of the eligibility requirements defined below. The benefit includes in-state course fees for Florida SouthWestern State College credit and some non-credit (Continuing Education) courses as follows. The President, or designee, has the authority to approve exceptions to this procedure for the benefit of the College.

1. Eligibility:

- a) Full-time and part-time regular employees, and
- b) Employed at least six (6) consecutive months with the College, and
- c) Successfully completed probation period, and
- d) Remains in good standing.

2. Educational Requirements:

- a) Maximum benefit is 12 credit hours per semester and 24 credit hours per academic year.
- b) The benefit may be shared between the employee and qualifying dependents but may not exceed the semester and annual limits, unless both parents are employees of the College. In the case where husband and wife both work for the College, a maximum

total benefit of 24 credit hours per semester and 48 credit hours per academic year may be shared between the employees and their qualifying dependents.

- c) This benefit does not cover multiple attempt or lifelong learning charges.
- d) Multiple attempts (more than two) of the same course by the same employee or an employee's eligible dependent will not be covered.
- e) If an employee or an employee's eligible dependent withdraws from a course, this benefit will not permit that individual to use this benefit to retake that same course more than a total of two times.
- f) If the employee has received any other form of non-repayable financial aid (i.e. scholarship, grant, financial aid, etc.), the Florida SouthWestern Tuition Scholarship will be based on the reduced amount. Loans and Florida pre-paid are not considered non-repayable.
- g) The employee must meet the College's admissions and prerequisite requirements for the course(s) to be taken under this rule.
- h) Must comply with the College's Standards of Academic Progress in order to continue to take courses under this procedure beyond the initial session.
- i) The employee is responsible for any testing, admission, and/or applicable application fees.
- j) Course(s) to be taken under this rule may be taken for credit or audit in accordance with appropriate Board Policies regarding credit and/or audit.
- k) Benefit for non-credit courses (Continuing Education) may not exceed \$300.00 within each academic term (Fall, Spring, Summer) and must be for course(s) in which the fee is paid directly to the College and not to an outside vendor partnered with the College. The non-credit course benefit is in addition to the benefit for credit courses as described above. However, the dollar value for the non-credit benefit cannot be used to supplement the benefit for credit courses. This benefit is provided on a "space available" basis and is determined by the Department of Continuing Education.
- l) The employee must have prior approval of his/her supervisor before taking a course(s) under this procedure.
- m) No courses will be approved to be taken during the employee's normal work day unless the course(s) clearly contributes to the enhancement of the employee's job skills as they relate to the College as determined by the employee's supervisor and approved by the appropriate Vice President/Executive.

B. Spouses and dependents:

1. Eligibility:

- a) Spouse or legally dependent child as listed on the most recent income tax return of the employee as a legally dependent child, or
- b) A spouse, former spouse or child for whom there is a court order requiring an eligible employee as defined in section I.A(1), above, to pay for educational benefits of the spouse, former spouse or child.

1. Educational Requirements for eligible spouses or dependent child(ren):

- a) Benefit applies to credit courses only.
- b) The dependent must meet the College's admissions and prerequisite requirements for the course(s) to be taken under this rule.
- c) The dependent must comply with the College's Standards of Academic Progress in order to continue to take courses under this procedure beyond the initial session.

- d) The spouse or dependent is responsible for any testing, admission, and/or applicable application fees.
- e) Properly documented proof of eligibility is required for spouse and dependent child(ren).
- f) If the spouse or dependent child(ren) has received any other form of non-repayable financial aid (i.e. scholarship, grant, financial aid, etc.), the Florida SouthWestern Tuition Scholarship will be based on the reduced amount. Loans and Florida pre-paid are not considered non-repayable.

Applications for Florida SouthWestern Tuition Scholarships are available in the Office of Human Resources.

II. Tuition Reimbursement

NOTE: A Tuition Reimbursement Program Application must be submitted AND approved three (3) weeks prior to the beginning of the coursework; failure to do so may result in coursework not being reimbursed.

- A. The Tuition Reimbursement Program allows eligible employees to enroll in academic degree programs at regionally accredited degree-granting educational institutions, and to be reimbursed up to 75% of the tuition expense (less any financial aid the employee may be qualified to receive). Foreign institutions will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.
- B. Degrees or certificates offered at Florida SouthWestern State College will not be reimbursed if taken at other institutions. The Vice President/Executive with oversight for the area or designee will determine degree comparability.
- C. Eligibility:
 - 1. Employees must be full-time regular employees,
 - 2. Employed at least six (6) consecutive months with the College, and
 - 3. Successfully completed probation and remain in good standing.
 - 4. An employee must reestablish eligibility after a break in service.
 - 5. Employees must comply with all procedural requirements within the specified timeframes.
 - 6. Employees are eligible to apply for tuition reimbursement benefits beginning with the semester following the completion of the eligibility requirements defined above.
- D. The course work should be in pursuance of an academic degree at an upper-level college or university (i.e. Bachelors, Masters, or Doctorate). However, program applications for work-relevant undergraduate and graduate courses not taken in pursuit of an academic degree, as deemed appropriate by the supervisor and approved by the Vice President/Executive, will be given favorable consideration. The receipt of an academic degree or an additional degree will not result in an upgrade of the employee's position or ensure that an employee will receive priority for position vacancies.
- E. Application and Payment Request due dates: An application for tuition reimbursement benefits must be submitted to the Human Resources office no later than 3 weeks prior to the start of the class. Human Resources will verify that the employee is eligible to receive the benefit.

- F. The application will then be forwarded to the employee's supervisor, and Vice President/Executive for their review.
- G. The employee will be notified via email of the final outcome of the request for tuition reimbursement.
- H. Upon completion of the class, the **original** approved Tuition Reimbursement Application form with the Reimbursement Certification section completed, a copy of the **official** grade report, and proof of payment for the class(es) must be submitted to Human Resources.
- I. Tuition reimbursement benefits are not transferable to a spouse or dependent.
- J. The tuition reimbursement program is based on availability of funds, and the College President or designee may suspend, limit or otherwise revise the program at any time, including semester by semester.
- K. For purposes of this procedure, the academic year begins with the fall term; however, reimbursement funds are budgeted on a fiscal year. Approvals will be based on availability of funds within a fiscal year. If the employee has received any other form of reimbursement for the course(s) for which reimbursement is being requested (i.e. scholarship, grant, financial aid, etc.), tuition reimbursement will be based on the reduced amount.
- L. The employee must receive a minimum final course grade of 2.0 ("C") on a 4.0 grade scale for each undergraduate course; and a minimum final course grade of 3.0 ("B") or a grade considered as "passing" by the degree-granting institution on a 4.0 grade scale for each graduate or post-graduate course. One hundred percent of reimbursable costs will be made for passing a "pass/fail" course.
- M. Reimbursement shall not exceed the current Fall semester Florida Gulf Coast University rate for in-state fees for equivalent course level (i.e. the FGCU bachelor's rate for bachelor's level courses, the FGCU master's rate for master's level courses, etc.).
- N. Reimbursements are subject to Internal Revenue Code regulations. Courses taken below the graduate level are not included in the gross income of the employee, whereas Graduate and Doctoral level studies will be included in the gross income in accordance with IRS regulations.
- O. Reimbursement eligibility is limited to six (6) credit hours per semester and 12 credit hours per academic year; the academic year runs from Fall semester through the following summer semesters.
- P. Tuition reimbursement approval will be revoked if the employee terminates employment with the College or is terminated before completion (grade distribution) of the course.
- Q. Additional information on eligibility, guidelines and required due dates, as well as an application, may be obtained in the Office of Human Resources.