

- I. **PURPOSE** - To provide supplemental procedures to the State and VCCS Educational Assistance Policies with which these procedures shall not conflict. It is the intent of this policy to encourage and support the educational opportunities of employees with college support, particularly in courses offered at VWCC, and such that these opportunities will benefit the college, enhance employees' current job performance, and improve opportunities for advancement at Virginia Western.
- II. **AUTHORITY** - The president shall approve/disapprove educational assistance requests as submitted by employees on Form VCCS-16. The authority of the President shall not be inconsistent with the policies in force by the state and VCCS and pertinent delegated authority agreements.
- III. **APPLICATION** – The provisions of the Educational Assistance programs shall apply to all full-time faculty rank and classified employees. Continuous Learning programs include all full-time faculty rank and classified employees, hourly/wage employees (except student employees and work/study students), and adjunct faculty employees. New employees are immediately eligible to receive educational assistance for tuition and mandatory fees. This is an employment benefit and, therefore, it is intended to exclude students from eligibility. Persons whose primary status with the College is as a student, or who serve in positions designated as student positions, are not eligible for continuous learning programs under this policy.
- IV. **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. Typically, Educational Assistance will be for those courses taken at other institutions of higher education and those that do not meet the definition of Continuous Learning courses. Continuous Learning Courses are credit hour courses offered at the community college to employees at no cost. The courses must be offered by Virginia Western Community College, and may be job related or non-job related, part of a degree program, or for professional development; and should have application to the college's mission. To qualify for continuous learning assistance, courses shall not to be taken as a class audit; enrollment must be as a normal, graded student. The courses may be job related or non-job related; however, they should have application to the college's mission. Job Related Courses are those 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. Non-Job Related Courses are career/professional development courses or studies that prepare an individual for advancement in another field of work within the college's mission or at a higher level of proficiency in the current profession. Degree Requirement are 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; or (b) to enable classified employees to complete degree programs which will enhance job performance or support the college's mission. Employees pursuing degrees shall file a full program of study with the Human Resources Office in order for classes to be properly tracked. Any changes to the program of study shall be filed with

Human Resources as changes are made in order for classes to be eligible for educational assistance or continuous learning assistance. New Employees are those employees in a probationary status or in the first year as a faculty member or hired within the past twelve months.

V. EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE AND CONTINUOUS LEARNING PROCEDURES –

- a. SUPERVISORY ROLES: Each supervisor shall support the development of all employees through participation in and providing equal access to education, training and development opportunities. To the extent of available resources, the college may assist eligible employees in such education and training, particularly in courses offered at Virginia Western. The identification of the education and training should normally occur during the annual supervisor/employee discussion of “Personal Learning Goals” during the annual performance evaluation and planning processes. However, education and training opportunities may be identified outside of the annual process and may be considered as the needs arise. The decision to recommend educational assistance or continuous learning is the responsibility of each supervisor based on the needs of both the college and the individual and the availability of funds in general professional development and/or departmental budgets. Prior to course registration, Form VCCS-16 must be completed by the employee in detail, signed, and dated by the employee and the supervisor. The appropriate Vice-President shall review and approve/disapprove the request based on State funds to be spent and the consistent application of policy. Form VCCS-16 shall then be forwarded to the Human Resources Manager who shall verify the tuition costs data and review policy compliance based on the state, VCCS and college policies. If applicable, he shall further determine if proper documentation is on file reflecting a classified employee's entrance into a degree program for which aid is sought. Once approval has been received from the Vice-President, and Human Resources Manager has completed his review, the President shall review and approve/disapprove the request. The Human Resources Office shall provide a spreadsheet report to the Vice-President of Academic and Student Affairs by March 31 of each year in order for the educational assistance requests to be included in a tabulation of general professional development funding for the subsequent fiscal year budget process. Continuous learning courses may be reported, but will not be included in the overall review processes conducted by the Ad Hoc Committee on Professional Development. The Human Resources Office shall notify the employee of the action taken and maintain appropriate files.
- b. AD-HOC COMMITTEE FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ROLE: The Ad-Hoc Committee for Professional Development is designed to assist in the development and administration of overall professional development plans and educational assistance funding. The Ad-Hoc Committee shall be committed to the need for the continued professional growth and development of employees and to assist the Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs in planning for and allocating fiscal year professional development and educational assistance funding in order to equitably and uniformly support professional development and growth. The Ad-Hoc Committee, however, shall not make recommendations regarding continuous learning courses taken at VWCC by eligible employees. Continuous learning courses, whereby tuition and fees are waived, shall be upon the recommendation of the supervisor and respective Vice-President and subject to the approval of the President.

- c. EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE ELIGIBILITY AND PAYMENT OPTIONS – Full-time faculty and classified employees are eligible for educational assistance based upon the following:
- i. Typically educational assistance, as differentiated from continuous learning courses, is provided for job related courses or to meet degree requirements at regionally accredited institutions of higher education, public or private, outside of Virginia Western Community College.
 - ii. Educational assistance funding is subject to the review and deadlines of the Ad-Hoc Committee for Professional Development processes.
 - iii. The provision of educational assistance may be limited to funds available in the college's fiscal year budget and/or based upon prioritization of requests as determined by the Ad-Hoc Committee for Professional Development.
 - iv. Courses approved for educational assistance at other state-supported colleges shall be subject to the per credit hour tuition rate in effect at that college at the time the course is to be taken, unless otherwise specified by VWCC administration. Courses approved for educational assistance at private colleges or non-state supported colleges shall receive educational assistance not to exceed the per credit hour tuition rate at Virginia Tech, unless specified otherwise by VWCC administration. Employees must currently be employed with the College and satisfactorily complete the courses with a grade of "C" or better to receive the educational assistance.
 - v. PAYMENT OPTIONS for Educational Assistance:
 1. Up-Front Payment-Promissory Note: Approved courses taken at other institutions of higher education will be based upon tuition and mandatory fees in effect at the time the courses are taken. The college will pay for the course at the time of registration. The employee and the college shall execute a promissory note for the amount of tuition and mandatory fees prior to registration for the course. Payment for tuition will be transmitted to the institution by check or IAT. A "Continuation Agreement" pursuant to VCCS Policy 3.10.1.5 may be made part of the provision of up-front payments.
 2. Reimbursement: Employees pay the required tuition and fees and will be reimbursed for the costs when the course is completed and the appropriate documentation is submitted to the Human Resources Office for payment processing. A "Continuation Agreement" will not be made part of the reimbursement option.
 3. For all payment options, the employee must be currently employed by the college and the course(s) must be completed satisfactorily with a grade of "C" or better. For any up-front payment, if an employee fails to complete a course, receives an unsatisfactory final grade, and/or the fails to complete the employee work obligation the college shall initiate repayment provisions immediately according the VCCS Policy 3.10.1.5.C.
 - vi. Eligibility for educational assistance that includes leave with full pay, partial pay or without pay shall be controlled by VCCS Policy 3.10.1.2.C.
- d. CONTINUOUS LEARNING ELIGIBILITY AND PROCESS: Full-time faculty and classified employees, hourly/wage employees (except student employees and work/study students) and adjunct faculty employees may access continuous learning opportunities by taking courses for credit offered by Virginia Western Community College; auditing a class is not permitted for continuous learning assistance. These

courses may be part of a degree program or for professional growth and development. These courses are provided tuition free. This is an employment benefit and, therefore, it is intended to exclude students from eligibility. No more than six (6) credit hours may be taken in a semester. Continuous learning opportunities should normally be identified through the performance planning and evaluation process each year; however, courses identified outside of this time period can be considered for continuous learning. The number of credit hours per semester may be limited based upon employee participation and available seats in the courses. Regular students will have priority to the seats in courses, and college employees may receive approval for the seats in classes as enrollment permits. In the event a class is full and cannot accommodate an employee under the continuous learning program, efforts will be made to secure a seat in another class or to give priority to the employee at the next available course offering. Employees must be currently employed at the college and receive a grade of "C" or better to receive tuition free opportunities under continuous learning programs; auditing a class is not subject to the Continuous Learning benefits. In the event an employee does not complete a class or receives an unsatisfactory final grade or fails to complete the employee work obligation the college repayment options shall commence pursuant to VCCS Policy in the same manner as provided for educational assistance.

- e. GENERAL PROVISIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE AND CONTINUOUS LEARNING – Employees shall fully complete the Educational Assistance Request Form (Form VCCS-16) for all academic courses (credit and non-credit) and forward it to the immediate supervisor. It shall be completed in detail, be signed and dated by the employee and the supervisor. Educational Assistance Request Forms must be received in the Human Resources Office prior to registration for the classes. Courses taken at other institutions of higher education will typically be reviewed by the Ad-Hoc Committee on Professional Development according to its established processes. The Human Resources Office, after receiving and logging the Educational Assistance Form, will forward the documentation to the Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs for consideration by the Ad-Hoc Committee. Forms received after the Ad-Hoc Committee's timeframes will be considered and processed; however, funding will be contingent upon unallocated or available professional development funds or the availability of departmental funds. Forms VCCS-16 submitted under the Continuous Learning Program shall be submitted to the Human Resources Office for processing. These documents shall not be subject to the Ad-Hoc Committee review; however, Human Resources shall file a report with the Vice-President of Academic and Student Affairs of the eligible employees participating in the program. Other provisions are as follows:
 - i. If the class is part of a degree requirement, the employee must submit documentation of acceptance in 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.
 - ii. The application for assistance must include:
 - 1. The course title(s), institution and location, class schedule, and whether the course is job related, non-job related and/or part of a degree requirement. If part of a degree requirement, verification of acceptance into a degree program must be on file in the Human Resources Office.
 - 2. The VCCS-16 form must indicate whether the course(s) is "Employee-Initiated" or "Supervisor Required" by checking the appropriate box on the form.
 - 3. The amount of tuition and mandatory fees that are requested, with each

- listed separately.
4. If the class(es) is “after hours study” for job-related, non job-related or degree required course(s) and the course(s) is not required by the supervisor, the classified employees attendance is considered voluntary. Voluntary education time occurring outside or after normal work hours is not considered hours of work for computing overtime.
 - a. After hours study courses that are taken by non-exempt employees that are required by the supervisor shall be considered hours worked and will be counted accordingly on employee timesheets. Consequently, overtime payment will be due to non-exempt employees for total hours worked over 40 in the workweek. Supervisors must manage work schedules accordingly.
 5. If the class(es) is “during hours study”, classified employees are required to adjust their work schedules to fulfill their normal hours per week. Adjustments may take the form of reducing an employee’s work week, increasing the number of hours worked, requiring the use of annual or compensatory leave or VSDP family/personal leave (for VSDP participants).
 - a. Non-exempt classified employees: For non-exempt classified employees, time spent in a job related or required class during normal work hours is considered hours of work for computing any overtime liability. Supervisors must manage work schedules accordingly.
 - b. Courses taken by employees that are required by the supervisor to enhance job performance shall be considered hours worked and will not be subject to work schedule adjustments or requirements to use accrued leave balances.
 - c. Courses taken by employees that are non-job related education time occurring during and/or outside of normal work hours is not considered hours of work for computing overtime, if employees attendance is voluntary, and the employee performs no productive work during such attendance. Supervisors must appropriately manage work schedules to ensure that the daily and/or work week standards are met.
 - d. Faculty are required to ensure that courses do not conflict with teaching and college responsibilities.
- iii. Educational Assistance with Leave and Full Pay or Partial Pay shall be submitted in accordance with VCCS Policy 3.10.1.4.B.
 - iv. Promissory Notes: Employees receiving educational assistance through the use of up-front payments, shall be subject to the provisions of VCCS Policy 3.10.1.5.
 - v. All documents of employees receiving educational assistance and continuous learning assistance shall be filed in the Human Resources Office as required by State and Federal regulations. Some of these documents will become part of the employee’s official personnel records.
 - vi. The college may modify this policy from time-to-time to meet college needs. This policy may address:
 1. Partial payments of tuition and fees
 2. Establishment of in-state benchmark payments for tuition at out-of-state institutions of higher education.
 3. Limiting the financial support for the first two years of a degree program

- to the cost of the course at a community college.
4. Application procedures and deadlines.

VI. OTHER SOURCES OF AID AVAILABLE FOR EMPLOYEES

- a. Employees may apply for educational assistance through the VWCC Educational Foundation. The Foundation has established guidelines that determine the eligibility and aid to be granted to employees.
- b. Employees may apply for textbook assistance through the VWCC Educational Foundation as it may be funded from time-to-time. Established guidelines determine eligibility of employees qualifying for assistance based on financial need.
- c. Employees may also apply for the Chancellor's Fellowship programs for faculty and classified employees.

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