



SANTA ROSA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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Memorandum

To: Santa Rosa County Board of Commissioners

From: DeVann Cook, Director, Human Resources

Through: Tony Gomillion, County Administrator

Re: Tuition Reimbursement Program

Date: September 28, 2016

RECOMMENDATION

Approve the 2016 Tuition Reimbursement Program, for BOCC employees (attached).

BACKGROUND

Funds were included in the 2016-2017 Human Resources budget for a tuition reimbursement program. This program would allow BOCC employees to receive reimbursement for certain college class work. The amount of the reimbursement would be determined by the type of degree they are seeking (Associate's, Bachelor's or Master's). The degree would have to be related to their career path with Santa Rosa County. The employee would have to submit a request to their director. If determined to be appropriate, the director would then review the request and forward to the County Administrator. The County Administrator would make the final decision and Human Resources would notify the employee of that decision.

This Program has been developed with the assistance and input from the Administrative Leadership Team.

Attachment

TUITION PROGRAM

POLICY STATEMENT:

It is the policy of the Santa Rosa County Board of County Commissioners to encourage its employees to enhance their effectiveness through education and training, to develop their skills and knowledge and improve their ability to carry out their assigned duties. The tuition reimbursement program shall provide employees with full or partial reimbursement of tuition costs for approved course work from an accredited college.

REIMBURSEMENT GUIDELINES:

The program is restricted to permanent, full-time Santa Rosa County employees only. An employee in their probationary period will not be reimbursed for educational expenses until the successful completion of said probation.

All employees who take course work from an accredited college related to their job or career advancement will receive full or partial reimbursement of their paid tuition costs, based on the following guidelines:

Reimbursement shall be based upon the satisfactory completion of course work.

Employees receiving a grade score of a "B" or higher, for A.S. or A.A degree work (Freshman & Sophomore), will receive a reimbursement of 100%.

Employees receiving grade scores of a "B" or higher for B.A. or B.S. degree work (Junior & Senior) will receive a reimbursement of 75%.

Employees receiving grade scores of a "B" or higher for graduate work will receive a reimbursement of 50%.

Doctorate degrees are not included.

College correspondence/television courses are not allowed under this program.

The Board, at its sole discretion, may approve payment for certain courses of study undertaken by an employee at a vocational school or similar institution, if the course of study accomplishes the objectives of enhancing employee effectiveness as well as developing skills and knowledge necessary in improving the employee's ability to carry out assigned duties. Reimbursement of these courses may be made at 100% upon successful completion.

Tuition reimbursement applies to costs based on Florida residency. Additional costs will not be reimbursed.

With sufficient notice, the Board reserves the right to place further limitations on the program in the event reduced revenues or any other factor affects the availability of funds.

Limitations: Funding will be limited as follows:

The total reimbursement money allowable per semester or college quarter shall not exceed 8 quarter hours or 6 semester hours.

Employees eligible to receive educational benefits through G.I. Bill or similar programs may apply for reimbursement of only those tuition costs not funded by the other program, provided the total annual cost to the Board does not exceed the maximum credit hours allowed. (This plan is a secondary provider only to any other tuition plans.)

In accordance with Florida Statute, Chapter 112.063(3) an employee shall not be permitted to utilize any space, personnel, equipment, or supplies of the office by which he/she is employed in the process of fulfilling any of the requirements imposed by the coursework for which he/she is being reimbursed.

At any level of the approval process, the course reimbursement request may be denied if the employee has been suspended for disciplinary purposes, within six (6) months prior to the date of application. Furthermore, if a suspension occurs during the course, reimbursement support will be withdrawn immediately and the employee promptly notified.

No course or class will be approved more than once if the course or class is being repeated due to a substandard grade on the previous attempt.

Employee Obligations: Employees participating in this program incur the following obligations:

Class attendance, course work and studies must be completed on the employees own time.

Travel expenses are the responsibility of the employee.

Books and materials are the responsibility of the employee.

Classes will be attended on off-duty hours and will not be attended during the employees working hours unless prior approval is obtained from the Department Director and the class is not normally available during off-duty hours.

All employees receiving reimbursement under this program will be obligated to remain employed by Santa Rosa County for a minimum of one (1) year to date

(or two (2) years for Master degree programs), following satisfactory completion of course work.

Those employees resigning or terminating employment prior to expiration of the required obligation period, shall refund Santa Rosa County for reimbursement before receiving their final paycheck. Refunds will be prorated based on time employed prior to termination of employment.

Application: Process for receiving tuition reimbursement.

Each quarter/semester, the employee wishing to participate in the tuition reimbursement program shall submit a request to their director detailing their course selection, degree program and how it relates to their employment with Santa Rosa County. The director will review their request and submit to the County Administrator with their recommendation. The County Administrator will notify Human Resources of his approval or denial. Human Resources will notify the employee and their director.

Upon completion of the course work and receipt of grade(s), the employee must submit a tuition receipt and verification of grades received to the Human Resources Office.

Human Resources will authorize payments under this program upon receipt of successful completion of earned credits.

Definitions:

Accredited College – A community college or university that is accredited by the Southern Institute of Colleges and recognized by the State Department of Education, State of Florida.