

## 6.1 Professional Development

**Board of Trustee Approval:** August 6, 2007

**Revised:** October 1, 2015; October 1, 2019; October 1, 2020

Recognizing the importance of faculty and staff advancing their personal and professional knowledge, competence, skills, and behaviors, Sandhills Community College will make every effort to provide fiscal, human, and time resources within the fiscal limitations of state, local, and institutional resources. As such, full-time employees are encouraged and expected to identify and participate in professional development supporting the effectiveness and efficiency of College goals and services. This participation should be in coordination with the employees' direct supervisor and in support of their professional development plan. In addition to traditional faculty and staff development programs available through general college funds, the SCC Foundation has designated an SCC Career Educational Enrichment Benefit for all employees; the benefit is available in year four of employment (following the employee's probation/mentoring period).

This benefit can be used for focused professional advancement. To that end, the College makes available \$15,000 to each faculty and staff member over the lifetime of the employee's career; however, these funds must be used for these specific personal and professional advancement opportunities:

- Sabbaticals (see Policy 6.6 for Staff and 3.5 for Faculty); available after year seven of employment)
- Advanced academic degrees (see Policy 6.2 and 6.3; available after year three of employment)
- International Education (see Policy 6.5; available after year three of employment)

These endeavors are funded at specific caps as outlined in the policies and are intended to enrich the intellectual careers of faculty and staff. The President can approve additional funds if Foundation accounts designated for these purposes are available.

### 6.1.1 Applications for Development Funding

**Revised:** October 1, 2015; October 1, 2017

Faculty members or department chairs may apply for funding support for faculty development activities by submitting Travel Authorization and Travel Advance Request forms and/or Travel Reimbursement Request forms available on the college website. FDC funds may be used to provide activities and training opportunities for full-time or part-time College employees. The forms will be submitted to the appropriate department chair for approval and then to the Faculty Development Committee (FDC) first if FDC support is sought. Forms are then passed to the Vice President of Instruction's office for approval. (The department chair is responsible for supplying budget information if funds beyond FDC allotment are needed.)

When activities are approved, the signed forms will be returned to the faculty member who may then carry out the activity. When the activity is complete, expenses will be reimbursed following standard College policies and procedures.

Staff members may request funding support from the Office of the President or Senior Director of Human Resources for staff development activities sought to benefit full- and part-time staff.

### **6.1.2 Ancillary Support for Faculty and Staff Development**

**Revised:** August 6, 2007

Faculty and staff can seek additional support for development through The Center for Teaching and Learning, the Global/International Education Advancement Committee, and/or the McDonald's Innovation Grant program offered through the Office of Institutional Advancement. Each organization provides clear guidelines for application for support.

### **6.2 Employee Educational Achievement Program**

Sandhills Community College encourages and supports employee professional and career development efforts by providing educational assistance in the form of academic reimbursement and salary increases. Faculty and staff are encouraged to enroll in approved academic courses to enhance or complete educational objectives which relate to their current position and to potential career advancement.

#### **6.2.1 Application for EEAP**

**Revised:** October 1, 2015, October 1, 2016; October 1, 2017; October 1, 2018; April 1, 2019; October 1, 2020; February 6, 2023; March 11, 2024

It is Sandhills Community College's policy to grant a one-time increase of 5% in annual salary, subject to availability of funds, to employees who complete one of these degrees: a first-time associate's degree, a first-time bachelor's degree, a first-time master's degree, or a first-time doctoral degree, or other educational milestone (as approved by the President). If the completion of a degree is a condition of employment, employees are ineligible for additional compensation. Employees should refer to Policy 6.1 for more information regarding participation in this program.

### **Eligibility**

Faculty and staff who meet all the following criteria are eligible to participate in the Employee Educational Achievement Program (EEAP) funded through the SCC Career Educational Enrichment Benefit afforded all employees in year four after completion of the probation/mentoring period:

- Full-time employment
- Thirty-six months of continuous and non-probationary service with Sandhills Community College prior to the first day of class

### **Approved Courses of Academic Study**

Academic courses/degrees from regionally accredited community colleges/universities are eligible for approval. Courses not accredited by the U.S. Department of Education are not eligible under this policy. Eligibility of academic programs is subject to all the following criteria:

1. Courses must provide academic credit.
2. The community college/university must charge tuition in the traditional meaning of tuition (as opposed to registration fees).
3. Accreditation must be via an accrediting agency authorized by the U.S. Department of Education and the regional accrediting authority.
4. Courses must begin and end on the traditional semester or quarter system utilized by the university or community college system. Reimbursement of web-based

course work under accelerated learning course programs may not be covered in this policy.

## **Reimbursement**

The Vice President of Institutional Advancement reviews available funds each semester to determine availability of funds. Factors such as enrollment and market performance impact this funding source. When funds are limited, funding decisions will be based on the applicants' original date of application.(i.e., someone who applied in 2020 would be given priority for funds over someone who applied in 2023, if the 2020 applicant has made continual progress each in advancing toward the degree). The College funds the EEAP at the following rate:

### **EEAP Caps:**

- SACSCOC discipline-related education and leadership programs:  
\$3000 per academic year.

These funds are governed by these criteria:

1. Reimbursement may be received for tuition and fees.
2. Reimbursement will not be awarded for transportation costs, late fees, graduation fees, examination fees, or supplies. The following do not qualify for tuition reimbursement under this policy: professional seminars and workshops, symposia, non-credit courses, college/university entrance exams, review programs for entrance exams, or courses at non-accredited institutions. Itemized fees which are not reimbursable to employees also include application/preadmission registration fees, transcript fees, test preparation fees, admission testing fees, placement fees, course waiver or challenge fees, travel costs (i.e., transportation, housing, meals, etc.), parking fees, equipment/kit purchase costs, tutoring fees, deferred tuition fees, student activity fees, student union fees, petition fees, recreation fees, health coverage costs, dissertation or thesis typing fees, development or foundation fees, institution fees, alumni fees, and other similar fees.
3. Tuition reimbursement for undergraduate or graduate courses will not exceed the tuition prevailing rate charged by the University of North Carolina system. Thus, more expensive degree programs may far exceed those rates, but SCC caps annual available funds at the rates described above.
4. Funds permitting, the maximum annual employee reimbursement per semester is for two courses.

5. The College will only allow funds for two thesis/dissertation courses in the pursuit of the masters and doctoral degrees.

For undergraduate courses: Tuition and fees are reimbursed only for courses taken and completed with a final grade of “C” or equivalent, or higher.

If an eligible employee’s hours are reduced, or if the employee goes on a disability leave of absence, any approved course(s) in progress will be reimbursed, provided the course is completed with a final grade of “C” or higher, and fulfills the other provisions of this policy.

The following do not qualify for tuition reimbursement under this policy: professional seminars and workshops, symposia, non-credit courses, college/university entrance exams, review programs for entrance exams, or courses at non-accredited institutions.

Itemized fees which are not reimbursable to employees include application/pre-admission registration fees, transcript fees, test preparation fees, admission testing fees, placement fees, course waiver or challenge fees, travel costs (i.e., transportation, housing, meals, etc.), parking fees, equipment/kit purchase costs, tutoring fees, deferred tuition fees, student activity fees, student union fees, petition fees, recreation fees, health coverage costs, dissertation or thesis typing fees, development or foundation fees, institution fees, alumni fees, and other similar fees.

Tuition and eligible fees are not reimbursable when employees voluntarily terminate employment, when terminated for cause, prior to course completion, or when employees have not received advance approval as described below.

### **Tax Considerations**

The taxability of payments under the tuition reimbursement plan is in accordance with current Internal Revenue Service guidelines.

### **Required Preapproval**

Employees wishing to obtain permission for reimbursement must complete the **Employee Educational Achievement Program Proposal**, available on the College website under For Faculty & Staff, the semester **prior** to beginning any educational program or registering for any class(es).

Employees must, of course, discuss the proposal with their direct supervisor and make certain the supervisor approves and supports the plan. While not all proposals may be approved, the college welcomes submissions of these EEAP funding requests. Following

institutional review of the employee's application for participation in the EEAP, the employee will be notified if the application has been approved and any caps on funding. **No tuition reimbursement or 5% salary increase will be approved without following all these steps to application for EEAP.**

### **Reimbursement Procedure**

Each semester the employee must submit the following documents to the Executive Assistant to the President for reimbursement:

1. Employee Educational Reimbursement Request form
2. Grade Report
3. Receipt(s) for tuition
4. Copy of approved Employee Educational Achievement Proposal form

The Executive Assistant to the President will process the reimbursement request, and, the request for payment will be sent to the Business Office so a check can be written.

### **Miscellaneous**

Certification of degree program completion must be submitted through the appropriate administrative channel for approval to the Senior Director of Human Resources by completing a Personnel Action Form (PAF). The PAF submission must be accompanied by a memo from the employee's department head and a certified transcript indicating date and type of degree awarded.

All such salary increases will be effective January 1 of the following year for July through December graduates and July 1 for January through June graduates of that same year, depending on availability of funds. The recipient of funds should notify the President's office at least one month prior to graduation utilizing the Employee Educational Reimbursement Request.

Employees are expected to retain their full-time employment with Sandhills Community College for a period of two years after the receipt of tuition assistance.

### **Limitation**

All approved coursework must be taken on the employee's own time unless the course is not offered after working hours. Courses taken during work hours are subject to the

discretion of the employee's supervisor. Revised work schedules must not adversely affect departmental services or job performance.

### **6.3 Faculty and Staff Enrollment in SCC Classes**

**Approval:** August 6, 2007

**Revised:** October 1, 2012; October 1, 2019

Full-time college employees may register for one curriculum course each semester or one continuing education course per academic year without payment of tuition or student fees, excluding all-must-pay, self-supporting classes, audited, and applied music (MUS 161 and 162) classes. When employees register for classes which are conducted during normal working hours, permission must be obtained in advance from the appropriate administrator or supervisor. In cases where enrollment in a class is related directly to the employee's work, the employee's supervisor may approve that time away from the workstation as part of normal working hours. Otherwise, the employee must make up the time lost from work. In cases where courses are job-related, the college's staff development fund, pending availability of funds, will assume the cost of the course materials.

#### **6.3.1 Application for Fee Waiver**

**Revised:** October 1, 2012; January 8, 2019

As outlined in Policy 6.3, a faculty or staff member who wishes to take an SCC class must obtain the approval of his or her supervisor if the class will take place during the workday. The SCC employee must secure this signature before submitting his or her form during registration.

### **6.4 Reimbursement of Dues and Fees for Service Organization Membership**

**Board of Trustee Approval:** August 6, 2007

**Revised:** October 1, 2012

Sandhills Community College sponsors membership in local service organizations (i.e., Rotary, Kiwanis, etc.). In order to receive reimbursement for expenses, prior approval by the Chief Operating Officer must be obtained in writing before the employee joins any club and professional organization that requires membership dues and other specialized fees.

Reimbursable expenses are limited to member dues and specific specialized charges required for membership. College sponsorship will be limited to two employees per service organization. Payment of such dues and specialized fees will be subject to availability of funds.

#### **6.4.1 Application for Reimbursement**

**Revised:** October 1, 2012; October 1, 2017

A faculty or staff member who has been approved for reimbursement under Policy 6.4 or 6.5 will submit a memo with a receipt to the Chief Operating Officer for approval and reimbursement.

#### **6.5 International Education**

**Board of Trustee Approval:** October 1, 2012

Sandhills Community College recognizes and supports the importance of a global perspective in the education of its students. When resources permit, the College will support partnerships with international institutions of higher education and will support its faculty and staff in developing their own international experiences and in transferring those experiences to the classroom. The President shall establish a standing committee to aid in the review of such requests.

##### **6.5.1 Application for Support for International Travel**

**Revised:** October 1, 2012

A faculty or staff member who seeks support for international experiences related to professional development should contact the Global/International Education Advancement Committee for an application for funding. For situations in which additional funding is necessary, the faculty or staff member should seek the approval of the Chief Operating Officer before contacting the Executive Assistant to the President for potential funding.

## **6.6 Staff Sabbatical**

**Board of Trustee Approval:** February 6, 2017

**Revised:** October 1, 2020

Sandhills Community College will establish, fund and provide a mechanism for continuing professional development of staff in a manner that ultimately will benefit the students, the College, and the academic community at large. Sabbatical leave should provide an opportunity for continued professional growth and new (or renewed) intellectual achievement through teaching, study, research, writing, and travel. Policy 3.5 provides similar information on faculty sabbaticals. A staff member is eligible to apply for a sabbatical after seven full years of service and may apply for an additional sabbatical seven years following a previous sabbatical award.

### **6.6.1 Application for Faculty & Staff Sabbatical**

**Revised:** February 6, 2017; October 1, 2020

A faculty or staff member is eligible to apply for a sabbatical every seven years after seven full years of employment. Faculty and staff members may apply using the Sabbatical Leave Application form that is emailed to SCC All Users in January and is posted on the college's webpage. Faculty and staff members must submit the request for sabbatical leave to their department chair or director by the deadline stated on the application in the academic year preceding the proposed sabbatical leave. The department chair or director will forward the request, along with a recommendation, to the Vice President of Instruction (faculty), the Vice President of Academic Affairs & Institutional Planning, the Vice President of Student Services, the Vice President of Workforce Continuing Education, or the Chief Operating Office.

Faculty and staff members must submit a detailed sabbatical proposal which includes the following: the general purpose and nature of the sabbatical leave; the location(s) at which the leave will be taken; written statements from any collaborators, confirming the expected nature and duration of the collaboration; an outline of anticipated sabbatical-related expenses and financial compensation; an outline of the activities to be pursued, including a rationale for using a sabbatical leave to pursue these activities; and a

statement of anticipated outcomes, including all evidence that the sabbatical leave will increase individual effectiveness or produce academically or socially useful results.

Faculty or staff members may receive outside compensation from a grant, contract, or any income-producing activity while on sabbatical, consistent with the following provisions:

- The compensated activity must not conflict with the purpose of the sabbatical leave.
- The expected compensation must be disclosed in advance through the sabbatical application process.

Faculty department chairs should work with their vice president to arrange for suitable part-time teaching assistance, if this is required during the period of the sabbatical leave.

### **Sabbatical Leave Responsibilities**

Faculty and staff members have an obligation to return to the College for at least one full year of further service following a sabbatical leave. If the faculty or staff member does not fulfill this service obligation following a sabbatical leave, the member may be liable for sabbatical leave salary and the costs of associated benefits.

Faculty and staff members must present receipts in order to be reimbursed for sabbatical-related expenses. Reimbursement requests with receipts must be submitted within thirty days of completion of sabbatical leave.