UPMC

Subject: Tuition Assistance Program for Staff Members
Date: 1/1/10

I PROGRAM

UPMC provides an educational assistance benefit to eligible UPMC staff members for professional and career development. The benefit is offered as a reimbursement or advancement depending upon the program and provider involved.

II ELIGIBLE STAFF MEMBERS

A. Job Status

1. Eligible staff members include those UPMC employees classified as regular full-time, flex full-time, job-share, and regular part-time.
2. Physicians and staff members covered by a collective bargaining agreement must refer to the terms of their contract to determine eligibility. Groups not eligible for the UPMC Tuition Assistance benefit include, but are not limited to, staff at: Carrillo Steam Plant, Ladies Hospital Aid Society, UPP faculty and staff dually employed with UPMC and the University of Pittsburgh, and St. Margaret IUOE Local 95-95A.
3. Staff members are eligible immediately upon employment in an eligible job class provided the school term or course date begins on or after the employment date.
4. In the event of position elimination, tuition assistance will be granted for courses that have already begun for the semester during which employment termination occurs and when all other requirements of these guidelines have been met.

B. Mid-Semester Internal Job Transfers

Staff members who transfer internally during the school term may be eligible for tuition assistance for that current term. Eligible courses must begin prior to the effective date of transfer. The assistance level is determined by the job status at the start of the term.

1. Eligible mid-semester transfers include transfers:
   - from a business unit covered under these guidelines to a business unit not covered, or
   - from an eligible full-time job status (e.g. regular full-time, flex full-time) to an eligible part-time job status (e.g. regular part-time, job share) or vice versa.
2. Ineligible mid-semester transfers include transfers:
   - from a business unit not covered under these guidelines to a business unit covered, or
   - from an eligible job status (e.g. regular full-time, flex full-time, regular part-time, job share) to an ineligible job status (e.g. limited part-time, casual, temporary, terminated).

III EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

A. The intent of the UPMC Tuition Assistance Program is to assist staff with education expenses for subjects that are mutually beneficial for the staff member and UPMC. Eligible courses must provide knowledge and skills directly related to a UPMC budgeted position. All courses are subject to review for appropriateness.

B. Courses taken must be offered by a post secondary/post high school accredited institution of learning (college, university, business or trade school) that is recognized by the United States Department of Education or is a proprietary school affiliated with UPMC.

C. Eligible programs include:
   - associate's, bachelor's, master's, and doctorate degree programs
   - correspondence courses, external degree programs, independent study courses, on-line, and distance learning
   - College Level Examination Program (CLEP) exams and challenge exams
   - courses intended to prepare a staff member for taking a certification exam provided they are offered at an accredited institution and are preparing for an exam that is eligible under these guidelines
   - the cost of examinations leading to recognized certification in a health care specialty (e.g. oncology nursing certification, critical care nursing, trauma nursing, emergency nurse certification, advanced cardiac life support, or diabetes educator), professional certification used in health care (e.g. CPA), or the Test of General Educational Development (GED)
   - non-degree and non-credit courses

D. Ineligible programs include but are not limited to:
   - college entrance exams
   - initial and periodic renewal license fees
   - continuing education seminars and conferences that provide continuing education units or professional development units, but not academic credit
   - audited courses

IV TUITION ASSISTANCE AMOUNT

Tuition assistance is provided as a percentage of the student's actual out-of-pocket tuition expense up to an academic year maximum.

A. The assistance percentage is based on the school the staff member attends.
   - 100% if attending the University of Pittsburgh, a community college, a UPMC proprietary school, or completing a certification exam
   - 50% at other accredited institutions (including vocational/technical programs)

B. Academic year maximums are based on the staff member's job status. The academic year is the 12 month period August 1 through July 31. Generally it starts with the fall semester, continues through the spring semester, and finishes with the summer semester. The start date of a class determines its academic year.

   The academic year maximums are up to:
   - $3,500 for full-time and flex-full time staff
   - $1,750 regular part-time and job-share staff

C. The tuition assistance benefit is limited to the staff member's actual out-of-pocket tuition costs only and does not cover any other fees associated with taking classes, such as technology fees, administrative fees, books, room and board, supplies, etc.

D. Any non-repayable tuition assistance received from third party sources (e.g. grants, scholarships, and tuition assistance through a spouse's employer) offsets the tuition assistance provided by UPMC. It is the staff member's responsibility to report non-repayable amounts received to the Employee Service Center. Repayable tuition assistance (e.g. loans) is not factored into tuition assistance received.

V SUCCESSFUL COURSE COMPLETION

A. Tuition assistance will be provided only for courses completed with a grade of "C" or better.

B. A "P" or "S" grade for pass-fail basis courses is considered the equivalent of a "C" grade.

VI TUITION ADVANCEMENT

Tuition advancement provides UPMC staff members with the ability to have the eligible tuition assistance benefit paid directly to the school at the beginning of the term.

A. UPMC provides tuition advancement benefits for staff members enrolled in courses at the University of Pittsburgh, the Community College of Allegheny County (CCAC), UPMC proprietary schools, Carlow University (CAP/Weekend program), and Chatham University.

B. Tuition advancement is available for credit courses only.

C. Application procedure:

1. At the beginning of each term, print a new Staff Member Tuition Assistance Request Form from the UPMC Infonet at http://benefits.infonet.upmc.com.
2. The completed Tuition Assistance Request Form, a class schedule, and an itemized invoice must be submitted no later than 30 days after the class start date. Forms received after 30 days will only be eligible to receive tuition reimbursement. Documentation must include the student's pre-printed name, school, and term.
3. Once the advancement is approved, an Advancement Letter is mailed to the staff member within 3 to 5 business days.
4. The staff member presents the Advancement Letter to the student account/billing office at their institution.
5. The school will credit the student's account and bill UPMC for the amount of the advancement. Any additional amounts levied by the school (books, fees, remainder of tuition, etc) are the staff member's responsibility to pay directly to the school.
6. Following the conclusion of the term, the school provides a grade report to UPMC.
   - For successfully completed courses, appropriate taxes (currently includes state and local) are deducted from the staff member's pay.
   - For courses not successfully completed, repayment occurs by payroll deduction. The amount to be repaid will be calculated based on the benefit received and the portion of the total credits not completed successfully.

D. Staff members are not eligible to utilize tuition assistance while in repayment status.

VII TUITION REIMBURSEMENT

With tuition reimbursement, staff members pay for classes directly to their school at the beginning of the semester and then request reimbursement of eligible out-of-pocket tuition expenses from UPMC after the completion of the term.

A. Reimbursement is available for any school or course eligible under these guidelines.

B. Application procedure:

1. At the end of each term, print a new Staff Member Tuition Assistance Request Form from the UPMC Infonet at http://benefits.infonet.upmc.com.
2. The completed Tuition Assistance Request Form, an itemized invoice, proof of payment, proof of successful completion (grade report or exam result) must be submitted no later than 6 months after the class end date. Documentation must include the student's pre-printed name, school, and term.

3. Once the reimbursement is approved, a notification letter is mailed to the staff member.
4. Reimbursement amounts are included in the staff member's regularly scheduled pay approximately 4 weeks after the Employee Service Center receives all the necessary documentation. Appropriate taxes are deducted from the reimbursement (currently includes state and local).
5. Reimbursement will be provided for courses completed successfully. In cases where a course is not completed successfully (e.g. below a "C" grade, incomplete, withdrawl), the eligible benefit amount is calculated based on the percentage of credits completed successfully in relation to the total credits taken in that term.

C. Staff members are not eligible to utilize tuition assistance while in repayment status.

VIII PRE-ELIGIBILITY VERIFICATION

A. Staff members who want to obtain general verification of eligibility prior to the start of a term may print a Tuition Assistance Eligibility Verification Form from the UPMC Infonet at http://benefits.infonet.upmc.com and submit it to the UPMC Employee Service Center. The form will be reviewed and a response concerning the eligibility will be mailed to the staff member within four weeks.

B. Verification is based on the staff member's self-reported information and is not a guarantee of payment. A review of the actual documentation and specific information of the actual advancement or reimbursement submission will determine exact eligible payment amounts as additional criteria are reviewed at that time including: successful completion, available maximum, employee's job status, timely submission, proof of payment, and non-repayable third party payments.

C. Completion of a Tuition Assistance Eligibility Verification Form is not required to qualify for the tuition assistance benefit.

IX PRE-EXISTING BENEFIT OPTIONS

A. Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic, Falk Clinic, Pittsburgh Cancer Institute, and Mathilda H. Theiss Health Center staff members who transferred to the UPMC payroll and who elected to remain with the University of Pittsburgh tuition plan (the "Pitt Option") at the time of transfer or during the open enrollment in April 1992 may receive benefits according to the guidelines below. The University of Pittsburgh tuition plan is not available to staff members from these institutions that were hired after May 2, 1992.

1. Staff members who chose to remain in the Pitt Option plan are subject to University of Pittsburgh policies and any changes relating to that benefit.
2. Staff members in the Pitt Option plan must submit a Tuition Assistance Request Form – Pitt Option for themselves, their spouses, or their dependents to the Employee Service Center – Tuition Assistance for processing.
3. Specific guidelines describing credit limits, dependent eligibility, and procedures for applying for tuition assistance under the Pitt Option plan are available from the Employee Service Center – Tuition Assistance.
4. Effective May 1, 2007, staff who voluntarily or involuntarily terminate employment permanently lose eligibility for the pre-existing benefit option at the time of termination. Staff who involuntarily terminate employment due to reduction in force and return to active job status within 90 days of termination will have the pre-existing benefit option reinstated. Staff who lost their pre-existing benefit option under prior guidelines in effect before May 1, 2007, and would have retained their benefits under these new guidelines, will not have their pre-existing benefit option reinstated.

X EMPLOYMENT COMMITMENT

Staff members receiving tuition assistance are expected to remain in a tuition eligible employment status for 12 months following the completion of the course in which tuition assistance was provided. Staff not remaining in an eligible status are required to repay any tuition assistance received.

A. An ineligible employment status occurs when:
   - employment terminates (with the exception of position elimination, reduction in force, divestiture, disability, or Graduate Medical Education Fellows), or
   - job status changes to limited part-time, casual, or temporary

B. At the time of ineligibility, repayment is required for all courses completed within the 12 months prior to the date of ineligibility.

C. Repayment will be deducted from the staff member's pay and any remaining balance must be paid directly to UPMC. The terminating staff member should contact the UPMC Employee Service Center to arrange for repayment.

D. If a staff member repays tuition assistance, and returns to an eligible employment status within one year, the repayment amount is refunded to the staff member. The refund occurs after the staff member remains in an eligible employment status for a period of time equal to the balance of time needed to meet the 12 month employment commitment prior to termination (minimum of 90 days). The staff member must notify the UPMC Employee Service Center when they have met this requirement.

XI OTHER

A. A change in a staff member's working hours to accommodate course scheduling requires approval of the staff member's department head or clinical director.

B. General information on other financial aid opportunities and tuition deferral programs at educational institutions is available from the Employee Assistance Program staff or in the Employee Assistance Program section of UPMC Infonet at http://benefits.infonet.upmc.com and directly from your school.

C. In the event that these guidelines are inconsistent with the provisions of a collective bargaining agreement, the collective bargaining agreement provisions apply.

D. In cases where credit hours are not utilized by a school, 15 hours of instruction is equivalent to one credit.

E. Questions about the UPMC Tuition Assistance benefit should be directed to the UPMC Employee Service Center at 1-800-994-2752, option 3.

XII APPEAL PROCESS

The Employee Service Center has the initial authority to determine whether an individual is eligible to participate and the amount of benefits that are payable. Even though it does not happen often, occasionally questions arise. If a staff member does not agree with a benefit eligibility or assistance amount determination, the staff member should contact the UPMC Employee Service Center to discuss. In most cases, issues are resolved quickly by the Employee Service Center. However, if the staff member still feels the issue is unresolved, there is a written appeal process in place. Refer to the Appeals section of the UPMC Welfare Summary Plan Description for details to submit a written appeal.