Educational Assistance Program

Allegany College of Maryland is committed to the continued development of its faculty and staff. As part of that commitment, the College provides an Educational Assistance Program which supports employees in their pursuit of higher education with institutions other than ACM. The Educational Assistance provides financial assistance for the professional development of employees in their current jobs and in the enhancement of competencies for career development and promotability at ACM. This program applies only to courses approved in advance, taken by eligible employees outside of normal working hours, and at accredited educational institutions. It is not the intent of the College to imply that participation in the program will guarantee career advancement.

A. Terms and Conditions

Eligible employees approved for Educational Assistance can receive reimbursement for tuition charges for a maximum amount per fiscal year for courses successfully completed at an accredited educational institution.

The College's recognized fiscal year is July 1st through June 30th. Educational Assistance is funded by the annual budget and is not guaranteed in any fiscal year due to available funding. The amount of maximum reimbursement will be published at the beginning of each fiscal year by the Human Resources Office. The amount of reimbursement for the current fiscal year can be found on the Educational Assistance Application. An eligible employee may receive **up to a maximum amount per fiscal year for undergraduate, graduate or doctoral courses.** All other associated costs for coursework including books, supplies, materials, and required and non-required program fees are the financial responsibility of the employee and are not applicable for reimbursement under this Program.

To be eligible for reimbursement, the course(s) for credit or degree program must either be directly related to the employee's job function or consist of courses which, while not directly related to the employee's present position, are required for the completion of the degree program.

Coursework approved in accordance with the provisions of this Program must generally be taken outside of normal working hours.

An employee requesting reimbursement must be actively employed by Allegany College of Maryland at the commencement and completion of all courses. Generally, an employee who voluntarily terminates employment prior to course completion, or leaves within two years of receiving reimbursement for prior courses, will be required to repay the College for all Educational Assistance reimbursements in accordance with terms outlined in Section D.

B. Criteria and Eligibility

An eligible employee is a full-time non-temporary administrator, faculty, professional or associate support staff member with a contract exceeding 6 months in duration for any given fiscal year. Employees must remain in the employment of the College through completion of the approved coursework. An employee who leaves the College prior to completion of approved coursework

will not be eligible for reimbursement.

Doctoral, graduate or undergraduate coursework must be directly related to the employee's job function, relate to improving the employee's effectiveness on the job or assist in preparing the employee for a position of increased responsibility or advancement within the College. (The Educational Assistance program does not cover job-related workshops, seminars, or special supervised training sessions, etc., which may be funded under Professional or Staff Development). Approval of coursework must be obtained from the Supervisor and departmental Dean and Vice-President for a course or program prior to reimbursement.

C. Procedures

1. Approval/Application

The eligible employee must complete the Educational Assistance Program Application (Schedule A) prior to enrolling in courses. This form is available through the Human Resources Office or online through the Human Resources shared portal. The application must be submitted by March 1st of each year for consideration for the next academic year, beginning with the Summer Term. Applications after that date will only be considered if funds are available in the annual budget. Once the initial application is approved, the approval is valid until completion of the approved program/degree.

The application must contain all required signatures from the Supervisor, Dean and Vice-President and include the following attachments:

1. Degree Program Description from the institution that includes overview of the program and the required curriculum. This must list all classes/courses required, the number of credit hours, and the cost per credit hour at time the application is submitted.
2. A statement of how this degree is directly related to the employee's current position, how it will benefit the employee's career, help the employee perform at a higher level or improve the employee's effectiveness at the College.
3. A completed and signed Educational Assistance Repayment Agreement (Schedule B).

Applications will be prioritized within the limits of the budget as follows: (1) degrees required as a condition of employment due to accreditation or as a "Hard-to-hire" position as outlined in Policy 03.02.004: Hard to hire; (2) degrees that directly relate to the employee's current position; (3) degrees/programs that will prepare the employee for increased responsibility or advancement in the College. Application status will be communicated by Human Resources to the employee.

Where an employee finds it necessary to alter course selection after courses have been approved, written notification indicating the changes must be forwarded to HR.

2. Payment and Proof of Completion

To receive reimbursement for course(s) approved and successfully completed, employees must provide to the Human Resources Office the following:

1. Educational Assistance Reimbursement Form (Schedule C);
2. Itemized Tuition Statement for the completed course(s) for the semester or quarter; and
3. Final Grade(s) for the courses being submitted for reimbursement.

Doctoral and Graduate coursework must be successfully completed with a grade of "B" or above; or proof of successful completion for doctoral courses where no letter grade is given. Undergraduate coursework must be successfully completed with a grade of "C' or above. Courses and programs must be offered by an accredited educational institution acceptable to the College.

All reimbursements will be subject to the maximum fiscal year limits. Reimbursements will made according to the following schedule unless proper documentation has not been received:

Term	Reimbursement form due to HR no later than:	Reimbursement* to employee:
Fall Courses	January 15th	February
Spring Courses	June 15th	June
Summer Courses	September 15th	September

*Reimbursements can be delayed if proper documentation is not supplied with the reimbursement form

D. Repayment Agreement

If the employee voluntarily leaves employment with the college before completing his or her coursework, the employee forfeits the reimbursement. In addition, an employee who voluntarily leaves employment with the college within two (2) years or receipt of Educational Assistance from the College must repay the full amount of Educational Assistance reimbursements they received.

Employees will be required to submit a signed Educational Assistance Repayment Form with the Educational Assistance Application.

E. Supplemental information

1. Scholarships, Grants or Financial Aid

Reimbursements are reduced by any financial assistance received for tuition from any funding source such as veterans' benefits, financial aid, grants and scholarships.

2. Tax Information

The Internal Revenue Code regulates taxation on employer-paid educational assistance. Based on Internal Revenue Code Section 127, amounts paid in a calendar year that do not exceed $5,250 are not taxed. Payment amounts exceeding $5,250 per calendar may or may not be subject to taxation depending on certain criteria outlined in the tax code.

3. Fees not eligible for Reimbursement

All other costs associated for coursework including books, supplies, materials, required and non-required fees, interest charges, or travel are the financial responsibility of the employee and not applicable for reimbursement under this program.

F. Amendment and Termination

While this Program is expected to be continued indefinitely, Allegany College of Maryland reserves the right to terminate or change the Program's provisions. Provisions of this program will be adjusted to conform with changes in Internal Revenue Code Section 127.