

# AURA-NSF TUITION REIMBURSEMENT PROGRAM PROCEDURE

EFFECTIVE January 1, 2020

## PURPOSE

AURA NSF encourages and fosters continued education that will contribute to job performance and career development by offering tuition reimbursements and time to attend necessary classes and/or labs.

## SCOPE

This AURA-NSF procedure incorporates by reference the tuition reimbursement provisions of AURA policy B-IX - Benefits. It is the Human Resources Office that is responsible for implementation of this procedure. Any **changes, addenda, or exceptions must be submitted through this office for signature approval.**

Full time regular employees in an actively at work employment status at the time of enrollment are eligible to participate in the tuition reimbursement program. This covers academic course work for which credits are granted by an accredited college or university, vocational/non-accredited instruction at trade schools and non-accredited institutions and /or online nanodegree instruction where coursework for each segment must be completed within six months from the date of registration.

All applicable forms are available in the Human Resources Office.

## Academic Courses

Academic course work must be related to the mission of the AURA-NSF Centers and directly related to current work or commonly expected future work for AURA or must be required to fulfill degree requirements in a curriculum which is related to the employee's job.

Requests for tuition reimbursement that meet the above requirements will generally be approved. However, requests may be denied if it is determined that the educational requirements may create a conflict with the employee's work requirements and/or if the employee's current job performance is not at a satisfactory level. Permission to enroll, or for time off from work, will not be granted unless there is reasonable expectation that the course or degree requirements will be successfully completed and in time to be of benefit to AURA.

The employee will be reimbursed for tuition costs for the successful completion of up to six (6) credit hours per semester, plus various mandatory fees such as lab fees and registration fees. The annual maximum tuition reimbursement, regardless of credit hours, shall not exceed \$12,000 per calendar year. Any amount of tuition reimbursement that exceeds \$5,250 is considered a fringe benefit of the job and is automatically a taxable event to the employee. Reimbursement rates are based on the grade received: grades A and B at 100%, and grade C at 50%. Grades lower than C do not qualify for reimbursement.

## **Other Reimbursements**

If an employee is entitled to educational benefits such as the G.I. Bill or similar grants or scholarships, reimbursement will be only for the amount by which the tuition and allowable mandatory fees exceed the benefits received.

## **Tuition Repayment at Termination (new)**

If employment at AURA-NSF is voluntarily terminated, the employee must repay in full any tuition reimbursement benefits received within one (1) year of the termination date. Tuition repayments will be deducted from final pay if not repaid in advance of the termination date. In the event final pay is insufficient to recover tuition benefit payments, the organization and individual will document a repayment plan (not to exceed three (3) months) to recover the outstanding balance due.

Employees who accept tuition reimbursement, commit to regular full-time time service for one year following the completion of the last course. In the event that an employee voluntarily terminates their employment or is terminated for cause at any time during the course of employment, the employee agrees to repay the tuition, associated fees, and taxes, if any, that have been paid for all courses. Repayment will not be required if the termination of their employment is due to death, long-term disability, layoff or involuntary termination for any reason other than cause.

If an employee does not repay any amounts due as indicated above on or before my last day of employment, any such amounts will be deducted from the employee's final paycheck or from any other amounts payable to the employee upon or following termination of employment, including but not limited to accrued vacation, bonuses or special compensation awards, and will authorize such deduction. Employees will also acknowledge that any balance still owed to after the deductions referenced above must be repaid to AURA. Note: All participating employees are required to sign the Tuition Reimbursement Program Form

## **Vocational/Non-accredited Courses**

Courses taken at a vocational or non-accredited institution must be directly related to the employee's job to qualify for tuition reimbursement. The employee will be reimbursed in full by showing evidence of satisfactory completion of the course. If grades are granted, the employee will be reimbursed at the same rate accredited course work is reimbursed.

## **Class/Lab Attendance**

AURA-NSF encourages all employees to enroll in course work outside their normal work hours whenever possible. However, it is recognized that occasionally this may not be possible, and the employee may need to attend a class or lab during work hours. If necessary, the employee may take up to three (3) hours per week to attend class or up to four (4) hours per week to attend a lab.

Prior to requesting authorization for academic leave, the supervisor and the employee should exhaust other options for adjusting the work schedule to accommodate the time off needed for the class. All requests for academic leave must be approved in advance by the supervisor and Human Resources. Human Resources will notify Payroll that the leave may be accepted. Timecards containing academic leave will not be processed by Payroll unless such leave has previously been approved and authorized by

Human Resources. Time off for this purpose will be recorded in the "Other Leave" portion of the time card and noted as education leave.

### **Tuition Reimbursement**

To utilize the tuition program, the employee must complete a Tuition Reimbursement Program Application. The form must be approved by the manager and the Human Resources Office prior to registration for the course. After successful completion of the course work, the employee must submit the original grade report and payment receipt to the Human Resources Office, who will request the reimbursement through Payroll. Reimbursements are normally processed in the next available payroll after the submittal of all required documents.