



## HUMAN RESOURCES POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Area: Benefits

Subject: Tuition Assistance Program

Applies To: Campus Employees

Sources:

Number: 2420

Issued: 7/2008

Revised: July 2012

Page(s): 1 of 6

### **Purpose**

Georgia Southern is committed to creating a more educated Georgia. Both of these commitments extend internally as well as externally. As part of its desire to meet its employees evolving needs, Georgia Southern has established an educational assistance program, the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP). This program is part of the University System of Georgia Tuition Assistance Program.

### **Policy**

The purpose of TAP is to foster the professional growth and development of its eligible employees.

### **Procedures**

#### Definitions

**Full Time Employee** - A full time employee is an employee who has a 1.0 FTE (full time equivalent) work commitment.

**Home Institution** - The location where the employee conducts the major portion of his/her work and/or research is considered the "home institution". The "home institution" must be located within the State of Georgia.

#### Exceptions:

The home institution for an out-of-state employee is the employing institution located within the State of Georgia. The home institution for a University System Office employee is the institution at which he/she is admitted as a student.

**Limited-Slot Enrollment Program** - A limited-slot enrollment program is a degree program for which there are a limited number of spaces allowed in the program, and, for which there may be additional criteria required (such as work experience in a related field).

**Student Fees** TAP participants are identified as faculty or staff, and, their status as a student is secondary in all considerations, including student fee waivers. The following fees are waived by Georgia Southern for TAP attendees: tuition, student late registration fee, student technology fee, student health fee, student activity fee, and student athletic/recreation fee. TAP attendees, whose

student health fee, student activity fee, and athletic fee are waived, are ineligible for the services sponsored by these fees unless the fees are paid separately. Other student fees and charges, as defined by the "teaching institution", are not waived for TAP attendees. Such student fees must be paid as required by the course or institution (e.g., transcript, graduation, exam and testing fees, and lab fees).

**Teaching Institution** The "teaching institution" is the "institution" at which a TAP participant has met the admissions requirements and is approved for enrollment in an academic credit course(s).

**Tuition Assistance** Tuition assistance is the waiver of tuition and the waiver of certain fees (Please see Student Fees above). Tuition assistance requires an approved TAP application and space availability within the course(s) and/or degree program of the institution

#### Overview

The Board of Regents of the University System and Georgia Southern are committed to helping its full time employees pursue professional growth and development (reference BOR Policy Section 802.20).  
**The Tuition Assistance Program**

**Work Schedule Arrangements** To the extent possible, no employee should take a course(s) that would require him/her to be absent from work during regularly scheduled work hours. If attendance in an approved TAP course requires that an employee be absent from his/her assigned workstation during normal work hours, various accommodations may be possible, depending upon the needs of the unit/department and of the employee. The supervisor must certify that the employee's participation in TAP will not adversely affect departmental services, or, result in undue hardship for other employees. Alternate work arrangements will only be granted at the discretion of the immediate supervisor. Supervisors are encouraged to make a reasonable effort to find an appropriate work schedule accommodation.

#### Tax Implications for Participants

The federal government currently allows up to \$5,250 annually, in employer-provided educational assistance benefits, to be "tax free" to TAP participants. This applies to both undergraduate and graduate-level courses. This "tax free" exemption currently applies through 2010. An employee must generally pay taxes on employer-provided educational assistance benefits in excess of \$5,250. This amount will be included in your wages (Box 1 of your Form W-2). A tax professional should be consulted for further information concerning taxable tuition.

**Ineligible Programs** Employees may not enroll in certain programs or courses of study under the TAP policy.

Those ineligible programs, or courses of study, include academic courses in the following professional schools: dental, law, medical, pharmacy, veterinary, or executive/premiere or comparable graduate school programs. Other ineligible programs, or courses of study, include: workshops, seminars,

continuing education courses, management development programs, special examinations for admissions to degree programs, or private consultant refresher courses to take examinations such as C.P.A. certification, admissions examinations, and related types of programs or classes. Support for these types of programs, may be provided by departmental policies.

Appeals An employee may not appeal any institutional decision regarding the TAP program to the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia. Each USG institution will utilize its internal review process to review TAP application denials.

#### TAP Program Regulations

Eligibility The tuition assistance program is available to full time benefits-eligible employees of GEORGIA SOUTHERN who have successfully completed at least six (6) months of employment in a benefits-eligible position, as of the date of the TAP application deadline for the desired academic semester.

#### Process

An employee will be required to go through the regular student admissions process, prior to applying for TAP; and an employee must complete a TAP application for each semester in attendance.

#### Maximum Credits

An employee may seek approval to enroll in up to nine (9) academic semester credit hours for each of the three designated semester periods: Fall Semester, Spring Semester, and Summer Semester.

#### TAP Application Deadlines

The following Georgia Southern University TAP application deadlines will apply to all: (If any of these dates fall on a holiday or on a weekend, the application deadline will be the last business day prior to the dates identified.)

Fall Semester July 1-15th Spring Semester November 1-15th Summer Semester April 1-15th

#### Distance Learning and Web-Based Courses

TAP participants may enroll in distance learning and web-based courses offered by Georgia Southern. If the tuition for these courses is greater than the System-approved normal tuition amount, GEORGIA SOUTHERN may elect to waive only that portion of the tuition that does not exceed the System-approved normal tuition amount. An employee will be responsible for paying the remainder of the tuition cost.

#### Grade Requirements

An employee must receive a grade of "C", or better, in each approved TAP course. The employee must furnish a copy of his/her final semester grade(s) to the TAP Coordinator of the "home

institution" within ten business days after the close of the semester. Failure to provide a final semester grade report may result in any prior TAP approval for the following semester being voided.

An employee who receives a grade of "D", or below, in an approved TAP course will be ineligible to participate in the program for one semester. In an instance such as this, the TAP participant will not be personally responsible for repayment/reimbursement this course.

An employee, who receives an "Incomplete" in an approved TAP course, will have until the end of the following semester to complete the coursework and submit his/her final course grade to the TAP Coordinator of the "home institution". An employee must do this to continue participating in the TAP program the next academic semester.

#### Other Restrictions and/or Conditions

TAP is a supplemental educational assistance employee program. An employee who is eligible for Pell Grants must apply his/her Pell Grant monies toward tuition and fees before receiving a TAP waiver.

If an employee withdraws from an approved TAP course prior to its completion, the employee will be ineligible to participate in TAP for one semester. Eligibility for TAP participation does not guarantee admission into any degree programs.

An employee must follow the policies and procedures of the "teaching institution" in which he/she enrolls to be formally accepted as a TAP participant for limited-slot enrollment programs. Upon receiving approval to participate in a limited-slot enrollment program from the "teaching institution", the course(s) should be listed on the TAP application.

Participation in the TAP program does not guarantee continued employment with Georgia Southern.

Georgia Southern reserves the right to change this program, with or without notice.

Process/Procedures- An employee will be required to go through the regular student admissions process, prior to applying for TAP; and An employee must complete a TAP application for each semester in attendance.

#### Responsibilities

The responsibilities each party has in connection with Abbreviated Policy Title, are: Responsibility  
Required Actions

#### Employee

1. Completes and signs the TAP application (available on line at [www.usg.edu/hr/benefits\\_docs/tap\\_app.pdf](http://www.usg.edu/hr/benefits_docs/tap_app.pdf)). 2. Submits the TAP application to his/her immediate supervisor for review.

#### Immediate Supervisor

3. Reviews the TAP application and advises the employee if his/her request is approved or denied.

Immediate Supervisor & Employee

4. If an approved TAP course(s) is scheduled to meet during an employee's regularly scheduled work hours, the immediate supervisor will advise the employee if his/her work hours must be rescheduled; or, if the employee's class hours must be reported as annual leave (if available).

Immediate Supervisor

5. Signs the approved TAP application and forwards the original document to the TAP Coordinator of the employee's home institution by semester deadlines:

Fall Semester July 15th Spring Semester November 15th Summer Semester April 15th

Immediate Supervisor & Employee

6. Each retains a copy of the approved TAP application for departmental and personnel files.

TAP Coordinator of the Home Institution

7. Verifies employee eligibility and grants "home institution" approval. Notifies the TAP Coordinator of the "teaching institution" within ten (10) business days of the application deadline.

TAP Coordinator of the Teaching Institution

8. If the TAP participant enrolls in a limited-slot academic class at a "teaching institution", the TAP Coordinator of the "teaching institution" will advise the TAP Coordinator of the "home institution" if the employee will be accepted as a class member.

Employee

9. Registers for TAP course(s) during the designated employee registration period of the "teaching institution". (Please see [www.usg.edu/hr/benefits/tap\\_dates/](http://www.usg.edu/hr/benefits/tap_dates/).)

Employee & Immediate Supervisor

10. If a desired course(s) is filled before the employee registration period, the employee may receive approval from his/her immediate supervisor to enroll in an alternate course(s). The employee will be required to notify his/her "home institution" TAP Coordinator in writing or by e-mail of this decision, and, the employee will be required to copy his/her immediate supervisor of the change.

Employee & TAP Coordinator (Home Institution)

11. The employee must submit a copy of his/her final grade to the TAP Coordinator of the "home institution" to continue participation in the TAP program.

Forms

TAP Registration Dates [http://www.usg.edu/hr/benefits/tap\\_dates/](http://www.usg.edu/hr/benefits/tap_dates/)

Board of Regents TAP Policy [http://www.usg.edu/hr/benefits/tuition\\_assistance\\_program\\_tap/](http://www.usg.edu/hr/benefits/tuition_assistance_program_tap/)