

## **Identifying EAP Candidates**

As stated in the Employee Handbook, the **Educational Assistance Program (EAP)** was created to “assist employees to obtain the education...that will benefit SWC in targeted areas” (p. 27). Determining current or future needs of the college is primarily the responsibility of the Executive Committee, in conjunction with the various departments. A candidate does not have to be currently employed in the department with the identified need to be eligible.

While a candidate should provide documentation confirming these factors, the Education Assistance Committee (EAC) will verify:

- That there is an identified need, current or projected, that would be addressed by the **Employee Education Plan (EEP)** request;
- That the candidate upon completion of the proposed EEP would be qualified for the identified position;
- That the successful implementation of an EEP could be completed in a reasonable timeframe to address the identified need;
- That a transfer of the employee to another department would not create an undue challenge for the college.

## **Determining Eligibility**

Employees must provide the proper documentation to demonstrate that they are eligible to participate in the EAP. As part of the EEP review the Committee will verify that:

- The candidate is not currently on probation or subject to disciplinary action;
- The candidate has completed all of the mandatory coursework or other training required by SWC for their current position;
- The candidate will provide information regarding eligibility for PELL or other relevant personal grant funding to the Committee;
- The candidate has been accepted at the institution and/or the degree program that is listed in the EEP request.

## **Employee Education Plan**

The employee must complete and submit a proper EEP to his/her supervisor, or the department director, in order to apply for any EAP support. The submitted EEP must also include statements from the candidate and the department director explaining the anticipated benefits for SWC if the plan is adopted. The EEP must include a **course of study**. The plan must also include an estimated timeframe for completion, along with any deadline imposed by the institution being attended. Finally, the candidate and the supervisor must provide a plan of action to address any leave of absences that may be

required to complete the *course of study*; this should include a cost-benefit analysis if significant leave is expected to occur.

### **EAC Composition and Rules**

The EAC will contain a minimum of five voting members:

- **Two (2)** members selected by the Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA);
- **Two (2)** members selected by the Chief Financial Officer (CFO);
- The Director of Sponsored Programs, or a designated representative appointed by the President.

Additional members may be added to the Committee; however, the balance between faculty and staff members should be maintained. Regardless of the size of the EAC membership the President should not appoint more than **one (1) voting member**.

The EAC Chairperson may select other non-voting advisors to attend meetings.

The EAC Chairperson will be selected each year by a majority vote of the committee members. The Chairperson is responsible for scheduling the four (4) mandated meetings, and for calling any special meetings he/she deems necessary. The Chairperson, unless the EAC designates another member, is responsible for the drafting and submission of all decisions or reports by the EAC. The Chairperson retains his/her full voting membership on the Committee.

All meetings require a quorum, designated as over 50% of voting members, in order to perform any official functions. A voting member that has a *conflict of interest* does not factor in the calculation of what constitutes a quorum. All members have a duty to disclose a potential conflict of interest, and may recuse themselves from the discussion and determination of a specific case. The Chairperson, any member, or advisor may raise a challenge to recuse another member based on a perceived conflict of interest. Any contested challenge will be determined by the vote of the full EAC, including advisors; see below (Approval Process).

All decisions, with the exception of proposing the adoption or amendments to policies & procedures, require a simple majority of voting members present at an official EAC meeting. Votes regarding policy or procedure modifications require a two-thirds majority of the voting membership.

## **Approval Process**

The EAC will meet a minimum of **four (4) times per year** to review and approve/reject EEP requests. These meetings will typically occur during the first Friday after the first Monday of February, May, August, and November. The Chairperson will provide any alterations to this schedule at least **thirty (30) days** in advance to the President's Office to be included in the official SWC calendar. An EEP must be submitted to the HR Office and the Chairperson **ten (10) working days** prior to the scheduled meeting.

Any member of the EAC that has a conflict of interest related to a specific EEP request must inform the Chair no later than **five (5) working days** prior to the scheduled meeting. A member must recuse themselves if there is a clear conflict of interest. In cases where a conflict of interest is in doubt, a two-thirds majority of the remaining members of the EAC is required to allow the member in question to hear that specific EEP request.

The EAC may interview the candidate, supervisor, department head, or other individuals prior to rendering their recommendation. A request by **any two (2) members** of the EAC prior to, or during an EEP review meeting is required for an interview.

An incomplete EEP proposal, or one that is submitted late, may be returned to the applicant without action by the Committee. The EAC will vote, by simple majority, to provide a recommendation of approval, provisional approval, or denial of a properly submitted EEP. The EAC written recommendation will be submitted to the applicant and Presidents Office within three (3) working days of the decision.

## **EAP Monitoring and Other Actions**

Other functions of the EAC may include:

- Determining if EAP funds will be provided for the retaking of a course;
- Prioritizing the use of EAP support due to a reduction in available funding;
- Conducting a review of an EEP and its implementation at the request of the awardee, supervisor, or cognizant SWC official;
- Determining if an EEP support should be modified or terminated;
- Mediating disputes related to leave for an approved EEP;
- Proposing modifications to the forms, procedures, or policy to improve the implementation of the EAP;
- Determining if EAP funds should be repaid, and what portion, by the employee.