

# **Saint Joseph's College**

## **Educational Assistance Benefit Plan**

Effective July 1, 2015

### **Purpose**

Saint Joseph's College (the "College") has established this Educational Assistance Benefit Plan for the exclusive benefit of its eligible employees. The purpose of the plan is to provide financial assistance to eligible employees in meeting all or a portion of the cost of attending qualified educational courses that will promote their success in the performance of their duties with the College. The Plan is intended to meet the requirements of Section 127 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, so that benefits paid to employees under the plan may be excludable from gross income to the maximum extent allowed under Code Section 127.

### **Eligibility; Participation**

Full-time, tenured faculty members in good standing in the Departments of Business, and Communications and full-time non-tenured faculty in good standing in the Department of Nursing who do not already have doctorate degrees are eligible to participate in the Plan provided they are employed by the College both at the time the benefit is applied for and at the time the benefit is paid. No more than two eligible faculty members will be selected to receive Plan benefits for any plan year (July 1 - June 30). Once selected, a faculty member will remain a participant for up to four (4) successive years (if necessary to complete his or her educational program or course requirements) so long as the faculty member continues to satisfy the eligibility requirements. Thus benefits under the plan may or may not be available to new Participants in any given plan year.

### **Educational Program or Course Requirements**

An educational program and course qualifies for financial assistance under the Plan if the program or course:

- is offered by an accredited post-secondary educational institution towards either a recognized degree program or a definite plan of study;
- is pertinent to the participating faculty member's field of academic expertise (within his or her department of the College);
- satisfies a requirement for a doctoral degree in his or her field of academic expertise.

School or program accreditation must be awarded by a nationally recognized accredited body (*e.g.*, New England Association of Schools and Colleges). In all events, the College's Vice President and Chief Learning Office will decide whether an educational program or course meets these requirements prior to enrollment by the faculty member.

## **Educational Assistance Benefits**

Eligible Expenses. Educational expenses that are eligible for reimbursement (“eligible expenses”) include tuition, books, supplies, equipment and fees for each course taken, including registration fees and reasonable amounts paid to qualified dissertation advisers. However, tools or supplies (other than textbooks) that a faculty member may retain after the course has ended are not eligible for reimbursement under this Plan. Other expenses not eligible include suggested or nonessential expenses such as calculators, computers, insurance, and pre-acceptance expenses such as application fees, entrance or aptitude test fees (GMAT, GRE, etc.), medical examination fees, immunizations, etc. Also, meals, lodging, and transportation are not eligible expenses under this plan. Other potential discretionary expenses which may or may not be covered are those related to distance learning on-site visits (such as, a thesis defense, oral examination, and the like). Cases such as these will require special approval of the College’s Vice President and Chief Learning Officer.

Maximum Amount of Plan Benefit. The maximum benefit payable to or on behalf of any faculty member selected for participation for any year will be the lesser of \$4,000 or one-third (1/3) of the amount of his or her eligible expenses. In addition, the maximum amount payable to any participating faculty for all years of participation will be \$12,000.

Refund of Benefits Paid Under Certain Circumstances. As a condition to receiving benefits under the Plan, an eligible faculty member must promise to remain a full-time faculty member in his or her Department at the College for at least three academic years after the final year in which he or she receives benefits under the Plan. A faculty member who breaches his or her promise regarding future service will be required to refund the College in full all amounts paid to him or her (or on his or her behalf) under the Plan. In addition, if a faculty member receives plan benefits but fails to complete his or her doctoral degree within three calendar years after last receiving benefits under the Plan, he or she will be obligated to refund to the College one-half (1/2) of all amounts paid to him or her (or on his or her behalf) under the Plan.

Certain Other Requirements Affecting Benefits. Eligible expenses may be reimbursed to the faculty member upon successful course completion. The faculty member must provide proof of satisfactory course completion which includes a copy of the tuition statement and receipts for other items of qualified educational assistance, and a copy of the grade report. In the case of graded course a grade of “B” or better must be achieved in order to qualify for Plan benefits.

## **Requests for Educational Assistance**

An eligible faculty member must complete and submit to the Vice President and Chief Learning Officer a Request for Educational Assistance form before enrolling in any program or course for which he or she wishes to receive financial assistance under the Plan. The faculty member’s

request must be approved by the Director Human Resource and the Vice President and Chief Learning Officer prior to enrollment. Only two faculty members may be selected to receive benefits for any plan year. If the number of eligible faculty members submitting requests for educational assistance benefits exceeds the availability of benefits for any plan year, the Vice President and Chief Learning Officer will select the participant(s) for the year based on such factors as seniority and the importance of the field of expertise to the mission of the Department.

### **Plan Year**

The plan year shall mean the 12-month period July 1 through June 30 of each calendar year.

### **Contributions and Funding**

Employees are not required to contribute to the Plan. The College is not obligated to set aside any assets or funds to pay benefits under the Plan. All benefits are paid out of the College's general assets.

### **Administration**

The Plan will be administered by the Vice President and Chief Learning Officer, unless another person is appointed by the College to administer the Plan. The Vice President and Chief Learning Officer and Director of Human Resource together have complete authority and discretion to determine all questions arising from the interpretation of the terms of the Plan (including all questions relating to eligibility or benefits), and to adopt any rules and procedures necessary to administer the Plan. The terms of the Plan, and any rules or procedures adopted for the administration of the Plan, will be interpreted and applied in a uniform and nondiscriminatory manner.

### **Amendment or Discontinuation of Plan**

The College shall communicate in writing the terms and conditions of the Plan to all eligible employees, and shall provide each eligible employee with a copy of the Plan.

### **What If Your Expense Is Denied?**

In the event that your expense/claim is denied, either in full or in part, the College will notify you in writing within 90 days after your claim form is filed. If necessary, the College is allowed an additional period of not more than 90 days (180 days in total) within which to notify you of its decision. If such an extension is require, you will receive a written notice form the College indicating the reason for the delay and the date you may expect a final decision. The College's notice of denial shall include:

1. The specific reason or reasons for denial with reference to those policy provisions on which the denial is based;

2. A description of any additional material or information necessary to complete the claim and an explanation of why that material or information is necessary; and
3. The steps to be taken if you wish to have the decision reviewed.

Please note that if the College does not respond to your claim within the time limits set forth above, you should automatically assume that your claim has been denied and you should begin the appeal process at the time.

### **What Do You Do To Appeal a Denial?**

You, the claimant, or authorized representative may appeal a denied claim within 60 days after you receive the College's notice of denial. You have the right to:

1. submit a request for review, in writing, to the **Pension Administration Committee**;
2. review pertinent documents; and
3. submit issues and comments in writing to the College.

The College will make a full and fair review of the claim and may require additional documents as it deems necessary or desirable in making such a review. A final decision on the review shall be made no later than 60 days following receipt of written request for review. If special circumstances require an extension of time for processing, you will be notified of the reasons for the extension, and a decision shall be made no later than 120 days following receipt of the request for review. The final decision on the review shall be furnished in writing and shall include the reasons for the decision with reference to those policy provisions upon which the final decision is based.