

# STEPHEN F. AUSTIN STATE UNIVERSITY EMPLOYEE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

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The Employee Scholarship Program ("the Program") provides Stephen F. Austin State University ("University") eligible employees, their spouses and dependents, and the widow or widower and dependent children of an individual who died while an employee with assistance in obtaining additional education.

## 1. DEFINITIONS.

1.1 "Program participant" is defined as an eligible person receiving scholarship aid through the Employee Scholarship Program, subject to the provisions of the Program.

1.2 "Eligible employee" is defined as a person who has been employed in a Teachers Retirement System (TRS) or Optional Retirement Plan (ORP) benefits eligible position at the University for a minimum of six continuous calendar months immediately preceding the start of the semester for which the Program benefits will be applied and who has satisfactorily completed his or her probationary period. Employees with less than 12-month assignments will retain eligibility during summer months provided they (1) meet the other criteria of the Program, (2) are employed in the preceding spring semester, and (3) have not resigned or been permanently or indefinitely terminated.

1.3 "Spouse" and "dependents" are defined in accordance with current Employee Retirement System (ERS) definitions. Except for dependents of deceased employees, both the spouse and dependents must be eligible for inclusion on the employee's health insurance at the start of the semester for which the Program benefits apply.

1.4 "Widow or widower and dependent children" are defined specifically as the spouse and dependent children of an individual who was an eligible employee at the time of death and who died during active employment with the University. The widow or widower must not have remarried and the dependent children must have met the requirements of section 1.3.

1.5 "Course" is defined as any regular course offered by the University for which academic credit is awarded upon successful completion of the course.

1.6 "Tuition and fees" is defined as tuition and required fees and is subject to the IRS definition of qualified tuition and fees. Optional fees and charges such as application fees, orientation fees, property deposits, installment plan fees, late fees, reinstatement fees, parking permits and post office charges are not included in this definition.

## 2. ELIGIBILITY.

2.1 An employee and his or her spouse and dependents shall be eligible to participate in the Program after the employee has been employed in a TRS or ORP benefits eligible position at the University for a minimum of six continuous calendar months immediately preceding the start of the semester for which the Program benefits will be applied and who has satisfactorily completed his or her probationary period. The employee must be employed with the University at the beginning of the semester for which the employee and/or their spouse and dependents have applied for this benefit. Benefits shall be paid during summer terms for eligible employees who are not contracted to work during a summer session provided they are an eligible employee and have worked during the preceding spring semester, unless they have resigned or their employment has been permanently or indefinitely terminated. Benefits shall likewise be paid for the spouse and/or dependents of eligible employees who are not contracted to work during a summer session provided the employee meets the above criteria.

2.2 Program participants must meet current admission standards. If the program participant is a returning or transfer student, the program participant must be in academic good standing (currently 2.0 GPA for undergraduate courses and 3.0 for graduate courses) in order to be eligible to participate in the Program. Applicants are not eligible to participate in the Program if they are on academic probation or disciplinary suspension.

2.3 Applicants who owe any outstanding balances to the University are not eligible to participate in the Program.

### 3. BENEFITS.

3.1 Benefits may be used by employees, their spouses, or dependents for undergraduate or graduate courses. Scholarships for some courses may constitute taxable income. Employees, spouses, and dependents should consult a tax advisor.

3.2 Benefits shall be paid, subject to the other provisions of the Program, for any course that falls within the definition stated in 1.5.

3.3 Benefits shall be paid, subject to the other provisions of the Program, for hours less than 150 maximum attempted undergraduate hours, with no limit on attempted postgraduate hours.

3.4 Benefits shall be paid, subject to the other provisions of the Program, in an amount not to exceed \$2,000.00 per fiscal year (September 1 through August 31) and additionally not to exceed \$1,000.00 per semester or summer term for any program participant. Benefits shall be paid during summer terms for eligible employees who are not contracted to work during a summer session provided they are an eligible employee and have worked during the preceding spring semester, unless they have resigned or their employment has been permanently or indefinitely terminated. Benefits shall likewise be paid for the spouse and/or dependents of eligible employees who are not contracted to work during a summer session provided the employee meets the above criteria.

3.5 Benefits may be used for payment of tuition and fees associated with eligible courses for which program participants enroll under the Program. The program participant is responsible for payment of any amount incurred within a semester that exceeds the maximum semester or summer term benefit of \$1,000.00 or the maximum annual benefit of \$2,000.00.

3.6 Program participants who are eligible for other scholarships or grants may only receive benefits for any tuition or fees owed after application of all scholarships and grants. For purposes of the Program, any amounts paid by the Texas Tomorrow Funds plan will be considered as a scholarship.

3.7 No employee may receive a benefit of more than \$1,000.00 per semester or summer term, or \$2,000.00 per fiscal year, whether used by the employee, the spouse or a dependent child.

3.8 No program participant may receive a benefit of more than \$1,000.00 per semester or summer term, or \$2,000.00 per fiscal year.

3.9 Under no circumstance shall benefits be paid or reimbursed in cash to the employee, nor shall benefits be paid in lieu of other compensation.

3.10 Benefits may not be used in payment for the third time that any individual course is repeated, except for remedial and development courses (within the 18-hour limit), special topics and seminar courses, and independent study courses.

3.11 The level of benefit will be determined as of the 12th class day of the fall or spring semester and the 4th class day of the summer term. Additionally, the level of benefit shall be adjusted for additional scholarships or grants applied to the program participant's account after that date.

3.12 Benefits will not be applied to withdrawn or dropped courses. No benefit will be available if a student withdraws from school, either officially or unofficially.

**3.13 Any amounts due for dropped or withdrawn courses or for amounts exceeding the benefit limit, shall be the responsibility of the program participant. Costs associated with collection of any delinquent accounts shall be the responsibility of the program participant.**

### 4. AVAILABILITY OF FUNDS FOR THE PROGRAM.

Benefits under the Program shall be subject to the availability of specific funds in the University budget and shall be awarded based on eligibility criteria articulated in the Program and other appropriate considerations including the timing of the request. The University shall not be required to make funds available in any given fiscal year. Benefits shall not be carried forward from one fiscal year to the next fiscal year.

## **5. APPLICATION FOR BENEFITS.**

Any employee applying for benefits under the Program must complete the Employee Application. Additionally, employees taking courses under this program must submit the application to the employee's Account Manager and/or Dean (as indicated on the form).

Applications shall then be submitted by the employee to the Office of Human Resources for confirmation of eligibility. The application shall then be submitted by the employee to Financial Aid for additional confirmation of eligibility and for logging and tracking.

An employee applying for benefits under the Program for their spouse or child must complete the Dependent Application. Additionally, the employee must submit a Dependent Child Certification form (as indicated on the form). Both the application and the Dependent Child Certification form shall then be submitted by the employee to the Office of Human Resources.

The application shall then be submitted by the employee to Financial Aid for additional confirmation of eligibility and for logging and tracking.

## **6. MISCELLANEOUS.**

Nothing in the Program shall in any way modify or waive any University entrance or other academic requirements or course prerequisites. Approval of benefits under the Program does not constitute approval to be absent from assigned duties during normal working hours. See Policy E-16, Employee Enrolling for Courses.