

Article 29 – Educational Reimbursement

A. RN to BSN Program:

The Western Governors University (WGU) RN to BSN program will be extended for fiscal years 2023 and 2024:

1. Eligibility:

All Full Time University of Vermont Medical Center RNs with 6 or more months of service will receive 100% tuition assistance.

Part time and per diem employees may participate but payment will be pro-rated based on paid hours from the preceding 12 months prior to acceptance.

2. Enrollment:

Employee enrolls directly with WGU and provides documentation of acceptance, how many credits are needed and a copy of their learning plan.

B. Tuition Assistance:

To assist bargaining unit employees in their efforts to increase their effectiveness in their current jobs and/or help them establish eligibility for additional responsibility for positions at the Hospital by helping them to defray the costs of higher education.

C. Eligibility:

1. Full, part time and per diem bargaining unit employees are eligible for tuition reimbursement after one (1) year of service.
2. Bargaining unit employees are eligible to receive standard tuition reimbursement of three thousand two hundred dollars (\$3,200.00) per fiscal year upon meeting procedural criteria (see “procedures” below). Reimbursement for part time and per diem bargaining unit employees is pro-rated based on paid hours from the preceding twelve (12) months prior to the approval date.
3. Bargaining unit employees who have been employed for more than five (5) years are eligible for additional tuition reimbursement up to one thousand eight hundred dollars (\$1,800.00) per fiscal year. Reimbursement for part time and per diem bargaining unit employees is pro-rated based on paid hours from the preceding twelve (12) months prior to the approval date.
4. Bargaining unit employees who meet the eligibility requirements for the standard tuition reimbursement, but have been employed for less than five (5) years may become eligible

for the additional tuition reimbursement amount above, provided they sign an agreement to provide pro-rated reimbursement if they leave their employment within three (3) years.

D. Course Criteria:

1. Course(s) only at an accredited post-secondary institution:
 - a. Courses that are required to attain an Associates, Bachelor's, Master's or Doctoral level degree (for bargaining unit employees with a terminal degree, e.g., APRN, this criterion shall not apply).
 - b. College Level Examination Program (CLEP) offering credits may be approved. Each exam may count as one course.
 - c. Courses must:
 - i) maintain or improve the employee's skills in their present position or
 - ii) directly relate to the attainment of another position in the department to which the employee may reasonably aspire or
 - iii) provide requisite training for the employee to reasonably expect promotion or transfer to another department or type of work to the end that the employee and the Hospital may mutually benefit.
2. An organizationally sanctioned study program that prepares a bargaining unit employee for nationally recognized certification/ licensure exams. The Director of Nursing Education and Research must approve the program.
3. Workshops, seminars and programs with CEU's attached are not reimbursable under the tuition policy.

E. Application Procedures:

1. Applications must be originated by the bargaining unit employee prior to the course start date and the bargaining unit employee must obtain practice supervisor/manager signature approval and Director of Nursing Ed & Research signature approval prior to submitting the form to Education and Organizational Development.
2. Notification of approval will occur within two (2) weeks of receipt of all required paperwork.

F. Course Completion/Reimbursement Procedures:

1. A grade of "C" or better and/or "Pass" for undergraduates is required for reimbursement.

2. A grade of “B” or better and/or “Pass” for graduate courses is required for reimbursement.
3. Reimbursement is on a fiscal year basis (October 1st - September 30th). Grades must be received in E&OD prior to September 25 in order to receive reimbursement. Requests for extension of the September 25 deadline, which are due to reasons beyond the control of the bargaining unit employee, will not be unreasonably denied. Tuition reimbursements will not be carried over from one fiscal year to another.

G. Compensation for Training and Education:

Any hourly paid bargaining unit employee required by the Hospital to participate in or attend training or educational programs which are held at times other than during a bargaining unit employee’s scheduled work hours shall be paid the applicable hourly rate of pay.

H. Continuing Education:

All bargaining unit employees who are not APRNs (and, effective FY24, nurse educators). For each of FY23 and FY24, the Hospital will budget three hundred thousand dollars (\$300,000) to cover the cost of conferences and training. Beginning in FY23, any unused dollars may roll-over to the next year, but they must be spent in that subsequent year. In addition, the Hospital will budget one thousand two hundred eighty seven (1,287) conference days of eight (8) hours to cover the cost of conferences and training reasonably related to bargaining unit employee’s area of practice. The budget items under this section will not be frozen and will be available during the fiscal year.

I. Continuing Education:

All bargaining unit employees who are APRNs. Annually the Hospital will budget three thousand dollars (\$3,000) for each Advanced Practice Nurse to cover the cost of conferences, training, certification and licensure. Any unused dollars may roll-over to the next year, but they must be spent in that subsequent year. In addition, each Advanced Practice Nurse will receive five (5) paid days annually to attend these educational or certification courses. The budget items under this section will not be frozen and will be available during the fiscal year.

J. Continuing Education:

All bargaining unit employees who are Nurse Educators and Stroke Coordinators. Effective the first full pay period in FY24, the Hospital will budget seventy thousand dollars (\$70,000) to cover the cost of conferences and training. Any unused dollars may roll-over to the next year, but they must be spent in that subsequent year. In addition, each Nurse Educator and Stroke Coordinator will receive five (5) paid days annually to attend these educational or certification courses. This budget item will not be frozen and will be available during the fiscal year.

K. Nursing Scholarship Program

The Hospital and the VFNHP agree that the retention of nursing bargaining unit employees is an important goal of the parties. The Nursing Scholarship Program is intended to support career development at the Hospital. Scholarship funds may be used toward the cost of tuition, books, applications and other academic expenses for those pursuing degrees in nursing. Ten scholarships would be awarded for seven-thousand, two hundred and fifty dollars (\$7,250) each and two (2) of the ten (10) scholarships would be awarded to bargaining unit employees currently in LPN positions. Bargaining unit employees who participate in the Nursing Scholarship Program will be required to sign a Work Agreement and agree to the following commitments:

Criteria

Bargaining unit employees would apply on an annual basis, and all qualified applicants would be reviewed by the Nursing Awards and Scholarship Committee. Nursing scholarships would be awarded on the following criteria:

- a. Employment by the Hospital for one year or more.
- b. Acceptance or ongoing enrollment in an Associate's, Bachelor's, Master's or Doctorate Degree in Nursing, or Advanced Practice Concentration.
- c. A history of solid job performance.
- d. A completed application with two professional letters of recommendation, one from the bargaining unit employee's immediate supervisor.
- e. Review of a personal written essay.

Recipient Commitments

Any bargaining unit employee receiving the nursing scholarships would make the following commitments:

1. Bargaining unit employees would be required to sign an agreement to work at the Hospital for a minimum of three (3) years following course completion. Should the employee voluntarily terminate employment for any reason other than incapacitating ill health before the three (3) year commitment is met, they would be required to pay the Hospital a prorated portion of the tuition.
2. Bargaining unit employees must be continually enrolled during the scholarship award period, taking a minimum of six (6) credits per semester.

3. Bargaining unit employees would be ineligible for any future scholarship dollars if commitments were not met.
4. Grades of C or better would be required each semester for undergraduate courses and a B or better for graduate courses.
5. Bargaining unit employees would be required to work a minimum of twenty (20) hours per week and would be required to work with their manager for any proposed reduction in hours.

Scholarship Funding

Scholarship dollars would be determined annually based on the annual fiscal budget review and approval. The scholarship awards will be given to the recipient in two (2) installments, one at the beginning of the fall semester and one at the beginning of the winter/spring semester. Administration of the scholarship funds will be administered by the Nursing Education Department. Applications for the UVMNC Nursing Scholarship dollars would be available from Nursing Education.

Side Letter

The parties agree to work together to explore the opportunity to work with different Vermont higher education establishments to provide favorable terms for educational programs for bargaining unit members.

Article 29A – **Clinical Advancement Recognition Program (CARP)** The Clinical Advancement Recognition Program (CARP) recognizes, acknowledges, and aligns experience, and ongoing professional development.

The Clinical Advancement Recognition Program (CARP) consists of four levels:

1. Staff Nurse I
2. Staff Nurse II
3. Staff Nurse III
4. Staff Nurse IV

Application deadlines for promotion to SN III or SN IV position are:

- * January 1
- * April 1
- * July 1
- * October 1

All applications should be submitted to CARP Committee at CARPCommittee@UVMHealth.org. Any submissions received after the due date will be considered during the following quarter.

There shall be no limit to the number of SN IIIs or SN IVs, providing the nurse meets the requirements.

Staff nurse III and IV when transferring positions will carry job title forward to new position. Staff nurse and new manager will begin the process to onboard the nurse and have a plan to meet all expectations in the future. The staff nurse transitioning to new area actively participates and presents plan for self-directed learning and transition to new specialty in collaboration with new manager.

Certifications benefits for nurses pursuing their initial certification are covered in Article 28.

Education support provide to nurses pursuing their BSN are covered in Article 29.

UVMHC will reimburse new Staff Nurse III and IVs for a first year membership to a specialty nurses association, not to exceed \$250.00.

The CARP Committee, made up of leaders and staff nurses, will provide oversight to the CARP Program by performing ongoing review and assessment of the program’s effectiveness, including making programmatic changes. The President of the VFNHP or designee shall be invited to all CARP Committee Monthly Meetings. The committee is responsible for the quarterly review of SN III and SN IV applications and for making the promotional decisions. At the request of any RN, the committee will identify a resource to provide mentoring and support to the nurse seeking promotion to SN III or IV.

CARP Requirements:

	RN I	RN II	RN III	RN IV
Initial Application	No	No	Yes	Yes
Renewal Process	No	No	Yes, at annual evaluation	Yes, at annual evaluation
Peer Review Committee	No	No	Yes, for initial application only	Yes, for initial application only

Letters of Recommendation	No	No	Yes, manager at initial application only	Yes, manager at initial application only
Application	Upon hire	Upon hire	Yes	Yes
No Performance Issues	N/A	N/A	Employee in Good Standing: An employee who is not currently under corrective action greater than verbal counseling and is currently meeting their job accountabilities.	Employee in Good Standing: An employee who is not currently under corrective action greater than verbal counseling and is currently meeting their job accountabilities.
Evidence of Work at Each Level	Domains	Domains	Domains	Domains
Meet with Manager	No (other than check in)	Yes	Yes (review application form)	Yes (review application form)
Level of Practice	Advanced Beginner	Competent	Proficient	Expert
Minimum Hours Worked	No	No	1000 hours worked with 60% of scheduled hours on unit (excludes call) OR .5 FTE	.8 FTE
Years of Experience	1	Greater than 1	3 years of experience in area of specialty	5 years of experience in area of specialty
Certification	Not required	Not required	Yes	Yes
Degree	AND or BSN	AND or BSN	BSN or BSN enrolled, with 5 years to complete;	BSN

			or ADN with certification and a Bachelor's degree of any focus.	
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