

## Article 29 – Educational Reimbursement

### A. RN to BSN Program:

The RN to BSN program will be extended for fiscal years 2025-2027 through one or more UVMMC program options:

#### 1. Eligibility:

All Full Time University of Vermont Medical Center RNs with 6 or more months of service will receive (i) 100% tuition assistance with no maximum time period at institutions that charge per credit, or (ii) 100% tuition credit for up to four terms at institutions that charge per term.

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 the program and provides documentation of acceptance, how many credits are needed and a copy of their learning plan to the Director, Nursing Education and Professional Development.

#### 3. Employee must contact Director, Clinical Education and Professional Development for facilitation of clinical practicum hours, sites and preceptors.

### 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 UVMMC 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 prorated 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 prorated 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 UVMMC 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 Professional Development 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 Education and Professional Development 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 UVMMC 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:

A bimonthly report will be made available to UVMMC’s sharepoint site detailing the previous bimonthly education funds requests for all bargaining unit members. Details will include:

- Starting balance of funds available as of October 1<sup>st</sup> of that FY and monthly thereafter
- Reason for request
- Amount requested
- What the request covered (i.e. hotel, conference registration etc.)
- Any amount denied
- Reason for amount denied

All bargaining unit employees, excluding those in sections I, J and K below:

For FY25, UVMMC will budget three hundred thousand dollars (\$300,000) to cover the cost of conferences and training. For FY26 UVMMC will budget three hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$350,000) to cover the cost of conferences and training. For FY27 UVMMC will budget three hundred seventy five thousand dollars (\$375,000) 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, UVMMC will budget one thousand two hundred eighty seven (1,287) conference days for a maximum of twelve (12) hours/day (prorated to the member’s regular shift length of 8/10/12 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 for APRNs:

All bargaining unit employees who are APRNs.

Effective in FY25, annually UVMMC will budget four thousand dollars (\$4,000) for each Advanced Practice Nurse to cover the cost of conferences, training, certification and licensure. In addition, UVMMC will provide up to an additional one thousand dollars (\$1,000) on a prorated basis (e.g., \$1000 for a 1.0 FTE and \$500 for a 0.5 FTE). 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 seven (7) 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.

#### **Side Letter**

Within three (3) months of ratification of this Agreement, an Advanced Practice Provider Council sub-committee consisting of an equal number of representatives appointed by VFNHP and UVMMC will meet to bargain a Professional Advancement Model for APRNs and to discuss specific percentages of non-patient-facing time.

#### J. Continuing Education for Nursing Professional Development Specialists/Practitioners and Stroke Coordinator

All bargaining unit employees who are Nursing Professional Development Specialists/Practitioners and Stroke Coordinators. Effective the first full pay period in FY25, UVMMC will budget eighty-three thousand two hundred dollars (\$83,200) 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 Nursing Professional Development Specialist/Practitioner 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. Clinical Nurse Leaders and Nurse Clinicians Continuing Education:

All bargaining unit employees who are Clinical Nurse Leaders (CNL) and Nurse Clinicians. Effective the first full pay period in FY25, UVMMC will budget nineteen thousand two hundred dollars (\$19,200) 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 CNL and Nurse Clinician 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.

#### L. Nursing Scholarship Program

UVMMC 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 UVMMC. Scholarship funds may be used toward the cost of tuition, books, applications and other academic expenses for those pursuing degrees in nursing. Twelve (12) scholarships would be awarded for seven-thousand, two hundred and fifty dollars (\$7,250) each and equal consideration for scholarship distribution will be given to APRNs, RNs and LPNs. 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 UVMMC 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 UVMMC 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 UVMMC 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 UVMCC Nursing Scholarship dollars would be available from Nursing Education.