



Fiscal Year July 1, 2020—June 30, 2021

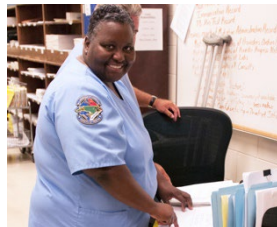
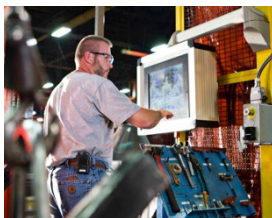
June 21, 2022



## *Annual Academic Assistance Report*

# NORTH CAROLINA

Office of State Human Resources  
Talent Management Division



## Program Overview

The Academic Assistance Program (AAP) provides a tool for managers and employees to support academic activities that directly relate to the organization's identified knowledge, skills, and behaviors (organizational competencies). These activities should also support the mission, vision, and values of the organization. The AAP is not an employee benefit, right or entitlement; it is a management program for workforce development. Denial of participation in the academic assistance program is not grievable, except on grounds of discrimination.

The AAP provides reimbursement of academic costs only if funds are available at the agency or university level and/or time off the job if the course is available only during working hours. Utilization of the AAP is required by policy to be identified, described, and documented in the employee's individual development plan.

Academic courses are defined as a course or degree provided by an accredited community college, college, or university. The course must provide academic credit (as opposed to CEUs), be listed in the college or university course catalog, and charge tuition in the traditional meaning of tuition (as opposed to only registration fees). Accreditation must be via an accrediting agency recognized by the US Department of Education.

Completion of the course should be determined by management to have a direct benefit to the organization. The improved knowledge, skills, and abilities gained by the employee should benefit the individual in the completion of his/her current and/or potential job duties.

In considering whether to approve academic assistance, management should consider workforce planning, succession planning, and career development.

Guidelines to consider for approval include courses:

- which provide knowledge and skills directly related to maintaining or improving current job skills
- mandated by law or regulation as a job requirement for continued employment
- directly related to the employee's current job or a documented workforce need
- intended to satisfy a documented workforce need

Each fiscal year, tuition reimbursement rates for the Academic Assistance Program (AAP) are communicated by the Office of State Human Resources. These rates are based on the maximum tuition rates set by the University of North Carolina System Office. These tuition rates are used to define reimbursement limits for employees pursuing education, certification, or other training programs under the AAP.

Per N.C.G.S. 126-4 and Administrative Rule 25 NCAC 01K .0324, the Office of State Human Resources is responsible for the administration of the AAP and approval of agency policy and procedures. Each state agency or university is delegated responsibility for, and authority to, administer the program within the provisions of this Rule. This includes retaining, on a fiscal year basis, records of academic assistance activity and reporting such information annually to the Office of State Human Resources.

This Academic Assistance Program Annual Report is based on the information reported by the various entities for the current reporting period. The report is organized as follows:

- Report Highlights
- Data Collection Methods
- Findings
- Conclusions/Recommendations

## Report Highlights

- Seventeen (17) state entities reported participating in the AAP.
  - 137 employees received reimbursements totaling \$318,875.
- Twenty-two (22) state entities reported they did not participate in the AAP.
- Approximately 50% of participating organizations use an agency budget for the AAP.

## Data Collection Method

The Office of State Human Resources Director distributed the annual memorandum across state agencies and universities requesting that institutions self-report their participation or non-participation in the AAP for the 2020-2021 fiscal year.

Data was collected as organizations submitted information via the links provided in the memo. This data was downloaded and used to create the charts and tables included in this report. This report uses definitions described in [25 NCAC 01A .0103](#).

## Overall Findings

- Forty (40) institutions reported Academic Assistance Program data (charts 1 and 5).
- Chart 1 lists the institutions that reported participation in the Academic Assistance Program (AAP) including a comparison of budgeted versus reimbursed funds.
- Six (6) state educational institutions, ten (10) state agencies and one (1) state bureau participated in the AAP during the 2020-2021 reporting period.
- A total of one hundred and thirty-seven (137) employees from seventeen (17) agencies were approved for reimbursement through the program.
- Some respondents indicated that they do not designate funds at the beginning of the year; funds are determined when employees request use of the AAP.

**Chart 1 – Budgeted Amount versus Reimbursements**

Agency/Bureau/ University	Number of Employees Participated	Dollar Amount Budgeted for FY 2019-2020	Dollar Amount Reimbursed for FY 2020-2021	Budget Difference (Less than / More than)	
				Less	More
Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services	7	\$49,271	\$7,876		\$41,395
Department of Commerce - DWS	6	\$24,000	\$18,897		\$5,103
Department of Environmental Quality	6	\$20,384	\$14,051		\$6,333
Department of Information Technology	4	No specific budget	\$3,147	- \$3,147	
Department of Justice	11	\$83,824	\$41,693		\$42,131
Department of Natural & Cultural Resources	11	n/a	\$15,397.92	-\$15,397.92	
Department of Public Safety - Division of Adult Correction & Juvenile Justice	23	\$67,807	\$58,387		\$9,420
<i>Elizabeth City State University</i>	1	\$2,143	\$3,092	-\$949	
Governor's Office	4		\$6014	\$6014	
Office of State Budget Management	2		\$12,547	\$12,547	
Office of State Treasurer	3	NA	\$5,294	-\$5,294	
State Bureau of Investigation	12	0	\$76,636		\$76,636
<i>UNC Asheville</i>	10	0	\$17,574		\$17,574
<i>UNC Charlotte</i>	15	\$60,000	\$10,801		\$49,199
<i>UNC School of the Arts</i>	18	\$30,000	\$16,565		\$13,435
<i>UNC System Office</i>	3	0	\$7,952	-\$7,952	
<i>Western Carolina University</i>	1	0	\$2,951.34	-\$2,951.34	
TOTAL	137	\$337,429	\$318,875	(\$17,130)	\$261,226

## Chart 2: Participating Employees and Total Reimbursements FY 2016-2021

Fiscal Year	# Participating Employees	Total Reimbursements
2020-2021	137	\$318,875
2019-2020	26	\$56,786
2018-2019	189	\$278,006
2017-2018	265	\$540,642
2016-2017	263	\$473,797

### Chart 2 Notes:

- Chart 2 highlights the total number of employees participating in Academic Assistance Program (AAP) and total organizational reimbursements for these employees each year from FY 2016-2017 through FY 2020-2021.
- While participation in the AAP was more prevalent than the previous fiscal year (2019-2020), it has not returned to 2017-2018 levels in terms of number of participating employees nor in total reimbursements.

**Chart 3: Educational Leave and Paid Leave Hours for Employees FY 2020-2021**

Agency/ Bureau/ University	# EEs* Course Requested by Org	# EEs Course Mandated by Org	# EEs Course Audits	# EEs Granted Ed Leave	# EEs Granted Ed Leave w/ Pay	# EEs Granted Ed Leave w/o Pay	# Of Paid Ed Leave Hours	# EEs Extended Ed Leave	# EEs Extended Ed Leave w/ Pay	#EEs Extended Ed Leave w/o Pay	# Of Paid Extended Ed Leave Hours
Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services	7	0	0	1	1	0	107	0	0	0	0
Department of Commerce - DWS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Department of Environmental Quality	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Department of Information Technology	0	0	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Department of Justice	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Department of Natural & Cultural Resources	9	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Department of Public Safety - Division of Adult Correction & Juvenile Justice	Not Reported	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
<i>Elizabeth City State University</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Governor's Office	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Office of State Budget Management	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Office of State Human Resources	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Office of State Treasurer	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
State Bureau of Investigation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>UNC Asheville</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>UNC Charlotte</i>	15	15	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>UNC School of the Arts</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>UNC System Office</i>	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Western Carolina University</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

**Chart 3 Notes:**

- Chart 3 provides details on the one hundred and thirty-seven (137) employees who participated in the AAP.
- Thirty-nine (39) employees were granted reimbursements at the behest of their agency, while seventeen (17) were required to complete coursework mandated or required by law for certifications.
- No employees audited the courses for which they were reimbursed.
- Only one (1) employee was granted educational leave and it was with pay.
- The total number of educational leave hours equaled one hundred and seven (107).
- No employees were granted Extended Educational Leave, either with or without pay, and therefore the number of hours of extended educational leave was zero (0).

**Chart 4: AAP Budget FY 2019-2020 / FY 2019-21**

Agency/ Bureau/ University	FY 2019-20 Budget	FY 2020-21 Budget	Variance	
			Increase	Decrease
Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services	\$49,271.00	\$49,271.00		
Department of Commerce - DWS	\$24,000.00	\$24,000.00		
Department of Environmental Quality	\$20,384.00	\$62,717.00	\$42,333	
Department of Information Technology	No specific budget	Each service area responsible, no set budget		
Department of Justice	\$83,824.00	\$66,764.00		\$17,057
Department of Natural & Cultural Resources	n/a	n/a		
Department of Public Safety - Division of Adult Correction & Juvenile Justice	\$67,807.00	\$67,807.00		
Elizabeth City State University	\$2,143.00	\$3,092.00	\$949	
Governor's Office		No specific budget		
Office of State Budget Management		No specific budget		
Office of State Treasurer	NA	NA		
State Bureau of Investigation	\$0.00	\$0.00		
UNC Asheville	\$0.00	\$0.00		
UNC Charlotte	\$60,000.00	\$60,000.00		
UNC School of the Arts	\$30,000.00	\$30,000.00		
UNC System Office	\$0.00	\$0.00		
Western Carolina University	\$0.00	\$0.00		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$337,429.00</b>	<b>\$363,651.00</b>	<b>\$43,282</b>	<b>\$17,057</b>

**Chart 4 Notes:**

- The total academic assistance dollar amount budgeted for past (FY 2019-2020) was \$337,429.00.
- The total academic assistance dollars amount budgeted for current FY 2020-21 was \$363,651.00.
- Two (2) of the fifteen (15) agencies increased their budgets by \$43,282, while one (1) decreased its budget to \$17,057.
- A modest statewide increase of \$26,225 is expected for FY 2020-21.
- Twenty-two (22) agencies reported not participating (i.e., they did not reimburse tuition to employees) in 2020-2021 FY.
- Many non-participants report that funding is the key issue in determining participation.



**Chart 5: FY 2020-2021 Non-participating Agencies/ Bureaus /Universities**

Agency/ Bureau /University	Ever participated?	If "Yes", when?	If "No", why not?	Future Participation?
Board of CPAs	No		No eligible participants	No
Department of Administration	No	Not since 2017		Unknown
Department of Labor	Yes	>2012		No
Department of Military/ Veteran Affairs	No		Lack of interest	Yes
Department of Transportation	Yes	2014		Yes
DHHS-Division of Vocational Rehabilitation	Yes	>2012		No
<i>East Carolina University</i>	No		Tuition Waiver Program	No
<i>Fayetteville State University</i>	Yes		No historical data	Unknown
Department of Commerce	No		No funds available	Unknown
<i>NC School of Science and Math</i>	No		Unfamiliar with program	Unknown
<i>NC State University</i>	Yes	2021		Yes
<i>North Carolina Central University</i>	No		Not been requested	Unknown
Office of State Auditor	Yes	FY 2019-2020		Yes
Office of State Human Resources	Yes	Pre-2017		Yes
Commissioner of Banks	Yes	2018		Unknown
Office of the State Controller	No		N/A	Unknown
Secretary of State	No		Budget constraints	Unknown
UNC Asheville	Yes		No historical data	Unknown
UNC Pembroke	No		Not been requested	Unknown
<i>UNC Wilmington</i>	Yes	2019		Yes
Wildlife Resources Commission	Yes	FY 2018-2019		Yes
<i>Winston-Salem State University</i>	No		No funding	Unknown

## Conclusion/Recommendations:

The Academic Assistance Program (AAP) continues to address skill gaps, anticipated changes to job requirements, and future development needs for employees in some state agencies. Agencies and universities also continue to use the AAP to help employees obtain and maintain necessary degrees, certifications, and training needed to perform current and future job responsibilities.

The AAP is a workforce development and planning resource, not an employee benefit. The AAP may be incorporated into an employee's performance management plan using the state's Performance Management System, North Carolina Valuing Individual Performance (NCVIP), where managers and supervisors collaborate with employees to design and construct a purposeful and strategic Individual Development Plan (IDP). The AAP can also be a resource for managers and supervisors to build leadership skills needed to strategically lead agencies and universities to meet the current and future business needs of the state.

As the state moves forward with offering the AAP, collection of additional data including employee demographics, such as race, gender, and role, can help determine if agencies and universities are carrying out the program in a fair, consistent, and equitable manner for all employees.

In conclusion, if agencies and universities can fund the Academic Assistance Program (AAP), it remains a valuable and effective tool to develop employees.