

MIAMI BEACH CITYWIDE PROCEDURE	DATE ISSUED: MAY, 2015	Page: 1 of 4	SEQUENCE NUMBER: HR.20.01
	DATE UPDATED: FEBRUARY, 2017		
	SUBJECT: EMPLOYEE TUITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM		
	RESPONSIBLE DEPARTMENT: HUMAN RESOURCES		

## PURPOSE:

The City of Miami Beach Employee Tuition Assistance Program ("Program"), which was revised in 2015 per Resolution 2015-28891, is established to provide financial assistance to eligible employees voluntarily participating in training or educational programs from accredited institutions of higher learning designed to improve their effectiveness which directly benefits City operations, activities and objectives; provide professional development; and help prepare employees for other opportunities within the City's service.

Tuition is the fee for instruction and lab fees only, and does not include textbooks, exams, audit fees, or any other expenses except for those executive degree programs where the tuition is inclusive of fees for books and other expenses.

An accredited institution of higher learning, as defined in the Higher Education Act, is an educational institution that awards a bachelor's degree or provides not less than a two (2) year program that is acceptable for full credit towards a degree; is legally authorized within such State to provide a program of education beyond secondary education; and is accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency or association, or if not so accredited, is an institution that has been granted pre-accreditation status by such an agency or association that has been recognized by the Secretary of Education.

## PROCEDURES:

### Reimbursement

1. Tuition assistance for undergraduate courses taken at Miami-Dade College (or a similar community college) will be reimbursed up to \$118.22 per credit hour. This rate will be updated by the Human Resources Department, as needed.
2. For traditional undergraduate and graduate courses, tuition assistance shall be based upon and not exceed the Florida International University (FIU) established credit hour tuition rate in the published State University System at the time of enrollment. This rate is updated each July and posted on the web at <http://www.flbog.edu/about/budget/current.php>.
3. For nontraditional graduate programs, (Corporate/Executive) tuition assistance shall be reimbursed up to \$714 per credit hour. This includes Executive programs at FIU, Barry, Nova, etc.
4. There is no reimbursement for PhD's.
5. Approved non-degree, work-related courses shall be reimbursed at 70% of the course cost, exclusive of fees for a "Pass" grade.
6. Approved certification courses shall be reimbursed at 70% of the course cost, exclusive of fees for a "Pass" grade.

Tuition assistance shall be limited to six (6) credit hours per semester, and eighteen (18) credit hours per year. At no time shall the annual tuition assistance for each employee exceed \$5,250, the federal government cap for withholding tax exemption. (This amount is subject to change based on updates to the federal guideline.)

Upon successful completion of approved coursework, the assistance schedule is based on the following

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levels of achievement:

- Grade A = 90% reimbursement
- Grade B = 80% reimbursement
- Grade C = 60% reimbursement; except for graduate level courses which are not eligible for reimbursement at this level of performance
- A passing grade on a pass/fail basis = 90% reimbursement

Employees receiving financial assistance including scholarships, fellowships, grants, special discounts and/or Veteran's benefits, will be eligible for tuition assistance after the financial assistance has been applied to the tuition costs.

The City reserves the right to determine and amend the number of courses, the number of credit hours, and the level of tuition assistance prior to the beginning of a school semester.

#### Employee Eligibility

Tuition assistance is available to full-time City of Miami Beach employees who have completed their respective probationary periods:

- a) Unclassified/Other employees must have completed six (6) months of continuous service and receive the approval of his or her supervisor.
- b) Classified employees must meet requirements stated in their respective Collective Bargaining Agreement in order to be eligible.

**Note:** Time served in provisional/temporary status is not included when determining eligibility.

#### Coursework Eligibility

Guidelines for establishing eligible coursework are as follows:

- a) Degree programs at accredited institutions which relate directly to career opportunities within the City of Miami Beach are eligible for approval.
- b) For those employees who have been approved for a degree program, all general education courses specifically required by the school will be approved.
- c) All courses must be taken outside of working hours unless the employee's Department Director approves the use of annual leave.
- d) Non-degree, work related courses (or City of Miami Beach career path).
- e) Certification, work related courses (or City of Miami Beach career path)

#### Department Director

Department Directors shall be responsible for verifying that all approved coursework is in compliance with this administrative procedure, as well as all other aspects of the program. Department Directors shall approve or disapprove all reimbursements for degrees, programs, and

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	RESPONSIBLE DEPARTMENT: HUMAN RESOURCES		

coursework for employees within their departments.

#### Employee Obligations

There is a repayment requirement if the employee separates from employment from the City of Miami Beach within two years of having received assistance, with the exception for those employees who have been laid off.

Employees separating from City service prior to the expiration of the two (2) year period will reimburse the City for the assistance received during the final year of employment through deductions from their final payroll check. If the final paycheck is insufficient, the employee will be responsible for making arrangements to reimburse the City or their separation papers shall be coded as not having left the City in good standing.

In the event the employee fails to reimburse the City, the services of an attorney required to collect such debt shall be sought and such attorney's fees and court costs shall be added to the amount owed the City.

#### Application Procedure

Employees wishing to participate in the Program shall submit to their Department Directors the attached Tuition Assistance Program Application Form along with the supporting documentation stated in Part I of the application no later than 30 days prior to the start of classes.

#### Coursework, Degree Review and Approval

The Department Director shall approve or disapprove the employee's request after verifying the employee's eligibility for participation in the Program.

#### Reimbursement

Employees seeking reimbursement shall submit their pre-approved application form along with the supporting documentation stated in Part I and II of the application, no later than 30 days from receipt of their grades. Departments shall submit all applications to the Human Resources Department with the supporting documentation for final review and reimbursement approval.

#### Penalty

Should an employee submit documentation which the employee knows is false or intentionally misleading in order to receive benefits to which the employee is not entitled, the employee shall be deemed ineligible to continue to participate in the Program and shall repay City of Miami Beach for any tuition assistance received while in the City's employ. The employee may be subject to disciplinary action, including, but not limited to, dismissal from the City service.

<b>MIAMI BEACH</b> CITYWIDE PROCEDURE	<b>DATE ISSUED:</b> MAY, 2015 <b>DATE UPDATED:</b> FEBRUARY, 2017	<b>Page:</b> 4 of 4	<b>SEQUENCE NUMBER:</b> HR.20.01
	<b>SUBJECT:</b> EMPLOYEE TUITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM		
	<b>RESPONSIBLE DEPARTMENT:</b> HUMAN RESOURCES		

Resolution No. 2017-29714 regarding the revisions to the Employee Tuition Assistance Program was passed and adopted by the Mayor and City Commission on January 11, 2017.

**Prepared by:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Director, Human Resources

**Reviewed by:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Internal Auditor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Assistant City Manager

**Approved by**

\_\_\_\_\_  
City Manager

2/12/17

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

RESOLUTION NO. 2017-29714

**A RESOLUTION OF THE MAYOR AND CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF MIAMI BEACH, FLORIDA, ACCEPTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE FINANCE AND CITYWIDE PROJECTS COMMITTEE TO AMEND THE CITY'S EMPLOYEE TUITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM AS SET FORTH IN THE ATTACHED EXHIBIT "3".**

**WHEREAS**, the City Commission passed Resolution No. 2015-28891 on January 14, 2015, to amend the Employee Tuition Assistance Program, which had not been updated since 2004; and

**WHEREAS**, effective January 2015, the City began administering a two-year pilot Tuition Assistance Program with a \$305,000 budget allocation, but only 21.96% (\$67,000) of the funds were utilized; and

**WHEREAS**, during the two-year pilot program, the number of employees that received assistance was twenty-nine (29) undergraduates, fifteen (15) graduates, and twelve (12) non-degree enrollees; and

**WHEREAS**, the Administration saw a need to improve the program structure as well as streamline the procedure for approving course work and processing the tuition reimbursements, as outlined in Exhibit "3.", Administrative Procedure HR.20.1.

**WHEREAS**, the Administration is recommending the following enhancements to the City's Employee Tuition Reimbursement Program: a six (6) credit hour limit per semester and an eighteen (18) credit hour limit per year; reimbursement of tuition cost at 90% for an "A," 80% for a "B," and 60% for a "C"; non-degree coursework/certification programs reimbursed at 70%; and, the maximum annual reimbursement for each participant not to exceed the allowable federal government maximum (\$5,250 for 2017); and

**WHEREAS**, the Administration's recommendations were approved by the Finance and Citywide Projects Committee at its meeting on November 18, 2016.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT DULY RESOLVED BY THE MAYOR AND CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF MIAMI BEACH, FLORIDA**, that the Mayor and City Commission hereby accept the recommendations of the Finance and Citywide Projects Committee to amend the City's Tuition Assistance Program as set forth in the attached Exhibit "3".

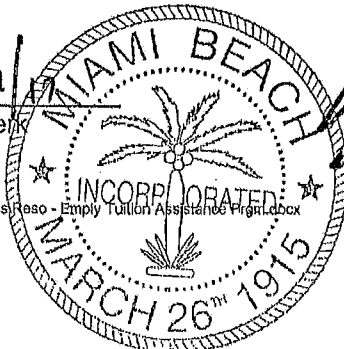
PASSED AND ADOPTED this 11 day of January, 2017.

ATTEST:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Rafael E. Granado, City Clerk

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Philip Levine, Mayor

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APPROVED AS TO  
FORM & LANGUAGE  
& FOR EXECUTION

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
City Attorney

1/19/17  
Date

# MIAMI BEACH

## COMMISSION MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Commission  
FROM: Jimmy L. Morales, City Manager  
DATE: January 11, 2017

SUBJECT: A RESOLUTION OF THE MAYOR AND CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF MIAMI BEACH, FLORIDA, ACCEPTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE FINANCE AND CITYWIDE PROJECTS COMMITTEE TO AMEND THE CITY'S TUITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS SET FORTH IN THE ATTACHED EXHIBIT "3".

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### RECOMMENDATION

We still believe that a Tuition Assistance Program is a valuable tool in enabling our employees to reach their personal goals, while also creating a pool of qualified staff to contribute to the City. Therefore, the administration is recommending a more streamlined, simplistic procedure for approving course work and applying the tuition assistance reimbursement.

Areas of clarification are recommended as follows and will reflect in the Administrative Procedure No. HR.20.1 (Exhibit 3 – Revised Draft Procedure):

- All coursework must be related to a City of Miami Beach career path
- Six (6) credit hour limit per semester; eighteen (18) credit hours per year
- No reimbursement for PhD's
- The tuition per credit hour rate for classes taken at Miami-Dade College is \$118.22 (this rate will be updated by the Human Resources Department, as needed)
- Reimbursement will be at the following levels, with the per credit hour rate (tuition only, exclusive of fees) not to exceed the FIU rate, for traditional Undergraduate and Graduate programs, published each July in the State University System of Florida, Tuition and Required Fees ([www.flbog.edu/about/budget/current.php](http://www.flbog.edu/about/budget/current.php)):
  - o 90% reimbursement for courses in which employees earn an "A"
  - ? Includes a "passing" grade on a pass/fail basis
  - o 80% reimbursement for courses in which employees earn a "B"
  - o 60% reimbursement for courses in which employees earn a "C"
- Corporate/Executive programs (ie. MPA, MBA) will be reimbursed at the same grading scale above, at \$714 per credit hour (including on-line courses and courses at private schools)
- Maximum allowable reimbursement for each employee, regardless of the educational program they are enrolled in is \$5,250 per year (federal government cap for exemption from withholding tax)
- Approved, non-degree, work-related courses shall be reimbursed at 70% of the course cost, exclusive of books and other fees

- Approved, certification courses, directly related to a City of Miami Beach career path, will be reimbursed at 70% on a pass/fail basis. (Examples of certification programs: Film, Human Resources, Finance)

Using the recommended changes proposed above, we are proposing a \$300,000 budget allocation using the following participation scenarios:

#### Undergraduate Program

- 40 enrolled employees
- Each of the 40 employees takes 6 credit hours per semester for a total of 18 semester hours per year at \$162.61 per credit hour (using FIU per credit hour rate)
- 40% earn an "A" which results in a cost of \$42,148
- 40% earn a "B" which results in a cost of \$37,465
- 20% earn a "C" which results in a cost of \$14,050, for a total expenditure of \$93,663

#### Graduate Program (traditional)

- 10 enrolled employees
- Each of the 10 employees takes 6 credit hours per semester for a total of 18 semester hours per year at \$398 per credit hour (maximum allowable per year \$5,250)
- 40% earn an "A" which results in a cost of \$21,000
- 40% earn a "B" which results in a cost of \$21,000
- 20% earn a "C" which results in a cost of \$8,617, for a total expenditure of \$50,617

#### Executive/Corporate Program

- 10 enrolled employees
- Each of the 10 employees takes 6 credit hours per semester for a total of 18 semester hours per year at \$714 per credit hour (maximum allowable per year \$5,250)
- 40% earn an "A" which results in a cost of \$21,000
- 40% earn a "B" which results in a cost of \$21,000
- 20% earn a "C" which results in a cost of \$10,500, for a total expenditure of \$52,500

#### Certification Programs (City of Miami Beach career path)

- 50 employees at an average of three (3) courses at \$500 per course = \$1,500
- Completion of courses on a Pass/Fail basis, reimbursed at 70% for a "Pass"
- Estimated annual cost for certifications is \$52,500

#### Non-degree Programs (City of Miami Beach career path)

- 25 employees at an average of three (3) courses at \$250 per course = \$750
- Completion of courses on a Pass/Fail basis, reimbursed at 70% for a "Pass"
- Estimated annual cost for certifications is \$13,125

With the recommended changes, the Administration intends to make Tuition Assistance a smooth process for those employees wishing to expand their knowledge and skills by obtaining a degree or certification in a career-related path at the City. These amendments will also improve the process for the Human Resources staff that is responsible for processing the tuition assistance reimbursement

request.

### **ANALYSIS**

Beginning in January 2015, the program utilization was as follows: twenty-nine (29) undergraduate enrollees, fifteen (15) graduate enrollees, and twelve (12) non-degree seeking enrollees. With a total of fifty-six (56) employees utilizing the program, to date, approximately \$67,000 has been reimbursed, that is 21.96% of the current budget. The majority of our employees attended Miami-Dade College (21.4%), Florida International University (19.6%), and Barry (19.6%). We have determined that some aspects of the current program are vague and somewhat confusing to the user, as well as the Human Resources staff that is calculating the reimbursement. Several employees voiced their concern about the way tuition assistance is being applied when compared to the illustration used in the January 14, 2015, Commission memo (Exhibit 1). For example, the information provided to the FCWPC and Commission includes executive degree programs at colleges such as Barry, Nova, and FIU, in which the City has partnered with these schools to offer varying preferred tuition rates, costing as much as \$760, exclusive of application and lab fees, books and other related expenditures. The cost analysis used for the two-year pilot program was based on the following assumptions for an Undergraduate student at FIU and a Graduate student in a corporate Master of Business Administration program at \$760 per credit hour. The tuition assistance budget allocation for the two-year pilot program is \$305,000. This budget was arrived by using the following assumptions:

#### **Undergraduate Program**

- 56 enrolled employees
- Each of the 56 employees takes 6 credit hours per semester for a total of 18 semester hours per year at \$203.59 per credit hour
- 40% earn an "A" which results in a cost of \$66,000
- 30% earn a "B" which results in a cost of \$37,000;
- 30% earn a "C" which results in a cost of \$25,000, for a total expenditure of \$128,000

#### **Corporate Graduate Program (Business Administration)**

- 18 enrolled employees
- Each of the 18 employees takes 6 credit hours per semester for a total of 18 semester hours per year at \$760 per credit hour
- 60% earn an "A" which results in a cost of \$118,000; and
- 40% earn a "B" which results in a cost of \$59,000;
- 30% earn a "C" which results in a cost of \$25,000, for a total expenditure of \$177,000

However, as we near the end of the two-year pilot program, and look back at past practices, we believe that the program was not used to its full potential due to the conflicting class approval process and the misunderstanding of the reimbursement process, especially as it relates to the Corporate/Executive Graduate programs. Additionally, we received a letter from the Director, Master of Public Administration ("MPA") at FIU regarding their program structure for the Executive MPA and how the tuition is determined. An MPA program cost is \$32,000, with \$2,000 of those dollars used for books and food, resulting in a \$714 per credit hour tuition rate. The Director also states that the MPA program has been very successful since its inception in 1978, with 2800 graduates (Exhibit 2).



### **CONCLUSION**

The Administration recommends adopting the Resolution.

### **Legislative Tracking**

Human Resources

### **ATTACHMENTS:**

#### **Description**

- ☐ Exhibit 1
- ☐ exhibit 2
- ☐ Exhibit 3

## EXHIBIT # 1

RESOLUTION NO. 2015-28891

A RESOLUTION OF THE MAYOR AND CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF MIAMI BEACH, FLORIDA, ACCEPTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE FINANCE AND CITYWIDE PROJECTS COMMITTEE TO AMEND THE CITY'S TUITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM AS FOLLOWS: TUITION ASSISTANCE SHALL BE BASED ON, BUT NOT EXCEED, THE ESTABLISHED CREDIT HOUR TUITION RATE IN THE STATE'S UNIVERSITY SYSTEM AT THE TIME OF ENROLLMENT; ASSISTANCE SHALL BE BASED ON A SLIDING SCALE DIRECTLY RELATED TO THE EMPLOYEE'S PERFORMANCE IN APPROVED COURSEWORK FROM ACCREDITED INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING WITH A SIX CREDIT HOUR LIMIT PER SEMESTER; ASSISTANCE SHALL BE LIMITED TO 80 PERCENT OF THE TUITION COSTS FOR COURSES IN WHICH EMPLOYEES EARN AN "A," 60 PERCENT WHEN THEY EARN A "B," AND 40 PERCENT WHEN THEY EARN A "C," EXCEPT GRADUATE COURSES FOR WHICH ASSISTANCE REQUIRES EARNING NO LESS THAN A "B"; A REPAYMENT REQUIREMENT IF THE EMPLOYEE SEPARATES FROM EMPLOYMENT BY THE CITY WITHIN TWO YEARS OF HAVING RECEIVED ASSISTANCE, WITH AN EXCEPTION FOR EMPLOYEES WHO ARE LAID OFF OR DIE; AND APPROVING THE REVISED CITY OF MIAMI BEACH EMPLOYEE TUITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM SET FORTH IN THE ATTACHED EXHIBIT A.

WHEREAS, there City of Miami Beach (City) has a long-standing tradition of encouraging employees to further their education by offering a tuition assistance program; and

WHEREAS, the tuition assistance program has not been revised since 2004; and

WHEREAS, costs for a post-secondary education have risen considerably in the intervening years; and

WHEREAS, tuition assistance is available only to full-time City of Miami Beach classified employees who have completed their probationary periods, or for unclassified employees who have a minimum of six (6) months of continuous service. (Time served in a Provisional/Temporary status is excluded); and

WHEREAS, the Finance and Citywide Projects (FCWP) Committee members reviewed the status of the program and recommended the following changes at the December 12, 2014 meeting: tuition assistance shall be based on, but not exceed, the established credit hour tuition rate in the State's University System at the time of enrollment; assistance shall be based on a sliding scale directly related to the employee's performance in approved coursework from accredited institutions of higher learning with a six credit hour limit per semester; assistance shall be limited to 80 percent of the tuition costs for courses in which employees earn an "A," 60 percent when they earn a "B," and 40 percent when they earn a "C," except graduate courses for which assistance requires earning no less than a "B"; and a repayment requirement if the employee separated within two years of having received assistance, with an exception for employees who are laid off or die; and

WHEREAS, a revised City of Miami Beach Employee Tuition Assistance Program that incorporates the recommendations of the FCWP Committee, and other clean-up revisions, is attached as Exhibit A; and

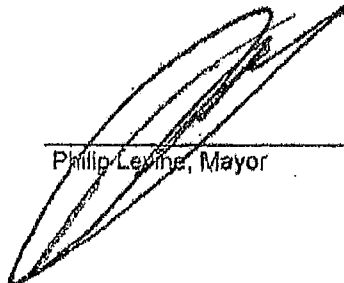
WHEREAS, the applicability of the revised City of Miami Beach Employee Tuition Assistance Program, as set forth in Exhibit A, to employees covered by a collective bargaining unit will be subject to negotiations when the current collective bargaining agreements expire.

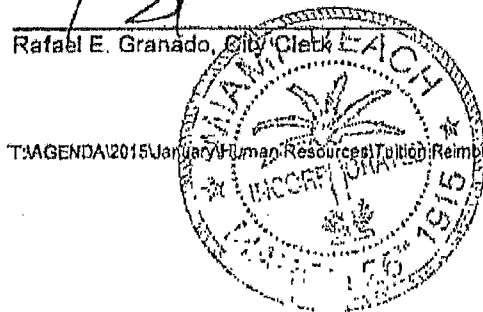
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT DULY RESOLVED BY THE MAYOR AND CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF MIAMI BEACH, FLORIDA, that the Mayor and the City Commission hereby accept the recommendations of the Finance and Citywide Projects Committee to amend the City's Tuition Assistance Program as follows: tuition assistance shall be based on, but not exceed, the established credit hour tuition rate in the State's University System at the time of enrollment; assistance shall be based on a sliding scale directly related to the Employee's performance in approved coursework from accredited institutions of higher learning with a six credit hour limit per semester; assistance shall be limited to 80 percent of the tuition costs for courses in which employee's earn an "A," 60 percent when they earn a "B," and 40 percent when they earn a "C," except graduate courses for which assistance requires earning no less than a "B"; and a repayment requirement if the employee separated from employment by the City of Miami Beach within two years of having received assistance, with an exception for employees who are laid off or die, within two years of having received assistance; and approve the revised City of Miami Beach Employee Tuition Assistance Program set forth in the attached Exhibit A.

PASSED AND ADOPTED this 14 day of January, 2015.

ATTEST:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Rafael E. Granado, City Clerk

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Philip Levine, Mayor



APPROVED AS TO  
FORM & LANGUAGE  
& FOR EXECUTION

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
City Attorney

1/7/15  
Date

# COMMISSION ITEM SUMMARY

## Condensed Title:

A resolution of the Mayor and City Commission of the City of Miami Beach, Florida, accepting the recommendation of the Finance and Citywide Projects Committee to approve changes to the tuition assistance program.

## Key Intended Outcome Supported:

Ensure that a universal culture of high quality customer-service is driving the conduct of the City Commission and all City employees

## Item Summary/Recommendation:

The Tuition Assistance Program is an employment benefit, so long-term that the last time it was reviewed was ten years ago in October 2004. The purpose of the program is to encourage employees to further their education by taking approved or accredited courses which will improve their performance in the services they were hired to perform or would be relevant to the employees' career development and potential advancement within the City.

After significant discussion, the FCWPC recommended that the tuition assistant program be modified as follows, upon City Commission approval, for employees in the unclassified and "others" salary groups.

- Assistance based on a sliding scale directly related to the employee's performance in school, for approved coursework from accredited institutions of higher learning
- Six credit hour limit on the number eligible for tuition assistance per semester
- A repayment requirement if the employee separates within two years of having received assistance, with an exception for employees who are laid off or die

### Undergraduate Programs

- 80% reimbursement for courses in which employees earn an "A"
- 60% reimbursement for courses in which employees earn a "B"
- 40% reimbursement for courses in which employees earn a "C"

### Graduate Programs

- 80% reimbursement for courses in which employees earn an "A"
- 60% reimbursement for courses in which employees earn a "B"

Applicability of these changes to employees covered by a collective bargaining unit will be a subject to negotiations with representatives from the American Federation of State County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), Communications Workers of America (CWA), Fraternal Order of Police (FOP), Government Supervisors Association of Florida (GSAF) and the International Association of Firefighters (IAFF) when current collective bargaining agreements expire.

## Advisory Board Recommendation:

At the December 12, 2014, Finance and Citywide Projects Committee meeting, members unanimously voted to continue approve changes to the tuition assistance program as set forth herein.

## Financial Information:

Source of Funds:	Amount	Account
1	\$305,000	011-9590-000367
2		
OBPI	Total	

## Financial Impact Summary:

## City Clerk's Office Legislative Tracking:

Sylvia Crespo-Tabak, Human Resources Director

## Sign-Offs:

Department Director SC-T	ACM/CFO KGB	City Manager JL
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MIAMI BEACH

AGENDA ITEM C7D  
DATE 1-14-15



# MIAMI BEACH

City of Miami Beach, 1700 Convention Center Drive, Miami Beach, Florida 33139, www.miamibeachfl.gov

## COMMISSION MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor Philip Levine and Members of the City Commission

FROM: Jimmy L. Morales, City Manager

DATE: January 14, 2015

SUBJECT: RESOLUTION ACCEPTING THE FINANCE AND CITYWIDE PROJECTS COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING THE CITY OF MIAMI BEACH TUITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

### BACKGROUND

At the November 19, 2014, City Commission meeting, the subject program was referred to the Finance and Citywide Projects Committee (FCWPC) for its review and recommendations and the matter was addressed at the December 12, 2014, meeting.

The Tuition Assistance Program is an employment benefit, so long-term that the last time it was reviewed was ten years ago, in October 2004. Budgetary allocations during the same period of time have fluctuated between \$30,000 and the current \$20,000 per year. Expenditures in 2004 were over budget by almost \$8,000 but every year since then, except for 2010, expenditures were significantly below allocated amounts. In fiscal year 2013/14, 34 employees made use of the benefit for a total expenditure of slightly over \$19,000. Based on the amounts reimbursed, six of the 34 employees who filed for reimbursement are enrolled in post-graduate programs.

The purpose of the program is to encourage employees to further their education by taking approved or accredited courses which will improve their performance in the services they were hired to perform or would be relevant to the employees' career development and potential advancement within the City. The City reimburses tuition only for one course per semester for a total of 12 credit hours per calendar year.

To be eligible for reimbursement, employees must successfully complete each course taken, which means earning a grade of "C" or better and a "pass" if the course is graded on a pass/fail basis. Reimbursement rates are as follows:

- Approved undergraduate community college and non-credit/certificate courses - \$158.25;
- Approved undergraduate university courses - \$251.16; and
- Approved graduate courses - \$531.15.

### DISCUSSION

At the December 12, 2014, meeting, Committee members were informed that in addition

to the tuition assistance program, the City of Miami Beach has partnered with Barry University, Carlos Albizu University, Florida International University and Nova Southeastern University to offer employees preferred tuition rates for a number of programs. Offerings vary, yet despite significant discounts, post-graduate credit hours may cost as much as \$760, exclusive of application and lab fees, books and other related expenditures.

In April 2014, staff undertook an informal survey regarding tuition assistance and received eight responses from municipalities in Miami-Dade and Broward Counties. One did not offer any assistance; another offered it to select bargaining unit employees and a third suspended its program due to budgetary constraints.

The different approaches among the entities that responded were striking. Two entities allocated a certain amount to the program and reimbursed at the State tuition credit hour rate until the allocations were exhausted. Since there were no limits on the number of credit hours eligible for assistance, reimbursement was based on available funding. If an employee delayed submitting the required information, he or she ran the risk of losing out on the benefit due to budgetary constraints.

Two municipalities, the Village of Key Biscayne and the City of Doral, based their reimbursements on employee achievement. An "A" was reimbursed at 100%, a "B" and 75% and a "C" at 50% at both organizations. The Village of Key Biscayne reimbursed an employee up to \$4,000 per fiscal year and the City of Doral reimbursed up to 18 credits per fiscal year.

Miami-Dade County reimburses up to 50% of tuition costs to any employee who earns a "C" in an approved course after financial and other assistance has been applied.

#### ANALYSIS PRESENTED TO THE FCWPC

Should the City elect to make changes to the Tuition Assistance Program, the matter will have to be negotiated with labor representatives as part of the collective bargaining process. Changes, if adopted, may apply to employees in the unclassified or "others" salary groups upon adoption.

The attached revised program procedures incorporate the following:

- Assistance based on a sliding scale directly related to the employee's performance in school
- No limit on the number of credit hours eligible for tuition assistance
- A repayment requirement if the employee separates within two years of having received assistance, with an exception for employees who are laid off or die

The Administration recommends a two-year pilot program because it is difficult to anticipate how much interest the program will generate and whether the City will be able to afford to offer such an employment benefit. The cost analysis is based on the following assumptions and the undergraduate tuition cost at Florida International University and \$760.00 per credit hour for the Corporate Master of Business

Administration also at Florida International University.

Undergraduate Program

- Instead of 28 employees, 56 enroll in an undergraduate program (a twofold increase);
- Each of the 56 takes 6 credit hours per semester for a total of 18 semester hours per year at \$203.59 per credit hour;
- 40% earn an "A" which results in a cost of \$66,000;
- 30% earn a "B" which results in a cost of \$37,000; and
- 30% earn a "C" which results in a cost of \$25,000 for a total expenditure of \$128,000

Corporate Master of Business Administration

- Instead of 6 employees, 18 enroll in this graduate program;
- Each of the 18 takes 6 credit hours for a total of 18 semester hours per year at \$760 per credit hours;
- 60% earn an "A" which results in a cost of \$118,000; and
- 40% earn a "B" which results in a cost of \$59,000 for a total expenditure of \$177,000

Consequently, based on the above assumptions, this pilot program could run at \$305,000.

RECOMMENDATION

After significant discussion, the FCWPC recommended that the tuition assistant program be modified as follows, upon City Commission approval, for employees in the unclassified and others salary groups.

- Assistance based on a sliding scale directly related to the employee's performance in school, for approved coursework from accredited institutions of higher learning
- Six credit hour limit on the number eligible for tuition assistance per semester
- A repayment requirement if the employee separates within two years of having received assistance, with an exception for employees who are laid off or die

Undergraduate Programs

- 80% reimbursement for courses in which employees earn an "A"
- 60% reimbursement for courses in which employees earn a "B"
- 40% reimbursement for courses in which employees earn a "C"

Graduate Programs

- 80% reimbursement for courses in which employees earn an "A"
- 60% reimbursement for courses in which employees earn a "B"

Applicability of these changes to employees covered by a collective bargaining unit will be a subject of negotiations with representatives from the American Federation of State County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), Communications Workers of America (CWA), Fraternal Order of Police (FOP), Government Supervisors Association of Florida (GSAF) and the International Association of Firefighters (IAFF) when current collective bargaining agreements expire.

The Administration recommends adoption of the FCWPC's recommendation and further recommends that beginning with the 2016/17 fiscal year budget, program costs be re-evaluated during the budget allocation process.

Attachment

JLM/KGB/SC-T

T:\AGENDA\2015\January\Human Resources\Tuition Reimbursement Rates at CMB Memo.docx



## **CITY OF MIAMI BEACH EMPLOYEE TUITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

The City of Miami Beach Employee Tuition Assistance Program ("Program") is established to provide financial assistance to eligible employees voluntarily participating in training or educational programs from accredited institutions of higher learning designed to improve their effectiveness which directly benefits City operations, activities and objectives; provide professional development; and help prepare employees for other opportunities within the City's service.

Tuition is the fee for instruction and lab fees only, and does not include textbooks, exams, audit fees, or any other expenses.

Tuition assistance is available to full-time City of Miami Beach classified employees who have completed their respective probationary periods and to unclassified employees who have no less than six months of continuous service. Time served in provisional/temporary status is not included when determining eligibility.

An accredited institution of higher learning, as defined in the Higher Education Act, is an educational institution that awards a bachelor's degree or provides not less than a 2-year program that is acceptable for full credit towards a degree; is legally authorized within such State to provide a program of education beyond secondary education; and is accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency or association, or if not so accredited, is an institution that has been granted preaccreditation status by such an agency or association that has been recognized by the Secretary of Education.

### **QUALIFICATIONS:**

The tuition assistance shall be based upon and not exceed the established credit hour tuition rate in the State university system at the time of enrollment and shall be limited to six credit hours per semester. Upon successful completion of approved coursework, the assistance schedule is based on the following levels of achievement:

1. Grade A = 80% reimbursement
2. Grade B = 60% reimbursement
3. Grade C = 40% reimbursement; except for graduate level courses which are not eligible for reimbursement at this level of performance
4. A passing grade on a pass/fail basis = 80% reimbursement

Employees receiving financial assistance including scholarships, fellowships, grants, special discounts and/or Veteran's benefits, will be eligible for tuition assistance after the financial assistance has been applied to the tuition costs.

Exhibit A

The City reserves the right to determine and amend the number of courses, the number of credit hours, and the level of tuition assistance prior to the beginning of a school semester.

#### **EMPLOYEE ELIGIBILITY:**

Tuition assistance is available to full-time City of Miami Beach classified employees who have completed their respective probationary periods and to unclassified employees who have no less than six months of continuous service. Time served in provisional/temporary status is not included when determining eligibility.

- (a) For classified employees, an overall evaluation of "meets expectations" or higher on the latest employee performance evaluation preceding the beginning of classes.

Exception: A classified employee whose latest overall evaluation is less than "meets expectations" may be eligible for tuition assistance for coursework related to specific areas of performance that have a requirement to take courses as a part of their job performance, upon approval of the Human Resources Department.

- (b) Unclassified employees must receive the approval of his or her supervisor to participate in the Program.

#### **COURSEWORK ELIGIBILITY:**

Guidelines for establishing eligible coursework are as follows:

- (a) Degree and certification programs at accredited institutions which relate directly to career opportunities within the City of Miami Beach are eligible for approval.
- (b) For those employees who have been approved for a degree program, all general education courses specifically required by the school will be approved.
- (c) All other coursework will be considered on a course by course basis.
- (d) All courses must be taken outside of working hours unless the employee's department director approves the use of annual leave. If administrative leave is granted to take a course during working hours, which requires City Manager approval, no tuition assistance will be granted.

- (e) Online Internet courses and programs provided by accredited Florida-based educational institutions are eligible for tuition reimbursement

#### **DEPARTMENT DIRECTOR:**

The department directors shall be responsible for verifying that all approved coursework is in compliance with this administrative procedure, as well as all other aspects of the program. Department directors shall approve or disapprove all reimbursements for degrees, programs, and coursework for employees within their departments.

#### **EMPLOYEE OBLIGATIONS:**

In order to be eligible for tuition assistance, employees receiving tuition assistance under this Program must remain in the City's employ for a minimum of two years following the last tuition assistance payment. Employees separating from City service prior to the expiration of this period will reimburse the City for the assistance received during the final year of employment through deductions from their final payroll check. If the final paycheck is insufficient, the employee will still be responsible for making arrangements to reimburse the City or their separation papers shall be coded as not having left the City in good standing and the employee shall remain responsible for any remaining reimbursement.

In the event the employee fails to reimburse the City, the services of an attorney required to collect such debt shall be sought and such attorney's fees and court costs shall be added to the amount owed the City.

No reimbursement will be required of those employees who have been laid off. If the employee dies while in the City's service, no reimbursement will be sought from the employee's estate.

#### **APPLICATION PROCEDURE:**

Employees wishing to participate in the Program shall submit to their department directors an application for coursework/degree approval no later than thirty days prior to the start of classes.

#### **COURSEWORK, DEGREE REVIEW AND APPROVAL:**

The department director shall approve or disapprove the employee's request after verifying the employee's eligibility for participation in the Program.

##### *(a) Approval*

After the department director approves the request, a copy of the original application is returned to the employee advising them of the approval.

*(b) Disapproval*

If the department director disapproves the application, he or she shall advise the employee of the reason for the rejection no later than 30 days from the date of the receipt of the application.

**REIMBURSEMENT:**

All approved applicants will submit a request for reimbursement, along with tuition receipts, official grade notifications, and all supporting documentation, to their department directors no later than thirty days from receipt of their grades. The departments shall submit all applications to the Human Resources Department, whether approved or disapproved, with the supporting documents for final review and reimbursement approval.

**PENALTIES:**

Should an employee submit documentation which the employee knows is false or intentionally misleading in order to receive benefits to which the employee is not entitled, the employee shall be deemed ineligible to continue to participate in the Program and shall repay City of Miami Beach for any tuition assistance received while in the City's employ. The employee may be subject to disciplinary action, including, but not limited to, dismissal from the City service.

Human Resources Department  
City of Miami Beach  
Miami Beach, Florida

Dear Sir/Mme:

It has come to my attention that there are questions about tuition charged by the Executive Master of Public Administration Program (MPA). In this letter, I hope to clarify these questions.

The FIU MPA Program is offered by the only public research university in Miami. The program has been offered continuously since 1978, and has over 2,800 graduates. The program is supported by 14 faculty members who are dedicated to public service research - with over 400 publications in the field of public administration. All our faculty are certified as graduate faculty, and the few adjuncts that we hire are credentialed according to our accreditation standards - i.e. 10 years of experience at the level of director or higher.

The FIU MPA program is the only NASPAA-Accredited program in Miami-Dade County. NASPAA accreditation is a quality assurance for curriculum, students and faculty of the program. While other institutions in the region offer non-accredited graduate degrees in public administration, they tend to teach courses using non-qualified faculty. Our average incoming MPA student has a 3.6 out of 4 undergraduate GPA. In short, the FIU MPA is a quality program delivering quality curriculum by quality faculty to quality students.

The Executive cohort of our MPA program is designed for working professionals with experience of 5-10 years of public service experience. The curriculum is designed to meet the needs of professionals - with core courses in budgeting, finance, human resource management, policy making and leadership. Additionally, the program offers elective coursework in strategic planning, public private partnerships, media relations, and executive leadership. The program has excellent retention rates because we are very selective in admission and we are very careful with curriculum design.

Because we are a public institution and our students are public and non-profit students, the EMPA is priced to barely recover its costs. The EMPA does not generate profit and every dollar generated from the cohort is reinvested in the program. The program does include the cost of books and food which amounts to less than \$2,000 of the \$32,000 tuition charged by the program. Therefore, the cost per credit for our EMPA, excluding cost of books and food, is \$714 per credit hour. I want to emphasize that this amount is the actual cost amount - the revenues generated by this program barely

Department of Public Administration, Steven J. Green School of International and Public  
Affairs  
11200 S.W. 8th Street, PCA 257 • Miami, FL 33199 • Tel: (305) 348-5890 • Fax: (305) 348-5848  
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8771

recover its expenses.

Offering an accredited program is expensive — for example, the cost of a research faculty is almost 10 times the cost of an adjunct faculty member. Quality and accreditation requirements unfortunately have costs associated with them. However, accreditation assures that your employees are in fact receiving the proper education and are not just receiving a degree.

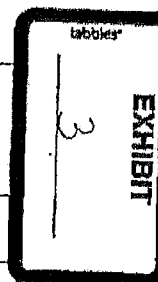
If you have questions, or to chat about this matter, please contact me at (305) 348-4338 (work) or at (305) 903-9990 (home). I may also be reached by e-mail at [malkadry@fiu.edu](mailto:malkadry@fiu.edu).

Sincerely Yours



Mohamad Alkadry, Ph.D.  
Director, Master of Public Administration  
Professor, Department of Public Administration

<b>MIAMIBEACH</b> CITYWIDE PROCEDURE	<b>DATE ISSUED:</b> MAY, 2015	<b>Page:</b> 1 of 4	<b>SEQUENCE NUMBER:</b> HR.20.01
	<b>DATE UPDATED:</b> DECEMBER, 2016		
	<b>SUBJECT:</b> EMPLOYEE TUITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM		
	<b>RESPONSIBLE DEPARTMENT:</b> HUMAN RESOURCES		



## PURPOSE:

The City of Miami Beach Employee Tuition Assistance Program ("Program"), which was revised in 2015 per Resolution 2015-28891, is established to provide financial assistance to eligible employees voluntarily participating in training or educational programs from accredited institutions of higher learning designed to improve their effectiveness which directly benefits City operations, activities and objectives; provide professional development; and help prepare employees for other opportunities within the City's service.

Tuition is the fee for instruction and lab fees only, and does not include textbooks, exams, audit fees, or any other expenses except for those executive degree programs where the tuition is inclusive of fees for books and other expenses.

An accredited institution of higher learning, as defined in the Higher Education Act, is an educational institution that awards a bachelor's degree or provides not less than a two (2) year program that is acceptable for full credit towards a degree, is legally authorized within such State to provide a program of education beyond secondary education, and is accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency or association, or if not so accredited, is an institution that has been granted pre-accreditation status by such an agency or association that has been recognized by the Secretary of Education.

## PROCEDURES:

### Reimbursement

1. Tuition assistance for undergraduate courses taken at Miami Dade College (or a similar community college) will be reimbursed up to \$118.22 per credit hour. This rate will be updated by the Human Resources Department as needed.
2. For traditional undergraduate and graduate courses, tuition assistance shall be based upon and not exceed the Florida International University (FIU) established credit hour tuition rate in the published State University System at the time of enrollment. This rate is updated each July and posted on the web at <http://www.flbog.edu/about/budget/current.php>.
3. For nontraditional graduate programs, (Corporate/Executive) tuition assistance shall be reimbursed up to \$714 per credit hour. This includes Executive programs at FIU, Barry, Nova, etc.
4. There is no reimbursement for PhD's.
5. Approved non-degree, work-related courses shall be reimbursed at 70% of the course cost, exclusive of fees for a "Pass" grade.
6. Approved certification courses shall be reimbursed at 70% of the course cost, exclusive of fees for a "Pass" grade.

Tuition assistance shall be limited to six (6) credit hours per semester, and eighteen (18) credit hours per year. At no time shall the annual tuition assistance for each employee exceed \$5,250, the federal government cap for withholding tax exemption. (This amount is subject to change based on updates to the federal guideline.)

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	RESPONSIBLE DEPARTMENT: HUMAN RESOURCES		

Upon successful completion of approved coursework, the assistance schedule is based on the following levels of achievement:

- Grade A = 90% reimbursement
- Grade B = 80% reimbursement
- Grade C = 60% reimbursement; except for graduate level courses which are not eligible for reimbursement at this level of performance
- A passing grade on a pass/fail basis = 90% reimbursement

Employees receiving financial assistance including scholarships, fellowships, grants, special discounts and/or Veteran's benefits, will be eligible for tuition assistance after the financial assistance has been applied to the tuition costs.

The City reserves the right to determine and amend the number of courses, the number of credit hours, and the level of tuition assistance prior to the beginning of a school semester.

#### Employee Eligibility

Tuition assistance is available to full-time City of Miami Beach employees who have completed their respective probationary periods:

- a) Unclassified/Other employees must have completed six (6) months of continuous service and receive the approval of his or her supervisor.
- b) Classified employees must meet requirements stated in their respective Collective Bargaining Agreement in order to be eligible.

**Note:** Time served in provisional/temporary status is not included when determining eligibility.

#### Coursework Eligibility

Guidelines for establishing eligible coursework are as follows:

- a) Degree programs at accredited institutions which relate directly to career opportunities within the City of Miami Beach are eligible for approval.
- b) For those employees who have been approved for a degree program, all general education courses specifically required by the school will be approved.
- c) All courses must be taken outside of working hours unless the employee's Department Director approves the use of annual leave.
- d) Non-degree, work related courses (or City of Miami Beach career path).
- e) Certification, work related courses (or City of Miami Beach career path)

#### Department Director

Department Directors shall be responsible for verifying that all approved coursework is in compliance with this administrative procedure, as well as all other aspects of the program.



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	DATE UPDATED: DECEMBER, 2016		
	SUBJECT: EMPLOYEE TUITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM		
	RESPONSIBLE DEPARTMENT: HUMAN RESOURCES		

Department Directors shall approve or disapprove all reimbursements for degrees, programs, and coursework for employees within their departments.

#### Employee Obligations

There is a repayment requirement if the employee separates from employment from the City of Miami Beach within two years of having received assistance, with the exception for those employees who have been laid off.

Employees separating from City service prior to the expiration of the two (2) year period will reimburse the City for the assistance received during the final year of employment through deductions from their final payroll check. If the final paycheck is insufficient, the employee will be responsible for making arrangements to reimburse the City or their separation papers shall be coded as not having left the City in good standing.

In the event the employee fails to reimburse the City, the services of an attorney required to collect such debt shall be sought and such attorney's fees and court costs shall be added to the amount owed the City.

#### Application Procedure

Employees wishing to participate in the Program shall submit to their Department Directors the attached Tuition Assistance Program Application Form along with the supporting documentation stated in Part I of the application no later than 30 days prior to the start of classes.

#### Coursework, Degree Review and Approval

The Department Director shall approve or disapprove the employee's request after verifying the employee's eligibility for participation in the Program.

#### Reimbursement

Employees seeking reimbursement shall submit their pre-approved application form along with the supporting documentation stated in Part I and II of the application, no later than 30 days from receipt of their grades. Departments shall submit all applications to the Human Resources Department with the supporting documentation for final review and reimbursement approval.

#### Penalty

Should an employee submit documentation which the employee knows is false or intentionally misleading in order to receive benefits to which the employee is not entitled, the employee shall be deemed ineligible to continue to participate in the Program and shall repay City of Miami Beach for any tuition assistance received while in the City's employ. The employee may be subject to disciplinary action, including, but not limited to, dismissal from the City service.

MIAMIBEACH CITYWIDE PROCEDURE	DATE ISSUED:	Page:	SEQUENCE
	MAY, 2015	4 of 4	NUMBER:
	DATE UPDATED:		HR.20.01
	DECEMBER, 2016		
SUBJECT:			
EMPLOYEE TUITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM			
RESPONSIBLE DEPARTMENT:			
HUMAN RESOURCES			

Prepared by:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Director, Human Resources Department

Reviewed by:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Internal Auditor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Assistant City Manager

Approved by:

\_\_\_\_\_  
City Manager

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**DRAFT**

# MIAMI BEACH

## Tuition Assistance Program Application Form

FOR HR USE ONLY:

### General Information

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Employed: \_\_\_\_\_ City ID #: \_\_\_\_\_

Department: \_\_\_\_\_ Classification: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Course Schedule Dates: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Educational Institution: \_\_\_\_\_

Educational Objectives ☐ Non Degree ☐ Undergraduate Degree ☐ Graduate Degree

Academic Degree ☐ Non Degree ☐ Associate's ☐ Bachelor's ☐ Master's

Major (Area of Concentration): \_\_\_\_\_

DO NOT WRITE IN SHADED AREAS

COURSE(S) REQUESTED	TOTAL CREDITS	ELIGIBLE Y/N	DATE GRADES RECEIVED	GRADE	AMOUNT	INITIAL FOR APPROVAL
1.						
2.						

State how coursework meets the objectives of the Tuition Assistance Program:

### Part I: Coursework, Degree Review and Approval

Department verification: ☐ Approved ☐ Denied, reason: \_\_\_\_\_

Documents provided: ☐ Tuition Assistance Application  
☐ Class Schedule  
☐ Catalog Description(s) for course(s) listed above

Department Director's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Part II: Reimbursement

Attach the following supporting documentation and submit to the Human Resources Department no later than 30 days after grades have been posted:

- ☐ Supporting documentation provided with Part I
- ☐ Course Registration Statement
- ☐ Receipt of Payment in full
- ☐ Grade(s) received for course(s) listed above

### Employee Signature

By signed below, I am affirming that I have read and agreed to comply with the requirements set forth in the Administrative Procedure No. HR20.1 - Employee Tuition Assistance Program.

Date \_\_\_\_\_

