

Contact: Kristin Bauer Davis

**UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA FACULTY RECRUITMENT PROGRAM**

**Action Requested:** Approve the proposed faculty tuition reimbursement program for the University of Northern Iowa as detailed in this memorandum and in Attachment A.

**Executive Summary:** The University of Northern Iowa (UNI) is proposing a faculty tuition reimbursement program, in an effort to recruit and retain top talent at UNI, to support the growth of faculty into terminal degrees, respective to the field, to serve UNI students at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Some academic programs and departments uniquely struggle to hire faculty with terminal and/or master's degrees. These programs and departments typically have applied areas where market demand often means that few people in the field attain the terminal degree and, in some cases, the master's degree. Academic programs and departments in universities similar to UNI often face similar challenges with such searches.

**FACULTY RECRUITMENT PROGRAM****Eligibility**

1. The participant must be a full-time (100% weekly FTE for a full academic year) appointee to a faculty line as described by the current faculty handbook.
2. This program is primarily designed to recruit and retain faculty in fields where there is a paucity of candidates with advanced degrees. Participants must be eligible and willing to pursue the terminal or other identified advanced degree to completion.
3. The degree must be in alignment with the participant's position at UNI. That is, UNI will only support the acquisition of degrees in programs that are viewed by accreditors as improving competencies in the discipline to be taught by the participant.
4. The participant must teach in a discipline that has faced distinct challenges in hiring qualified degree holders. See also item # 3 under "Implementation" below.
5. The participant must enroll in qualified institutions as noted below:
  - a. 1st Priority – Regents institutions (including UNI); institutions of higher education with a partnership agreement with Regents Institutions (see section 2.1(4.)(1.)) "Educational Tuition Assistance Principles" of the Board Policy Manual); or other accredited institutions in the State of Iowa.
  - b. 2nd Priority – Out-of-state United States accredited institutions with reputable online graduate programs, reviewed and approved by the cognizant college dean and Provost.

**Implementation**

1. One of two fundamental criteria must be met:
  - a. The department/program/discipline has a vacant line with an approved search underway; or
  - b. The department/program/discipline needs an existing faculty member to enhance credentials, primarily for reasons of accreditation at the disciplinary level.
2. The requesting department head must provide a justification of how the funded degree is critical to the success of the academic program. Fundamentally, the justification must focus on the advantage of having the same person teaching the same courses but with an advanced degree, much of which is paid for by university resources.
3. With the help of Human Resource Services, the requesting department shall provide a history of applicants from recent searches related to that academic program. Given the claim that candidates with the advanced degree are difficult to find, the department should be able to provide evidence of this through an examination of recent search pools.

4. The funding should not be considered primarily as an earned benefit or professional development on behalf of the employee. In this model, the primary consideration is the health, improvement and future of the academic program.
5. Pending availability of funds, the intent of this program is to fund the candidate through their requested degree. However, the candidate must make reasonable academic progress to complete the degree in a timely manner: for a master's, the degree must be completed within four (4) years. For a terminal degree, the degree must be completed within six (6) years. Funding beyond these time limits will not be available.
6. The funded faculty member must agree to the requirements of the program in writing. For every year of support, the funded faculty member must provide one year of service to UNI in addition to the year of service while support is provided.
  - a. For example, two years of tuition support requires two years of service to UNI after completion of the degree (or after stoppage point).
  - b. If the service requirement is not met (e.g., faculty member resigns or is terminated for cause), the faculty member must reimburse the University for the tuition support provided by the University. The reimbursement schedule shall be set at the time of departure from the University, but in no instance shall exceed three years.
  - c. If the appointment ends due to no fault of the faculty member (e.g., term not renewed, layoff or death), the faculty member is not responsible for any additional service or tuition pay back.
7. The tuition support may be approved annually as long as satisfactory progress is being made toward the completion of the degree. The faculty member who is participating in the program shall authorize the disclosure of their academic progress to the appropriate dean. The dean of the appropriate college will ensure a process for obtaining progress reports. Tuition support also shall be based on the financial situation of the university.

### **Funding**

1. A reimbursement of tuition plan for each selected faculty position under this program shall be established at the time of hire or at such other time as is appropriate. The selection of a faculty member to participate in this program shall be initiated by the appropriate department head or director, and is subject to review and approval of the appropriate dean and Provost.
2. Funding under this program shall only be available for the payment of tuition and associated fees. Funding amounts will vary.
3. Participants in the program should seek advice from their own tax professionals concerning the financial implications of accepting the tuition reimbursement. In addition, the letter of offer should state, "Per IRS requirements, 'If your employer pays more than \$5,250 for educational benefits for you during the year, you must generally pay tax on the amount over \$5,250. Your employer should include in your wages (Form W-2, box 1) the amount that you must include

in income.”(Please note, this statement and requirement might change in the future, depending on IRS rules and/or guidance, so please review and check each time it is used.)

4. Funding for the program shall be negotiated in advance of agreeing and signing a commitment.
  - a. Funding for program: Funding will be negotiated between the college dean and Provost's office, on a case by case basis.
  - b. Salary adjustment upon completion: upon completion of the degree, candidates will receive a salary adjustment established at the time of hire and as described in their letter of appointment, or as otherwise documented in writing at the time of the initiation by the college for the relevant faculty position. Support from the Provost's office shall be at least the established salary increase for the first year and then annually. Such a level of support provides budgetary stability for the Provost office's and the department/school's budget.