21.10 Tuition Assistance

The County will increase the maximum annual allowance payable under the Employee Tuition Assistance Program shall be $1730, to $1530 for FY-2008, to $1630 for FY-2009, and $1730 for FY-2010. The employee must remain employed for at least 2 years after completion of any course funded in whole or part by the County, or pay back the County a pro-rated portion of the funds received.

(a) The Employer may approve tuition assistance for unit member development related to the unit member's current job functions or career ladder in the same job series or profession.

(b) The Employer may approve tuition assistance for unit member who is working toward a degree in a field of study that will prepare him/her to make a career change to another position within the Montgomery County Government.

(c) Employee must receive approval from the Department Director prior to submitting tuition assistance request to the Office of Human Resources for review.

(d) Employer may approve tuition assistance towards education and training to obtain a professionally recognized certificate, or an accredited post secondary education degree.

(e) Colleges and Universities attended with tuition assistance funds must be accredited by a recognized accrediting agency.

(f) All other short term training programs must relate to the employee’s current job or career ladder in the same job series or job profession.

(g) The Employer may approve tuition assistance for tuition payments only. The Employer will not approve tuition assistance for examination fees and compulsory fees such as matriculation, registration, laboratory, and library fees.

(h) The Employer will not approve credit by examination courses (Courses in which credit is obtained solely by taking an examination).

(i) The Employer will not approve tuition assistance for books, supplies, and application fees, or extra fees such as late registration or library book returns, parking, travel, food, lodging, and other costs incidental to the credit courses.
(j) The Employer will not approve if tuition assistance benefit would duplicate benefits received for the same educational activity under other programs such as scholarships, veteran's benefits, etc. The Employer will continue the practice of not approving a tuition assistance benefit that would duplicate benefits received for the same educational activity (i.e. course) under other programs such as scholarships, veteran's benefits, grants, etc. The Employer will continue the practice of not approving a tuition assistance benefit when the employee is receiving tuition payment/reimbursement for the same educational activity under other programs such as scholarships, veteran's benefits, grants, etc...

(k) All classes approved for tuition assistance must be held in the United States.

(l) The Employer will not reimburse for courses which are primarily recreational, or utilize a specific faith-based method as a primary approach to problem solving or treatment.

(m) Tuition assistance is available on a first-come first-served basis until all authorized funding has been obligated.

(n) Employees receiving tuition assistance must attend the activities for which they are receiving tuition assistance during their off duty hours.

(o) An employee who received tuition assistance must complete the training with a passing grade, or the employee must reimburse the County for the amount of the County's tuition assistance. Final Grades or certificate of completion must be provided to OHR upon completion of the course.

(p) The tuition assistance does not have to be repaid if the employee dies or retires on a County disability retirement. The Employer may waive repayment of tuition assistance in other extenuating circumstances.

(q) An employee who is not approved for tuition assistance may file a grievance only if the denial by the Employer was arbitrary and capricious. Actions taken by the Employer to be in compliance with Section (m) above may not be grieved.

(r) Tuition assistance shall be suspended for FY 2013. The tuition assistance program shall be reinstated beginning in FY 2014. The amount and proportion of tuition assistance funding shall be a subject of the 2nd year reopener of this contract, effective July 1, 2013.