

## **UTAP – Unified Tuition Assistance Program: Proposal to Extend Faculty Tuition Assistance Programs Across Kansas Board of Regents Institutions**

Presented by the KBOR Council of Faculty Senate Presidents

**Introduction** The Kansas Board of Regents (KBOR) oversees six state universities: Emporia State University (ESU), Fort Hays State University (FHSU), Kansas State University (KSU), Pittsburg State University (PSU), Wichita State University (WSU), and the University of Kansas (KU) / KU Medical Center (KUMC). Each institution currently offers a tuition assistance program to their faculty and staff, providing opportunities for professional and academic development. However, these programs are inconsistent across the institutions. With the majority limiting eligibility to the courses and degree programs offered by the employing institution. This proposal seeks to extend tuition assistance eligibility to include courses and degree programs from any of the KBOR universities, fostering greater collaboration and maximizing the benefits of the tuition assistance program.

### **Rationale**

1. **Enhanced Educational Opportunities:** Expanding eligibility would allow faculty and staff to access a broader range of courses and degree programs, enabling them to pursue academic interests or professional development opportunities not offered at their home institution.
2. **Increased Collaboration and Knowledge Sharing:** Allowing faculty and staff to engage with peers across institutions would promote cross-university collaboration, strengthening the academic community within the KBOR system.
3. **Workforce Development:** Access to diverse educational offerings can help faculty and staff enhance their skills, contributing to more effective teaching, research, and administration across all institutions.
4. **Retention and Recruitment:** A more flexible tuition assistance program would serve as a significant incentive for attracting and retaining talented professionals within the KBOR system.
5. **Opportunity to Lead in Higher Education Innovation:** By adopting this policy, KBOR has the unique opportunity to set a national example in higher education. While many institutions and states offer inter-institutional tuition exchange programs for students, few have implemented such initiatives for faculty and staff. This would position Kansas as a leader in fostering professional development and

institutional collaboration, elevating the reputation of the KBOR system and its universities.

6. **Alignment with Broader Educational and Economic Goals:** This program supports KBOR's commitment to improving statewide educational outcomes and advancing economic development. By providing faculty and staff access to a wider range of academic programs, the initiative fosters continuous professional growth, leading to enhanced educational quality across institutions. Furthermore, a highly educated workforce is a critical driver of economic growth. Faculty and staff who develop new skills or earn advanced degrees can contribute more effectively to research, innovation, and student success, aligning with Kansas' economic goals of building a competitive and thriving workforce.
7. **Building on KBOR's State-Wide General Education Initiative:** The proposed tuition assistance program aligns with the principles of KBOR's state-wide general education initiative, which facilitates seamless credit transfer across Kansas public institutions. This initiative underscores KBOR's dedication to reducing barriers to education and enhancing academic mobility. Extending this philosophy to faculty and staff development ensures that KBOR continues to lead in creating equitable and innovative educational frameworks that benefit the entire academic community.

**Relevant Examples** Several other academic systems provide examples of collaborative tuition programs that support cross-institutional enrollment:

1. **Council of Independent Colleges Tuition Exchange Program (CIC-TEP):** This program connects over 440 member colleges and universities, offering tuition-free enrollment to full-time employees and their family members across participating institutions. CIC-TEP demonstrates how institutions can collaborate to provide expansive educational opportunities for their employees.<sup>1</sup>
2. **University of Missouri System:** The University of Missouri System enables eligible employees to receive a 75% tuition waiver on courses across any of its campuses. This system-wide benefit facilitates professional development and education for employees without being limited to their home institution.

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<sup>1</sup> Fourteen (14) participating institutions in the State of Kansas: Baker University (Baldwin City, KS), Benedictine College (Atchinson, KS), Bethany College (Lindsborg, KS), Bethel College (North Newton, KS), Friends University (Wichita, KS), Kansas Wesleyan University (Salina, KS), McPherson College (McPherson, KS), MidAmerica Nazarene University (Olathe, KS), Newman University (Wichita, KS), Ottawa University (Ottawa, KS), Southwestern College (Winfield, KS), Sterling College (Sterling, KS), Tabor College (Hillsboro, KS), University of Saint Mary (Leavenworth, KS)

3. **Big Ten Academic Alliance:** Some institutions within the Big Ten Academic Alliance provide tuition assistance programs for employees that include cross-institutional enrollment provisions. For instance, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln offers an Employee Scholarship Program, allowing employees to take courses at other campuses in the alliance under specific conditions.
4. **University of Kansas – Third Party Tuition Assistance:** This program allows employees to receive tuition assistance for courses at third-party institutions, contingent upon course completion and submission of required documentation. It demonstrates an effective framework for ensuring accountability and facilitating professional growth.

These examples highlight successful models of inter-institutional collaboration in tuition assistance, reinforcing the feasibility and potential benefits of a similar initiative within the KBOR system.

### **Proposed Policy Changes**

1. **Eligibility:** Faculty and staff employed by any of the six KBOR universities would be eligible to apply their tuition assistance benefits from their employing university to courses and degree programs offered at of the KBOR universities.
2. **Cost-Sharing Model:** Tuition costs for cross-university courses and degree programs could be shared between the employing institution and the institution offering the program, based on an agreed-upon framework.
3. **Administrative Collaboration:** Universities would collaborate to create a streamlined application and approval process, ensuring that faculty and staff can easily enroll in courses and degree programs across institutions.
4. **Credit Transfer and Program Compatibility:** Efforts would be made to ensure that credits earned under the expanded tuition assistance program are fully transferable and applicable to degree or certificate programs within the KBOR system.

### **Implementation Plan**

1. **Stakeholder Engagement:** Consult with university presidents, chief academic officers, faculty and staff representatives, academic units, and financial aid offices to refine the proposal and address potential concerns.
2. **Policy Framework Development:** Work with KBOR administrators to establish a formal policy and cost-sharing agreements between institutions.

3. **Pilot Program:** Launch a pilot program allowing cross-institution tuition assistance for a limited number of participants, gathering data to assess feasibility, participation rates, and outcomes.
4. **Full Implementation:** Based on pilot results, implement the expanded tuition assistance program across all six KBOR universities.

### **Anticipated Benefits**

- **Broader Access to Specialized Courses and Degree Programs:** Faculty and staff can benefit from unique programs and courses not available at their home institution.
- **Professional Growth:** Improved access to academic resources will enhance professional development opportunities.
- **Strengthened Institutional Collaboration:** Fostering inter-university connections will enrich the academic environment across the KBOR system.
- **Increased Equity:** Faculty and staff at smaller universities will have the same access to diverse educational opportunities as those at larger institutions.
- **National Recognition:** KBOR can establish itself as a trailblazer in faculty and staff development by implementing a forward-thinking and collaborative tuition assistance program.

**Conclusion** Expanding the tuition assistance program to encompass all degree programs at KBOR universities represents a forward-thinking approach to professional development, collaboration, and workforce enhancement. By leveraging the collective strengths of our state institutions, we can better support the academic and professional aspirations of faculty and staff while strengthening the KBOR system as a whole.

We respectfully request the support of the KBOR Council of Presidents & Council of Chief Academic Officers before submitting the proposal to the Kansas Board of Regents to review and approve, thus enhancing the tuition assistance program for the benefit of all faculty and staff within the KBOR system.

Links to tuition assistance program documents by university:

KU	<a href="https://policy.ku.edu/human-resources/tuition-assistance-policy">https://policy.ku.edu/human-resources/tuition-assistance-policy</a>
KSU	<a href="https://www.k-state.edu/policies/ppm/4800/4870.html">https://www.k-state.edu/policies/ppm/4800/4870.html</a>
WSU	<a href="https://www.wichita.edu/about/policy/ch_03/ch3_42.php">https://www.wichita.edu/about/policy/ch_03/ch3_42.php</a>
FHSU	<a href="https://www.fhsu.edu/policies/pdf/9-2024-tuition-assistance-policy.pdf">https://www.fhsu.edu/policies/pdf/9-2024-tuition-assistance-policy.pdf</a>
ESU	<a href="https://drive.google.com/file/d/1AoS0COn4tElgn9abWKZcA_zipOnq1_wt/view">https://drive.google.com/file/d/1AoS0COn4tElgn9abWKZcA_zipOnq1_wt/view</a>
PSU	<a href="https://www.pittstate.edu/hr/benefits/employee-tuition-assistance-program.html">https://www.pittstate.edu/hr/benefits/employee-tuition-assistance-program.html</a>  <a href="https://www.pittstate.edu/office/provost/files/documents/knea-documents/psu-knea-agreement-2023-2025-final.pdf">https://www.pittstate.edu/office/provost/files/documents/knea-documents/psu-knea-agreement-2023-2025-final.pdf</a>
KUMC	<a href="https://www.kumc.edu/academic-and-student-affairs/departments/registrars-office/tuition-and-fees/staff-and-staff-dependent-rates.html">https://www.kumc.edu/academic-and-student-affairs/departments/registrars-office/tuition-and-fees/staff-and-staff-dependent-rates.html</a>