LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND DEVELOPMENT

SECRETARY'S POLICY AND PROCEDURE MEMORANDUM (PPM) NO. 17

SUBJECT: Educational Leave/Tuition Reimbursement

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 14, 1995

INSTRUCTIONS: This memorandum supersedes all other memoranda and manuals.

1. EDUCATIONAL LEAVE

A. Civil Service Rule 11.24(a) allows the Appointing Authority to grant leave without pay to a permanent employee for the term of attendance at a school or educational facility. Rule 11.24(b) allows the Appointing Authority to grant leave with pay for up to 30 calendar days (i.e., 240 hours in one calendar year) if the course is pertinent to the employee's work in the Department. The 30 days may be spread throughout the year as classes are scheduled. The intent of Rule 11.24(b) is to permit a permanent employee to obtain formalized training which will materially assist the employee in conducting his/her work. Leave for a course that is only remotely related to the employee's work will not be approved. Therefore, it is the policy of the Department to approve leave for junior, senior or graduate-level college coursework at a Louisiana public or private university in a curriculum that is directly related to the employee's job. Consideration for granting educational leave for attendance at an out-of-state university will be given on a case-by-case basis. Additionally, consideration may be given to employees who are not seeking a degree, but who wish to improve their job performance by taking college courses that are specifically related to their jobs.

B. A permanent classified or unclassified employee who desires to take educational leave must submit a written request (Application and Contract form located on the intranet Human Resources Job Aids and Forms), proof of enrollment, and course description in advance to the Appointing Authority so that final approval will be received by the semester start date. (The employee must have permanent status at the time of application.) The Application and Contract form requires him/her to repay the value of educational leave received if he/she separates from the Department within a two-year period following course completion. This requirement to repay does not apply if the employee separates from the Department due to layoff, death, or mandatory transfer of agency. The Appointing Authority will carefully consider the job-relatedness of the request, and whether the section's/district's workload will permit the absence of the employee for the specified amount of time, before recommending the approval of any request. Employees are limited in taking educational leave to courses listed on the Application and Contract.

The Appointing Authority will also indicate if leave with pay (not to exceed 30 calendar days in one calendar year) or leave without pay is recommended. The employee's Application and Contract form will then be forwarded to the appropriate Assistant Secretary or Chief Engineer, for his/her action, with a full explanation of the reasons for the request and a recommendation by the Appointing Authority. The appropriate Assistant Secretary or Chief Engineer will indicate his/her recommendation and then forward the application to the Human Resources Section for further processing and final action by the Undersecretary. The Appointing Authority will be notified of the decision of the Undersecretary regarding the application and, if approved, must reserve the necessary funds for reimbursement in operating services.

C. Educational leave requests that have been submitted and approved by the Undersecretary must be coded with absence type code "LEJR" on the employee's timesheet. Attendance at all other training courses, such as management training, CPTP courses, skills training, etc., must be coded with attendance type code "ZTRN" on payroll timesheets.

D. Upon completion of the course, the employee will submit to the Appointing Authority (Section Head /District Engineer Administrator) documentation (i.e., grade notification) that he/she has satisfactorily completed the coursework. This documentation must be provided before any additional requests for educational leave can be approved.

2. TUITION REIMBURSEMENT

A. In addition to educational leave, the Department may reimburse employees for actual college tuition costs including, required fees, at accredited Louisiana public or private universities, upon approval of the Undersecretary and providing adequate funds are available. Out-of-state universities will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Consideration for reimbursement of tuition costs for online coursework will also be given on a case-by-case basis. The coursework eligible for tuition reimbursement must be directly related to the employee's job as indicated under educational leave. An employee may be reimbursed the actual tuition cost and required fees associated with the course. This is limited to nine credit hours per fiscal year (July – June), with a limit of one class per semester or quarter regardless of the semester or quarter duration, but can additionally include a required one credit hour lab in conjunction with the course. All accelerated coursework programs, including online courses, with periods shorter than a quarter are also limited to nine credit hours per fiscal year.

B. A permanent classified or unclassified employee who desires to apply for tuition reimbursement must submit a written request (Application and Contract form located on the intranet Human Resources Job Aids and Forms), a copy of that

semester's fee schedule, and the course description in advance to the Appointing Authority so that final approval will be received by the semester start date. The Application and Contract form requires him/her to repay the amount of tuition reimbursement received if he/she separates from the Department within a two-year period following course completion. This requirement to repay does not apply if the employee separates from the Department due to layoff, death, or mandatory transfer of agency. The Appointing Authority will determine if adequate funds are available for reimbursement. The Application and Contract form will then be forwarded to the appropriate Assistant Secretary or Chief Engineer for his/her action. The Assistant or Chief Engineer will indicate his/her recommendation then forward the application to the Human Resources Section for further processing and final action by the Undersecretary. The Appointing Authority will be notified of the decision of the Undersecretary regarding the application and, if approved, must reserve the necessary funds for reimbursement in operating services.

C. Upon completion of the course, the employee will submit proof of payment and a copy of his/her final grade to the Appointing Authority for processing. Acceptable grades include: "C" or better, "P" for pass/fail, or "S" for satisfactory/unsatisfactory for approved courses that use this grading scale. The Appointing Authority must submit proof of payment and grade notice, to the Human Resources Section along with a signed memorandum requesting payment. If the funds for the payment will come from a source other than the employee's default cost center in the Automated Financial System (AFS), the Appointing Authority must make a note of such in the memorandum.

## 3. ACCREDITATION

Any college hours or degree must be from a school accredited by a member of the Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions (C-RAC): the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools; the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools; the New England Association of Schools and Colleges; the Higher Learning Commission; the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities; the Western Association of Schools and Colleges; or the Council on Social Work Education.

## 4. MISCELLANEOUS

This policy does not apply to college courses that are required by DOTD. In those cases, the agency will initially pay all course-related fees and will not seek reimbursement of associated costs if the employee separates from the Department following course completion.

5. FURTHER INFORMATION

Any questions regarding this policy must be directed to the Human Resources Section.

Shawn D. Wilson, Ph.D.
Secretary