

**Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate  
Wounspe Wakantu Mazaska  
Unowicakiyapi  
Higher Education Program  
Policy & Procedure  
Manual**

Revised 9/6/17

Approved by SWO Tribal Council (10/11/17)

**P.O. Box 509  
Agency Village, SD 57262  
(605)742-0150  
(605)742-0140 Fax**

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## I. INTRODUCTION

On July 19, 2001 the Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate Tribal Council passed a motion authorizing the SWO Tribal Secretary to create a Higher Education Program (“Program”). Among others, the Tribal Council has established the program pursuant to its authority to promote public health, education, charity, and such other services as may contribute to the social advancement of the members of the Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate of the Lake Traverse Reservation (“Tribe”). SWO Revised Constitution and By-Laws, Article VII (1) (h). The Higher Education Program is operated in accordance to the Tribe’s General Welfare Policy. The Program’s establishment and management in furtherance to promote education is an inherent and sovereign power of the Tribe, implemented through the Tribe’s constitution and as a means of self-determination.

Program funding is provided to assist students in obtaining their educational goals. Statistically, Native American students’ enrolled at all Title IV U.S. Higher Education Institution during 2011-2012 undergraduate and graduate combined totaled 29,041,533 with 0.9% of the total were American Indian/Alaska Native and 53% were white. (NIEA.org, 2014)

Funding is provided to Tribal Members pursuant to the Tribe’s General Welfare Policy, as such educational assistance is provided on a non-tax basis pursuant to Tribal and IRS policy which allows the application of the General Welfare Exclusion to the Tribe’s programs that provide benefits to Tribal Members.

Program funding is provided to assist with tuition and living expenses upon pay or reimbursement in whole or in part. The Program encourages program participants to recognize that benefits pursuant to these policies may not cover 100% of expenses incurred by the student. Program funding is limited and strives to assist the highest number of students possible.

The Program does not directly work with colleges and universities; information requested is the responsibility of the student. Because the Program does not directly work with colleges and universities all funding is made payable to the student. Due to the particular needs of each individual student, program funding is provided as follows:

- Per credit hour – In order for the Program to provide benefits the Tribal Council has determined that assistance is provided upon semester completion per credit hour. Again, program participants are encouraged to recognize that education benefits may not cover 100% of all costs of tuition, living, and child-care expenses.
- Graduate Studies – The Tribal Council recognizes that in order to obtain a Graduate level degree, costs are significantly increased in addition to the inability to qualify for assistance that may be available to them as undergraduate students. Program participants who are seeking a Graduate level degree have shown their commitment to obtaining an advanced degree and are allowed an educational benefit at the commencement of their educational semester. Graduate program participants are also provided benefits at the completion of the semester due to increase costs of those students seeking an advanced degree.

## II. MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate Higher Education Program is to provide educational benefits to members of the Tribe, demonstration of cultural awareness that will encourage the Oyate to make post-secondary education a lifelong goal.

## III. VISION

To increase the post-secondary education participation and post-secondary graduation rates among the members of the Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate.

## IV. GOALS & OBJECTIVES

- Promote Cultural Awareness.
- Provide post-secondary benefits to pay or reimburse in whole or in part tuition costs and living expenses (both on and off-campus) to eligible enrolled members of the Tribe at the undergraduate and graduate level.
- Networking with Tribal education entities.
- Increase tribal member attendance in post-secondary education and degree completion
- Comply with all applicable policies and procedures.
- Identify and recommend scholarship opportunities.

## V. OFFICE AND CONTACT INFORMATION

Physical Address: 12554 BIA Hwy 711, Agency Village, SD

Mailing Address: Higher Education Program  
P.O. Box 509  
Agency Village, SD 57262

Telephone & Fax: (605) 698-742-0150 (t)  
(605) 742-0140 (f)

Office Hours: Monday-Friday, 8:00am to 4:30pm

## VI. CRITERIA FOR BENEFITS:

Students that meet the following criteria may submit application for Program funds. Program funds offered are NOT RETROACTIVE. Submissions for funding are upon completion of each semester as outlined section VII below.

To qualify for the Higher Education funds, the following criteria must be met and documented.

- A. Applicants must be enrolled members of the Tribe and attending an accredited post-secondary school (e.g. Accredited by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Schools and Colleges).
- B. The student must pass the course with a grade of “C” or better to receive educational benefits.
- C. Submitted grades **MUST** have the students’ name and student ID number printed on them. **No Final grades with hand written marks will be accepted.** Grade statements printed from the internet are subject to administrative approval and verification from the accredited post-secondary school may be requested before payment is issued.
- D. A budget form must be completed and submitted.
- E. Course registration for current semester.

## VII. BENEFIT AMOUNTS:

Program funds allow students the following: 1) Undergraduate, Graduate/Professional students to submit grade statements to the Higher Education Program upon successful completion of a post-secondary semester for each per-credit hour earned; 2) Graduate/Professional student educational benefits for the fall and spring semester only and upon successful completion of a post-secondary semester per-credit hour earned 3) A Diploma Benefit upon graduation of a post-secondary institution; and 4) a Testing/Licensing reimbursement.

- A. Undergraduate Students:
  - 1. Benefit amounts are based upon credit hours that are completed and passed during the current semester with a grade of “C” or better.
  - 2. Courses with grades of “D”, “F”, “I”, and “W” will not be considered, however if a student retakes the course and receives a “C” or better they will receive the benefit amount. Remedial courses are acceptable and the benefit amount will be based on credits earned.

3. Associate level and Undergraduates will receive \$56.00 per credit hour for classes, which meet the criteria above.
4. Upon graduation, Undergraduate level students may receive a diploma benefit based on degree earned following documentation submitted to the Higher Education Program. Associates will receive \$250.00, Bachelor will receive \$500.00 and Certificates will receive \$125.00 to reimburse the student for all graduation and outstanding college costs. This benefit is provided in order for students to receive their diploma and official transcripts, colleges and universities require that student costs are paid in full prior to release of transcripts and diploma certificates.

B. Graduate/Professional Students:

1. Benefit amounts are based upon credit hours that are completed and passed during the current semester with a grade of “C” or better.
2. Courses with grades of “D”, “F”, “I”, and “W” will not be considered, however if a student retakes the course and receives a “C” or better they will receive the benefit amount. Remedial courses are acceptable and the benefit amount will be based on credits earned.
3. Graduate/Professional students will receive \$75.00 per credit hours, students taking undergraduate courses will receive the program funding amount of \$56.00 for undergraduate courses.
4. Graduate/Professional Educational Benefits are as follows:
  - a. Master’s level students will receive \$1,500.00 per semester.
  - b. Doctoral and Professional level students will receive \$2,500.00 per semester.
  - c. Specialized post-master certificates will receive \$1,500 per semester.
5. Upon graduation, Graduate/Professional level students may receive a diploma benefit amount based on degree earned following documentation submitted to the Higher Education Program. A master degree will receive \$2,000.00, a Doctorate degree will receive \$2,500.00 and a Specialized Certificate will receive \$1,000. In order for students to receive their diploma and official transcripts, colleges and universities require that student costs are paid in full prior to release of transcripts and diploma certificates.

The Program recognizes that Masters and Doctorate level degrees are significant in costs graduate level students have shown their commitment to

obtaining an advanced degree and are allowed this educational benefit based on the conferred degree and date of diploma and official transcripts.

C. Additional Benefits:

1. The program will assist college students with 30% of their programmatic costs not to exceed \$1000 (i.e. educational opportunities such as study abroad, pre-law institute and/or opportunities given while working toward degree completion.)
2. Students taking pre-professional, proficiency, or licensing tests, may be reimbursed up to \$100.00 for undergraduates, and up to \$200.00 for graduates, provided they show proof of applying for, and denial of any offered fee waivers, and/ or proof of payment for the test, and passing grades for **ALL SECTIONS** of the test.
3. Any additional benefit amounts (i.e. reimbursements for test and certification, programmatic costs) will only be processed when accompanied by the necessary information.

VIII. APPLICATION PROCESS:

- A. Copies are made of all information submitted. A file is created for new students and/or updated for returning students.
- B. The Program Director will have up to 30 days after submission of application to send a correspondence to the applicant.
- C. Information regarding a student file will only be accessible to the student/applicant unless a release of information is signed and provided by the student, which consents the requesting agency information from a student file.
- D. In the event a student does not submit grades for more than two consecutive semesters, this does not include the summer semester the student must complete a new application form for the Higher Education Program.

IX. COMPLETED FORMS:

- A. Upon receipt of all required documents, the Program Director will comply with the tribe's payment process.
- B. Benefit amounts are recorded and updated.

- C. Individual Contact Forms will be included in student's file by the Higher Education Program Director as needed.

X. CHECK DOCUMENTATION:

- A. When benefit payments are prepared, a copy will have made and placed in the individual student's file.
- B. The student must sign and date the copy of the benefit amount before receiving his/her check.
- C. If the student needs someone else to pick up their check, the student must verify this by both calling the Program Director and submitting, in writing, authorization.
- D. FUNDING DISTRIBUTION MAY TAKE UP TO 1-9 6 DAYS.

XI. STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES:

- A. Students are responsible for notifying the Higher Education Program Office and the SWO Finance Department for any changes to their address or phone number that may occur.
- B. If more documentation is needed for student benefits it is the student's responsibility to contact the college registrar's office and submit to the Higher Education Program Office.
- C. Transferring students must provide an admissions/acceptance letter into the new college/university.

XII. DEADLINES DATES:

The following dates are due dates for students to submit all required documentation.

A. Grades:

1. **February 28**-courses taken August/September through December
2. **July 31**-courses taken January through May
3. **September 15**- courses taken June through August

B. On-Line &Quarter System Courses:

Four (4) weeks of issuance of grades. (Six (6) quarters will be allowed per budgeting year)



C. Summer semester benefits will be given IF the funding is available. Students need to contact the Higher Education Program to inquire on summer semester funding.

D. Graduate Level Educational Benefits:

1. **November 1**-fall
2. **March 1**-spring

E. Diploma Benefits:

1. **May 31**-fall
2. **August 31**-spring
3. **September 15**-summer

F. Military Deployment:

Students who have been deployed are able to submit their grades upon return, provided they submit documentation of their orders. Circumstances for deadline extensions are subject to change upon the discretion of the administration.

G. UNDERGRADUATE LEVEL:

Students who are enrolled in two (2) or four (4) year degree programs; this also includes students enrolled in degree programs earning a certificate.

Eligibility Requirements:

- a. Higher Education Application
- b. SWO Enrollment Verification
- c. School Acceptance Letter
- d. Budget Form
- e. W-9 Form
- f. Final grade report

H. GRADUATE/POST-GRADUATE LEVEL:

A student who is currently enrolled in the Masters, Professional or Doctorate Degree Programs

Eligibility Requirements:

- a. Application
- b. SWO enrollment verification
- c. Copy of Approved Course Plan must be submitted.
- d. Graduate Program Acceptance Letter
- e. Validated registration schedule for current semester
- f. Budget Form
- g. W-9 Form

If the Thesis or Dissertation is the only remaining course, the student will ~~not~~ be eligible to receive the educational benefit amount at the beginning of the fall and spring semester until the maximum credit hours have been awarded. (e.g. if the thesis requires 6 credit hours the program will award two semesters). To be eligible for the following semester benefits, students must provide proof of successful completion of courses taken the previous semester (e.g. if you registered for courses in the fall semester and withdrew/failed you would not be eligible for the spring semester educational benefit.)

I. DIPLOMA BENEFIT:

Degree earned when the student fulfills the required coursework.

Eligibility Requirements:

- a. Application
- b. Copy of Signed Diploma
- c. Final Transcripts
- d. W-9 Form

In the event of a deadline date in which the student has not received the diploma due to unforeseen circumstances the student may submit documentation from the registrar stating when the diploma will be available to the student. (e.g. outstanding debt)

J. ON-LINE DEGREE PROGRAMS:

College courses offered thru internet schools, online courses are considered quarter terms rather than semester terms. On-line schools must be accredited thru one of the national accreditation agencies.

Quarter terms are defined as two (2) quarters in each semester term with coursework completion in five to 16 weeks. Grade benefit amounts will be based on level of studies. (Reference to section VII Benefit Amounts)

Eligibility Requirements:

- a. Application
- b. SWO Enrollment Verification
- c. Letter of Acceptance

- d. Budget Form
- e. W-9 Form

K. SPECIALIZED DEGREE PROGRAMS:

Students who are enrolled in a post-graduate program with a specific area of study with an average completion of one year.

Eligibility Requirements:

- h. Application
- i. SWO enrollment verification
- j. Copy of Approved Course Plan must be submitted.
- k. Graduate Program Acceptance Letter
- l. Validated registration schedule for current semester
- m. Budget Form
- n. W-9 Form