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AGENDA REPORT

TO: DEANNA J. SANTANA
CITY ADMINISTRATOR

FROM: Jim Reese

SUBJECT: Supplemental Report - City Employee Access to University Now
DATE: May 21, 2013

City Administrator
Approval

Scott P. Johnson

Date

5/23/13

COUNCIL DISTRICT: Life Enrichment

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the City Council accept this informational report regarding the City extending educational opportunities to City employees through programs like UniversityNow's College Works Scholarship Program.

REASON FOR SUPPLEMENTAL REPORT

At the May 14, 2013 Life Enrichment Committee meeting, staff was directed to provide additional information regarding the efforts that have been made to make information available regarding University Now and its College Works Scholarship Program.

As of the writing of this report, a letter of agreement has been developed and is currently under review by the City Attorney's Office. Upon completion of that review, the agreement will be executed and announcements will be issued promoting UniversityNow's Patten University degree programs, and information regarding the College Works Scholarship Program will be distributed.

A sample of the employee announcement is provided as Attachment A. It is expected that this announcement will be distributed beginning the week of June 3, 2013. Subsequent communications will be issued via email and OakNetNews announcing the College Works Scholarship Program opportunity during the period the incentive is available to employees. Further, the City will facilitate access to the City employees through mutually agreeable events, such as information tables, lunch-n-learn events, faculty colloquiums, or webinars on mutually agreed topics, and other events as the parties may agree. This employee access will continue beyond the scholarship availability period, which will end in mid-August. Dates for these subsequent events have not been finalized.

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Staff will continue to work with uNow and Patten University to determine whether additional incentive periods, utilizing the College Works Scholarship Program, can be made available to City employees.

For questions regarding this report, please contact Deborah Grant, Risk Manager at (510) 238-7165.

Respectfully submitted,



JIM REESE

Interim Director, Department of Human Resource
Management & Information Technology

Prepared by:
Deborah Grant, Risk Manager
DHRM, Risk & Benefits Unit

Attachments:

A – Sample uNow College Works Scholarship Program Announcement

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ATTACHMENT A
SAMPLE ANNOUNCEMENT
University Now College Works Scholarship Program

Dear City of Oakland Employees,

We are pleased to announce that the City of Oakland has entered into an extraordinary partnership with UniversityNow and Patten University to offer employees and their family members the opportunity to earn a regionally accredited college degree at little to no cost!

How does it work for City of Oakland Employees? UniversityNow is limiting the cost of tuition at its universities to the amount of the City's tuition reimbursement (TR). The combination of your TR benefit and the College Works Scholarship potentially covers the entire cost of earning an undergraduate degree, since tuition includes all books and fees.

Enrollment starts on *[insert date]* and ends on *[insert date]*. This offer is valid as long as a student remains in good academic standing. (Please note that interested employees must obtain written approval from their department director to be eligible for reimbursement under Administrative Instruction 552.)

How does it work for City employees who do not have tuition assistance? For City employees who do not qualify for tuition reimbursement, UniversityNow will limit the annual cost of courses and books to \$1500 per year each year as long as the student remains in good academic standing, if the employee enrolls during the initial incentive period. *After the incentive period ends, annual cost of courses and books will be \$3,948.*

How does it work for City employees' family members? We are extending benefits to immediate family members of Oakland City employees, who will be eligible for a discount that limits their annual cost of courses and books to \$3,300 per year if they enroll during the initial incentive period.

How does the "Refer a Friend" Program work? If you refer someone who enrolls at Patten University, you will receive a \$100 gift certificate for each person who enrolls for at least a month and remains in good academic standing, and your friend will receive \$100 off of their tuition. To refer a friend, visit this website, and fill it out: <http://patten.edu/refer>.

What is UniversityNow? UniversityNow is a social venture founded on the belief that cost should not be a barrier to obtaining a quality higher education, and that students should be able to earn a quality college education without taking on student loan debt. UniversityNow launched the **College Works Scholarship Program** to make this possible for employees who work in UniversityNow partner cities or organizations. This program is available to those who would like to complete their Associate or Bachelor's degree from one of UniversityNow's two accredited universities: Patten University online and on-campus, and New Charter University online.

This is an exciting opportunity for you to further your education and advance your career, as well

as help a family member or friend complete their degrees, without the need to take on student loan debt! See this article from *Fast Company*, *Co.Exist*, "How to Get a College Degree For Free": <http://bit.ly/WbAq86>, as well as the following article from *Inside Higher Ed*, "Low Cost Option for Working Adults," for more details about the broader, city-wide implications of this initiative: <http://bit.ly/ihe-cw>.

Interested employees can visit **[insert link]** to schedule learn more.