

QUALITY OF LIFE OPPORTUNITIES

PROVIDING A PATHWAY TO EDUCATION

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Question

How can UCF be innovative in broadening the educational opportunities for advancement for those employees who wish to transform their lives but do not meet the criteria for the state Tuition Waiver Program?

UCF Overview

The phrase “Scale x Excellence = Impact,” has become a UCF institutional mantra whereby UCF employees strive daily to increase both scale and excellence in every aspect of their daily work to create impact. Moreover, the Strategic Plan’s, Impact Statement reinforces the power of this formula stating:

“ We use the power of scale and the pursuit of excellence to solve tomorrow’s challenges and to make a better future for our students and society. Through learning, discovery, and partnerships, we transform lives and livelihoods.” (UCF Strategic Plan 2016)

Since it’s inception in 1963, UCF has grown exponentially. It now serves over 66,000 students, employs over 12,000 personnel and is one of the largest universities in the country.

Shifting the Focus

While the collective focus of UCF is primarily towards its students and community partners UCF employees are critical to the mission of the university. Accordingly, the proposed project, focuses on supporting UCF’s employees. More specifically the focus will be on the University Support Personnel System (USPS) employees (n=1,622).

The proposed project suggests that in providing a more diverse pathway to education, that the quality of life for employees, may be increased opportunities. This, in turn, will create a more enriched and engaged workforce.

Education creates many opportunities including the possibility of wage security, promotional opportunities, and better living standards. Additionally education provides a sense of pride and accomplishment.

Within UCF there are a number of employees who might like to attain a degree or further their professional education, but they see further education as being unattainable.

Why?

Perhaps they may not have a High School Diploma; they may not have the GPA, SAT scores, or the level of credentials various UCF programs require; or they may experience a language barrier.

Whatever the obstacle, innovative solutions should be enacted to further promote employee life well-being.

Job Classifications and Salaries

USPS Job Classifications and Educational Requirements

To provide context to the idea of broadening the pathway to education for employees it is necessary to have an overview of the educational requirements for USPS positions. Of the 240 USPS staff classification titles noted on UCF's Human Resources (HR) website, the vast majority, 195 (81.25%), require a minimum combination of high school diploma and work experience, or high school diploma and a certification.

Additionally, 8 (3.33%) job codes have a minimum requirement of 9th grade in addition to a combination of experience or certification while the remaining 37 (15.42%) require an Associate's degree or higher, licensure, certification, or academy training

USPS Salaries

Each staff classification has a salary range to determine the starting salary of employees. As a result, personnel within the same job code may see differences in their base salaries.

A few determining factors for such variations may include prior experience and education, longevity at UCF, special pay increases, and employing unit budgets. According to HR in December 2017, USPS salaries ranged from \$22,769 – \$92,865.

Income is an integral part of planning an educational journey therefore this project will focus on those employees earning \$35,000 or less. Data provided by HR creates a snapshot by which to view salary increments and ethnicity. Of the 1622 USPS employees, this group represents 825 (50.8%) employees and in addition, represents the widest range of ethnic diversity.

# of Employees	Salary Range	Average Salary	ETHNICITY						
			Am. Indian	Asian	Black	Hawaiian/Pacific Is.	Hispanic	Multi-Racial	White
85	\$22,769 - \$25,000	\$23,971.54	0	6	19	2	35	1	22
351	\$25,025 - \$30,000	\$27,140.39	1	22	54	2	168	2	102
389	\$30,006 - \$35,000	\$32,606.84	1	21	55	2	112	3	195

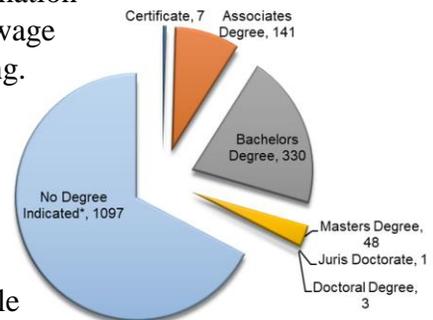
Figure 1: Salary Data as reported by UCF Human Resources for December 2017

Improving the Quality of Life through Educational Opportunities

As employees of an institution of higher learning it stands to reason we often look at education in terms of academic degrees. However, education need not be viewed through such a narrow lens. Instead it might be viewed in a broader perspective so as to meet the employees' needs across multiple spectrums.

What does that mean? How do we facilitate changes and what tools are currently available?

HR has identified the following educational information related to the 1622 USPS employees. As with the wage data, education qualifications are also wide-ranging. The largest group, 1,097 (67.63%) of USPS Employees are reflected in the category of "No Degree Indicated."



*According to HR this category represents multiple educational levels as employees in this range did not disclose their education at the time of employment or subsequently. Unfortunately this data cannot be separated further making it extremely difficult to determine and identify the number of employees who may need additional educational support or innovative programs.

Tuition Support at UCF

UCF supports its employees in attaining a degree through its Tuition Waiver Program. This program was first introduced at UCF in 1981 and is a benefit available to all qualified UCF employees, spouses or dependents. The tuition waiver provides up to 6 credit hours of tuition for eligible coursework to be taken at UCF. (<https://hr.ucf.edu/current-employees/tuition-waiver-program/>)

According to the Institutional Knowledge Management division during the 2016-2017 academic year, a total of 468 UCF faculty and staff registered for classes using the tuition waiver system. Of that number 193 were USPS employees. It should be noted: this data indicates unduplicated numbers, meaning the employee was counted once during the academic year and not each semester they registered.

For those UCF employees who qualify to access the Tuition Waiver Program it provides a wonderful opportunity to continue with educational and professional development. However, there is no provision within this program to assist employees who do not meet the minimum academic admissions to UCF programs.

In addition, to the Tuition Waiver, the USPS Staff Council provides a \$350 tuition scholarship, twice a year (one employee per semester) towards tuition at an educational institution. The scholarship requires the employee to submit a short essay. USPS Staff Council decides upon the awardee.

What is Being Done Elsewhere?

University System of Georgia

- Tuition Assistance Program – employees may utilize at any institutions within the USG
- 9 credit hours per semester

University of Chicago

- 50% tuition waiver for classes at institution
- 75% tuition reimbursement for classes outside institution – Max. \$2000 per year

Santa Fe College–UF Agreement

- 900 credits may be used by SFC employees at UF
- SFC- tuition reimburse for classes at other institutions, \$175 per credit hr. up to 6 credits.
- UF employees may take waivers at SFC

University of Washington

- Tuition exemption for 6 credit hours per term
- Opportunity available to take courses at other institutions with permission

Consortium of Universities of the Washington Metropolitan Area

- Consortium cross registration
- No compete clause in place

Rethinking Opportunity and Removing Barriers

To create opportunities and pathways for USPS employees to begin or continue their education both academically and professionally, UCF must be innovative and creative in its thinking. Concepts to revision educational access and professional advancement:

GED Classes

These classes will be taught by professors, including those who are retired, or other qualified individuals who wish to volunteer their time to strengthening and promoting the UCF employee community. As a result of this program, several obstacles to education will be overcome. Towards this end the following is proposed:

Removing Barriers:

- a. Provide employees an opportunity attend GED classes during working hours – similar to professional development when attending trainings provided by HR, F&A or programs such as the Leadership Empowerment Program. This would ensure employees are not disadvantaged if they are working two jobs or have other time barriers;
- b. Work with supervisors to ensure shifts are covered and employees are not discouraged from attending;
- c. Classes taught in English or Spanish – depending on the need of the cohort.

Tuition for Employees to Attend State College for Their First Associate's Degree

Prior to enrolling in UCF, employees might want to complete an Associate's degree at a State College. This might be especially relevant for those who fall short of UCF's admission requirements. Towards this end the following is proposed:

Removing Barriers:

- a. Initiate a tuition reimbursement plan for up to six credit hours per semester for employees who are seeking their first Associates Degree at regional state colleges;
- b. Initiate a consortium between UCF and state colleges who are already partners in education with UCF Connect. Further developing and strengthening relationships between institutions.

Reimbursement for Continuing Education and Advanced Certificates for UCF Personnel in Construction, Mechanical and General Industry Areas

Provide these employees with the tools to grow their skill set, become more accomplished and proficient in their jobs, and be cross changed. Towards this end the following is proposed:

Removing Barriers:

- a. Initiate a reimbursement plan for employees who successfully complete a continuing education or certificate course specifically related to their field of work;
- b. Due to the cost of some certificates, where it is determined a financial hardship exists, the university would initiate a waiver whereby the employee pays a percentage of the coursework upfront and the university assists with the remaining cost.

Who Benefits?

UCF has the extraordinary opportunity to **transform lives and livelihoods** simply by increasing the **scale** by which employees have access to **excellence** in educational and training opportunities. Solving **challenges** and creating additional pathways for employees to be successful in their personal and professional lives creates an atmosphere of **partnership** and community, all of which are ideals UCF strongly values.

This is bold,

This is transformational,

This is innovative,

This is the Knight's way...

CHARGE ON!