



TEXAS STATE TECHNICAL COLLEGE
HARLINGEN, TEXAS

FACULTY AND STAFF HANDBOOK

The Faculty/Staff Handbook provides basic information regarding the role and scope of TSTC Harlingen as well as the policies which define the responsibilities of employer and employee. Additionally, the benefits which accrue to employees are described in this publication with cited references for more detailed information.

2013 - 2014

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear TSTC Family,

Because of your efforts and dedication, Texas State Technical College Harlingen is a leader in higher education in our great state. I am proud and excited to see the ongoing commitment of our employees to the success of every student we serve. Extending beyond our campus, we share a dedication to improve quality of life for the region's residents and companies through public service and community involvement. We are committed to excellence in all facets of education- leadership, technology, instruction, facilities, partnerships, and enrichment activities- in everything we do.

I encourage you to make use of what TSTC has to offer, such as the Dr. J. Gilbert Leal Learning Resource Center, the Wellness & Sports Center, health and fitness workshops, and training and education opportunities. The Human Resources Office regularly distributes important information about these choices, and its staff provides fast, courteous answers for any questions. As an employee of TSTC, your personal and professional growth is important for the success of the organization.

For more than 40 years TSTC has been changing lives in the Rio Grande Valley and you have a vital role in our success. While at TSTC, every interaction you have with students, other TSTC employees, and the community is an opportunity to make a difference, and I'm confident that we can continue to make a positive impact together. Thank-you for your dedication, and I look forward to a bright future with you at TSTC.

Again welcome!

Dr. Cesar Maldonado, P.E.

President



INTRODUCTION

The Faculty/Staff Handbook provides basic information regarding the role and scope of TSTC Harlingen as well as the policies which define the responsibilities of employer and employee. Additionally, the benefits which accrue to employees are described in this publication with cited references for more detailed information.

However, the information in the Handbook should not be construed to form a contractual agreement between the college and the employee.

While the information in the Handbook is current at the time of publication, it should be recognized that policies and regulations will change from time to time as required and/or authorized by the Legislature of the State of Texas, the Board of Regents of the Texas State Technical College System, or the Administrators of Texas State Technical College System or Texas State Technical College Harlingen. The Handbook should be considered as a guide to the college concerning organization, employee obligations and benefits, and services available. It is not intended to be a formal statement of college policies, procedures or regulations, nor does it supplement, amend or supersede any official policy or regulation printed in one of the following references:

- College Operating Procedure (COP) Manual
- System Operating Standards (SOS) Manual
- TSTC Compensation Manual
- General Appropriations Act
- State Attorney General Opinions
- State Auditor Rulings

In addition, College Operating Procedures and System Operating Standards are available on the TSTC Harlingen portal at <https://portal.tstc.edu>. After logging in, click on Employee Services, Human Resources Harlingen, then go to Quick Links.

The State of Texas and TSTC Harlingen are employment-at-will employers. There is nothing in this document which negates the employment-at-will status or implies any contractual agreement between the employee and the college. No supervisor, manager, or Vice-President has the authority to enter into any agreement with an employee which in any way alters the employment-at-will relationship.

1. MISSION

TSTC's legislated purpose or mission is described in the Texas Education Code Section 135.01:

- The Texas State Technical College System is a co-educational two-year institution of higher education offering courses of study in technical-vocational education for which there is a demand within the state of Texas.

- The Texas State Technical College System shall contribute to the educational and economic development of the State of Texas by offering occupationally-oriented programs with supporting academic coursework, emphasizing highly specialized advanced and emerging technical and vocational areas for certificates or associate degrees. The Texas State Technical College System is authorized to serve the State of Texas through excellence in instruction, public service, faculty and manpower research and economic development. The system's economic development efforts to improve the competitiveness of Texas business and industry include exemplary centers of excellence in technical program clusters on the system's campuses and support of educational research commercialization initiatives. Through close collaboration with business, industry, governmental agencies and communities, including public and private secondary and postsecondary educational institutions, the system shall facilitate and deliver an articulated and responsive technical education system.
- In developing and offering highly specialized technical programs with related supportive coursework, primary consideration shall be placed on industrial and technological manpower needs of the state. The emphasis of each Texas State Technical College System campus shall be on advanced or emerging technical programs not commonly offered by public junior colleges.

2. Expanded Statement of Purpose

TSTC Harlingen is a unique college which offers technical and academic programs and courses in statewide demand for the 21st century while emphasizing, in particular, the needs of Texas. TSTC Harlingen provides opportunities for both immediate employment and seamless transfer of credits to other colleges and universities. Awards include Associate of Science (AS) and Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degrees, technical Certificates of Completion, as well as institutional recognition for completion of the General Education Core and workforce certificates.

TSTC Harlingen promotes economic development by making higher education affordable, readily accessible, and personal through diverse technical programs and rigorous curriculum offerings. TSTC Harlingen offers studies through multiple instructional delivery systems and actively promotes involvement of high school and non-traditional students in its programs. The needs of stakeholders are met through innovative approaches to teaching and student learning as well as appropriate advisement into educational programs that lead to successful career placement.

TSTC Harlingen is committed to preparing students for the 21st century by providing holistic personal and professional development through a combination of technical and academic delivery, relevant student services, talent development organizations, and other career building activities. TSTC Harlingen uses institution-wide coordinated planning to assure program vitality for today's industrial and academic demands and tomorrow's challenges.

3. PHILOSOPHY

Texas State Technical College Harlingen embraces the philosophy that technical education is the key to success in life for many students. Technical education emphasizes performance, knowledge, and the development of occupational skills, and de-emphasizes the teaching of generalities and abstractions. It utilizes the student's personal occupational interests to teach the concepts and ideas that contribute directly to success in achieving a productive and satisfying life, with enhanced earning ability. Relevance of all instruction to occupational requirements and interests is the essential and predominant theme.

Occupational interests vary with each individual. They vary not only across career fields but also through competency levels within careers. Hence, TSTC's institutional philosophy embraces the principle that educational programs must not only offer choices in careers but should also provide opportunities for students to progress to higher levels within their career fields.

Thus, TSTC is committed to welcoming any man or woman at his/her level of experience, skill, ability, and past learning accomplishments and to provide educational opportunities which, combined with individual motivation and abilities, will enable advancement to the highest level of professional proficiency.

Proficiency levels are personal goals which may be adjusted as a student experiences the satisfaction of educational and professional accomplishment and is thus motivated to seek higher goals. TSTC supports the student in that quest and believes that there must be no upper limit on any student who chooses to pursue his or her life's objectives through education.

4. EQUAL EMPLOYMENT/AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

Equal opportunity shall be afforded within the Texas State Technical College System to all employees and applicants for admission or employment regardless of race, color, gender, religion, national origin, age, or disability. TSTC will make reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities.

Refer to [SOS HR.2.5.1 Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action](#).

5. HISTORY

Texas State Technical College (TSTC) was established in 1965 as the James Connally Technical Institute (JCTI) of Texas A & M University to meet the state's evolving workforce needs. This College was located in Central Texas at the former James Connally Air Force Base in Waco. At the time, Governor John Connally predicted that it would be "the most sophisticated technical-vocational institute in the country."

In 1967, JCTI expanded to include a South Texas campus in Harlingen. In 1969, the Colleges separated from Texas A&M University and became an independent state system, with the name Texas State Technical Institute (TSTI) and its own Board of Regents. Additional campuses were created in 1970 in Amarillo in the Panhandle of Texas and in Sweetwater in West Texas. As the demand for quality technical education continued to grow, extension centers were established in McAllen (1983), Abilene (1985), Breckenridge (1989), Brownwood (1991), Marshall (1991), Ingleside (2011), and Red Oak (2013). In 1991, TSTI was renamed Texas State Technical College (TSTC). In 1999, the extension center in Marshall became an independent college of the system.

Today, the Texas State Technical College System includes four colleges: TSTC Harlingen, TSTC Marshall, TSTC Waco, and TSTC West Texas with extensions in Abilene, Breckenridge, Brownwood, Sweetwater, Ingleside, and Red Oak. More than 10,000 students attend TSTC in credit programs alone.

TSTC is the only state-supported technical college system in Texas. With a statewide role and mission, TSTC is efficiently and effectively helping Texas meet the high-tech challenges of today's global economy in partnership with business and industry, government agencies, and other educational institutions. TSTC has high graduation rates, exceptional graduate success rates, and an outstanding record in graduating individuals from diverse cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Among TSTC's strengths are its emphasis on "learning by thinking and doing," strong relationships with business and industry, state-of-the-art laboratories, residential campuses, and a student-centered philosophy:

"We believe in people. We believe people desire to be responsible and productive citizens. We believe technology is a force to be explored and channeled by people in a productive and responsible manner for the benefit of all humankind. Therefore, we believe all people should be provided with the educational opportunity to learn the skills necessary to perform meaningful work and, thereby, pursue their goals as responsible citizens contributing to the welfare and success of their families, communities, state, nation, and world."

Location

TSTC Harlingen is located in semi-tropical Cameron County, the southernmost county in Texas. The college serves a population of more than 650,000 in the immediate commuting area of South Texas. This location also attracts students from other Texas cities and northern Mexico.

Within 45 minutes of Harlingen is South Padre Island, recognized for its excellent recreational facilities. Also nearby are the city of Brownsville and the international border with Mexico.

The address is:

TSTC Harlingen
1902 N. Loop 499
Harlingen, Texas 78550
(956) 364-4000

Buildings and Facilities

TSTC Harlingen is a modern 167.28-acre college consisting of over 48 instructional facilities designed for learning. Recent college additions have included the University Center completed in Summer 2011 and the Engineering Technology Building completed in December of 2013.

6. COMMUNITY LIFE

While associated with TSTC Harlingen, you are encouraged to take an active part in the affairs of your home community. By your participation in local affairs, you will make your community proud to have TSTC Harlingen employees contributing to community development.

Many opportunities are afforded employees to participate in civic activities and projects in Harlingen and the surrounding areas.

Employees should be cautious to ensure that actions or remarks made by or attributed to them are not taken as an official expression of Texas State Technical College Harlingen. This does not preclude employees from public disclosure of their professional position with the college when speaking on issues directly related to their field of technical expertise at TSTC.

Faculty and Staff members are urged to accept invitations for personal appearances to inform the public about Texas State Technical College Harlingen and what it has to offer. Recruiting visits and public appearances should be coordinated through the Student Recruitment Office or by emailing college.information@harlingen.tstc.edu

7. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

7.1 Board of Regents

The governing body of the TSTC System is the Board of Regents, appointed by the Governor of the State of Texas. It ensures that the college is properly administered, that the college achieves the objectives established by the Legislature, and that policies necessary to guide the college are formulated.

Chairman of the Board

Mr. Ellis M. Skinner

Vice Chairman

Mr. Joe M. Gurecky

Executive Committeeman Place 1

Ms. Linda McKenna

Executive Committeeman Place 2

Ms. Penny Forest

Members

Mr. Ivan Andraza

Mr. John K. Hatchel

Mrs. Joe K. Hearne

Mr. Keith Honey

Mr. James Virgil (J.V.) Martin

7.2 System Administration

The Chancellor is the direct agent of the Board of Regents and the chief executive officer of TSTC. He is responsible to the Board for the complete operation of all campuses and facilities.

7.3 Campus Administration

President – Responsible for the complete operation of the campus with specialized advice and guidance from System Administration.

President's Cabinet (chaired by the President) – Comprised of the Vice-President of Financial & Administrative Services, Vice-President Institutional Effectiveness & Systems Research, Vice-President for Student Learning, Provost, Vice-President for Student Development, Vice-President for College Readiness and Advancement, and Chief of Staff. The Cabinet assists the President in developing and implementing procedures essential to the effective operation of the campus. The President's Cabinet meets bi-weekly.

An organizational chart can be found on the President's Website under [Leadership Philosophy](#).

7.4 Committees

The President appoints standing committees to study and make recommendations in areas of continuing campus interest. Appointments to standing committees are usually made in September. Ad Hoc committees are occasionally required to address issues deemed appropriate by the President or President's Cabinet. For a list of committees, please visit our Website at <http://www.tstc.edu/harlingenier/committees>.

7.5 Organizations

The Faculty Senate is the elected representative body of the TSTC Harlingen faculty. More information can be found at <http://www.tstc.edu/harlingenfacultysenate/>.

The Staff Senate is the elected representative body of TSTC Harlingen staff employees. More information can be found at <http://www.tstc.edu/harlingenstaffsenate/>.

8. BENEFITS

8.1 Eligibility

All employees employed to work at least twenty hours per week with the expectation of working at least four and one-half months are benefits-eligible employees. Benefits-eligible employees are eligible for holidays, vacation and sick leave as well as other leave entitlements and benefits to include retirement, group insurance, and education and training opportunities.

Faculty on nine (9) month contracts are considered full-time, benefits-eligible employees with full benefits less vacation and sick-leave accrual during the three months not worked.

8.2 Retirement

8.2.1 Teacher Retirement System (TRS)

The Teacher Retirement System plan is called a “defined benefit plan” because retirement benefits are based on a formula established by the Legislature that uses the number of years of service and salary earned. Thus, the benefit amount has little relationship to the amount of contributions made. For example, the basic normal-age lifetime retirement annuity (standard monthly annuity) is calculated as the number of years of creditable service multiplied by 2.3%, multiplied by the average of the highest three (3) annual salaries and then divided by twelve (12). Benefits provided under the formula have been improved several times over the years. Such improvements apply to all of an active member’s service credit, not just which earned after the improvement.

All benefits-eligible employees must participate in the Teacher Retirement System of Texas. There are some exceptions to this law. These exceptions are:

1. An employee who is eligible for ORP by virtue of the position and elects (within 90 days of the employment date) to participate in ORP;
2. An employee who was previously eligible for and participated in ORP and then is employed in a non-ORP eligible position; or
3. An employee who becomes eligible for ORP by transferring to an ORP-eligible position and elects to go into the Optional Retirement Program within 90 days of the date of eligibility.

In addition to the retirement program, these contributed monies fund (through TRS) life insurance and disability coverage. Vesting, for TRS retirement purposes, is defined as the point at which the member has at least five years of service and has attained the age of 55, if otherwise retirement-eligible as indicated below.

A member may receive an unreduced standard annuity:

- At age 65 with five or more years of service, or
- When the member's age and years of service total 80 with at least five years of service credit.

A member may receive a reduced standard annuity:

- At least age 55 with five or more years of service or
- At any age below 50 with thirty or more years of service.

Refer to [SOS HR 2.3.2 Teacher Retirement System of Texas](#)

8.2.2 Optional Retirement Program (ORP)

Optional Retirement is a “defined contribution plan” because the retirement benefit is based on the actual amount contributed to the individual participant’s account (and any return on investments). Benefits are dependent upon the contribution rate and total salary earned while a participant. Specific retirement benefits under ORP vary among the different investment products available and are subject to individual contract provisions and federal tax law. Contracts may provide for an annuity, periodic withdrawals (after retirement), or a lump sum payment (withdrawal of the total balance in the account at one time). Since ORP accounts are managed individually, there are not State provisions for improvement of benefits after termination.

Optional Retirement is a program for which the following employees are eligible:

1. A faculty member whose duties include teaching and/or research and who holds one of the following titles:
 - a. Instructor
 - b. Senior Instructor
 - c. Master Instructor
 - d. Associate Professor
 - e. Professor

2. An administrative employee is defined as:
 - a. President
 - b. Vice-President
 - c. Associate Vice-President
 - c. Director
 - d. Division Director

Other professionals are defined as staff positions generally and customarily recruited by advertising in national publications and other media. In addition, such positions must be at a salary rate equivalent (same Pay Grade or higher) to the rate for faculty for the institution. Professional positions shall include positions in nationally recognized fields which require advanced degrees and/or specialized professional training, experience and achievement.

An additional criterion for ORP eligibility is full-time benefits-eligible employment, e.g., 1.0 full-time equivalency.

Vesting, for ORP retirement purposes, occurs on the first day of the second year of participation in one or more optional retirement plans. A year shall mean twelve cumulative full months. A full calendar month of leave without pay shall not be included in the calculation of such year. A faculty member shall be credited the three summer months toward vesting in the ORP provided the faculty member teaches the spring semester immediately preceding the summer and the fall semester immediately following the same summer.

The decision to elect ORP is crucial, as employees electing ORP may not return to TRS. Therefore, the decision should be made only after a comprehensive comparison is made between TRS (a group benefit program) and those offered by ORP companies (individual programs). This decision must be made in the first 90 days of eligibility. Literature regarding the Optional Retirement Program and various approved companies is available in the Human Resources Office.

Refer to [SOS HR 2.3.3 Optional Retirement Program Participation](#)

8.2.3 Supplemental Annuities (Tax Deferred)

Texas State Technical College Harlingen is authorized to enter into an agreement with any employee to reduce the salary by a certain amount (determined by the Maximum Exclusion Allowance Calculation) for tax-deferred annuity premiums. The salary is reduced by such amount on a monthly basis, and the reduction is excluded from gross income for federal income tax purposes. Such reduction(s) take into consideration the FICA benefit and any past deferments and are in addition to those contributions to either the Teacher Retirement System or the Optional Retirement Program.

**Information concerning tax-deferred annuities may be obtained from the Human Resources Office.*

8.3 Insurance

8.3.1 Group Insurance

TSTC Harlingen offers all regular benefits-eligible employees group life, medical, dental, dependent life, accidental death and dismemberment, and disability insurance.

Beginning September 1, 2003, there is a 90-day waiting period before new employees are covered on the group medical plan. For exclusions to the rule, check the guidelines at <http://www.ers.state.tx.us>.

The plan provides \$5,000 term life insurance (\$10,000 for accidental death) and a basic medical coverage without cost to the employee.

For retirees who meet minimum age and service requirements, the plan provides \$2,500 of term life insurance and other optional coverages. Please refer to <http://www.ers.state.tx.us/Retirees/>.

Employees have an initial period of eligibility in which you can enroll yourself and your dependents in other optional coverages. The initial period of Eligibility is during your first 31 days of employment.

Other optional coverage available at the time of employment (through payroll deduction):

1. Accidental death and dismemberment (AD&D)
2. Optional amounts of term life insurance based on the salary level
3. Dependent term life insurance
4. Disability insurance
5. Optional long-term care insurance
6. Dental Insurance
7. AFLAC
7. Legal Shield

There are two plans for dental insurance: a traditional indemnified plan and a dental maintenance plan.

Coverage Change

Once coverage is established, it can be changed in one of two ways. Each year, the State offers an open enrollment period called Summer Enrollment for the purpose of making coverage changes. During this period, employees have the opportunity to make changes to coverage for the new plan year which begins September 1 and ends August 31. During Summer Enrollment, coverage changes may be made without a Qualifying Life Event. Although the period is designated as an open enrollment time, evidence of insurability (EOI) may still be required to change insurance coverage.

Coverage may need to be changed whenever life-changing events occur. These changes, known as Qualifying Life Events (QLE), allow for changes in health, dental and other plans. For example, getting married or having a baby allows the employee to

add the new spouse or dependent. Coverage changes must be consistent with the QLE and must be made within 31 days of the QLE.

8.3.2 Additional Explanation

For additional information concerning the benefits available through the various group insurance programs, visit www.ers.state.tx.us or call the Human Resources Office.

8.3.3 Flexible Benefit Plan

TSTC exempts tax from certain employee-paid premiums and expenses as provided for in Section 125 of the Internal Revenue Code. This program includes premiums for medical, dental, accident, and qualifying life insurance (employee only) with payroll reductions made before calculation of income taxes. All flexible benefit elections are required to remain in effect during the entire plan year unless there is a qualifying event in family status.

8.3.4 TexFlex

The TexFlex flexible benefits program allows the employee to reimburse him- or herself for health and dependent care expenses with tax-free money by setting up one of the following accounts:

1. Health Care Reimbursement Account (HCRA)
2. Dependent Care Reimbursement Account (DCRA)

TexFlex follows federal income tax laws that allow the employees to set up their own reimbursement accounts with money that is deducted automatically from their paychecks before federal income and Social Security taxes are calculated. Employees then pay themselves back after incurring eligible health and dependent care expenses.

The Health Care Reimbursement Account (HCRA) sets aside tax-free money for self-reimbursement of eligible health care expenses (like eyeglasses and certain unreimbursed medical and dental expenses) for you and your eligible dependents.

The Dependent Care Reimbursement Account (DCRA) allows contribution of money through a voluntary, tax-free payroll deduction. The employee may use a DCRA for self-reimbursement of eligible dependent care expenses, such as day care or after-school care. Refer to www.ers.state.tx.us/Employees/Programs/TexFlex/

8.3.5 Worker's Compensation Insurance

All employees, including part-time, temporary and student employees, are covered by Worker's Compensation as required by law. If an employee is injured as a result of or in the course of employment, the immediate supervisor must be notified of the injury at the earliest possible time. In any event, the injured employee must notify the supervisor of

the injury within twenty-four (24) hours of the injury or at the first indication of an occupational injury.

All on-the-job injuries, no matter how minor, must be reported by the supervisor to the School Nurse and the Safety Director (or the Human Resources Office if the Safety Director is not immediately available) no later than the end of the next working day following the date of the injury. This reporting procedure shall include completion of an Accident Investigation Form by the supervisor/employee with the assistance of staff in the Human Resources Office.

If an on-the-job injury results in lost time and/or medical expenses, supplemental reports must be prepared by the supervisor and/or the Human Resources Office and provided to the Risk Management Division of the State Attorney General's Office.

Refer to [SOS HR 2.3.5 Workers Compensation Insurance](#)

8.4 Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a confidential counseling service designed to assist employees and their immediate family members. The EAP services include, but are not limited to, the following areas:

Substance Abuse, Anxiety, Stress, Depression, Dependent Care Counseling, Marital, Family, Parenting, Health Concerns, Crisis, Eating Disorders, Psychiatric Disorders, Cross-Cultural Issues

The EAP Program offers up to five (5) free sessions/personal issues per employee, per year. Coverage may also be available through individual health plans depending upon the nature of the treatment and/or counseling. Counseling and treatment for drug and alcohol dependence can be obtained under the provisions of the Texas Employees Group Benefits Program, administered by the Employers Retirement System of Texas (ERS).

To make an appointment or to obtain information regarding services, call Deer Oaks at 1-866-327-2400 or visit online at www.deeroaks.com. All calls are confidential.

8.5 Leaves With Pay

8.5.1 Vacation

Benefits-eligible employees who are employed full-time shall accrue vacation according to the following schedule:

Total State Service	Monthly Accrual Full-Time Employment (Hrs.)	Maximum Carryover Full-Time Employment (Hrs.)
0 but less than 2 yrs.	8	180
2 but less than 5 yrs.	9	244
5 but less than 10 yrs.	10	268
10 but less than 15 yrs.	11	292
15 but less than 20 yrs.	13	340
20 but less than 25 yrs.	15	388
25 but less than 30 yrs.	17	436
30 but less than 35 yrs.	19	484
35 years or more	21	532

Benefits-eligible employees less than full-time receive accruals at a proportional rate. Faculty appointed for less than twelve months are not eligible for the vacation benefit. An employee will earn vacation beginning on the first day of employment and shall be credited with one month's accrual for each month or portion of a month worked based on the months of services as indicated in the chart above. An eligible employee shall accrue vacation as long as the employee's pay status is active. No vacation shall accrue during any full month in which an employee is in an unpaid leave status.

Vacation with pay may not be granted until the employee has had continuous employment with the State for six (6) months, although leave based on months of service will be accrued during the initial six-month employment period. Service transferred in from another state agency counts toward this six-month period.

The net balance of unused accumulated vacation leave, not to exceed the maximum cited in the table above, may be carried forward to the next fiscal year which begins each September 1. Any hours over and above the maximum cited will be credited to the employee's sick leave balance as of the first day of the next fiscal year.

An employee who resigns or is dismissed or separated from State employment shall be entitled to pay for all vacation time duly accrued at the time of separation, provided that the employee has completed the initial six months of active employment. Employees who transfer to another state agency within thirty (30) days may not receive vacation pay.

In order to receive vacation, the employee must submit an online request specifying dates and times requested. This can be done by going to portal.tstc.edu. The scheduled time to be taken should be mutually agreed upon by the subordinate and supervisor. Faculty who are eligible for vacation leave are encouraged to take time during those periods when classes are not in session.

Verified prior State service with any State agency is creditable as a part of the total State months of service in determining the vacation accrual rate.

See also [SOS HR 2.3.12 Employee Leaves and Holidays](#) and COP HR 3.01 [Vacation Leave](#).

8.5.2 Sick Leave

Benefits-eligible employees of TSTC Harlingen shall be entitled to sick leave without deduction in salary subject to the following conditions:

1. An employee will earn sick leave entitlement beginning on the first day of employment with TSTC Harlingen and terminating on the last day of service. Credit for one month's accrual will be given for each month or fraction of a month of employment with the State and will be posted to each employee's leave record on the first day of employment with the college and on the first day of each succeeding month of employment thereafter.
2. Sick leave entitlement shall be earned at the rate of eight (8) hours for each month or fraction of a month of employment, and shall accumulate with the unused amount of such leave carried forward each month. Sick leave accrual shall terminate on the last day of employment. Part-time, benefits-eligible employees accrue sick leave on a proportional basis.
3. Sick leave with pay may be taken when sickness, injury, or pregnancy prevent the employee's performance of duty or when the employee is needed to care for and assist a member of the immediate family who is actually ill. For purposes relating to regular sick leave, "immediate family" is defined as those individuals who reside in the same household and are related by kinship, adoption or marriage, as well as foster children certified by the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services. Minor children of the employee, whether or not living in the same household, will be considered immediate family for purposes of regular sick leave.

An employee's use of sick leave for family members not residing in that employee's household is strictly limited to the time necessary to provide direct care and assistance to a spouse, child or parent of the employee who needs such care and assistance as a direct result of a documented medical condition. This provision does not extend to an employee's parents-in-law if they do not live in the same household.

An employee who must be absent from duty because of illness shall provide notification of that fact to the supervisor at the earliest practicable time. Failure to provide such notification, either before or immediately after an absence, is cause for disciplinary action, and a record of prior progressive disciplinary action could be grounds for dismissal.

4. To be eligible for accumulated sick leave with pay during a continuous period of more than three (3) working days, an employee absent due to illness shall provide the supervisor a medical doctor's certificate showing the cause or nature of the

illness. If an illness results in an absence of three (3) days or less, the supervisor has the discretion to require documentation of the illness.

5. Prior to beginning sick leave or upon return to duty after sick leave, the employee who has been out due to his or her own illness or to the illness of a family member shall without delay complete online request for sick leave and submit to their immediate supervisor.
6. Faculty members must submit the online request for all sick leave even though no classes were missed if the absence occurred during the normal workday for regular employees.
7. A terminating employee may not use excessive, unsubstantiated sick leave prior to final separation from employment.

See also **SOS HR 2.3.12** [Employee Leaves and Holidays](#).

8.5.3 Sick Leave Pool

The sick leave pool benefit was established to provide for the alleviation of the hardship caused to an employee and/or the employee's family in the event of a catastrophic illness or injury which forces the employee to exhaust all sick leave time earned.

To be eligible to request time from the sick leave pool, the following circumstances must exist:

1. The employee or eligible dependent must have suffered a catastrophic illness or injury.
2. All available leave balances have been exhausted.
3. The employee must have been employed with TSTC Harlingen for a full continuous twelve months immediately prior to the date of the qualifying disability.

In the event an employee has exhausted all available sick leave, but previously donated time to the pool to which there would otherwise have been an entitlement, the employee may be eligible to withdraw from the pool the amount contributed. In no event, however, shall the amount withdrawn exceed the lesser of one-third of the total hours in the pool or 90 days.

To request time from the sick leave pool, an employee shall submit a "Request for Withdrawal of Sick Leave Pool Hours" form through prescribed administrative channels to the Human Resources Executive. This form shall then be forwarded to the System Sick Leave Pool Administrator for final determination.

To contribute time to the sick leave pool, the employee must submit an application to the Human Resources Office. The employee may transfer to the pool one or more days of accrued sick leave time. The employee must retain a minimum of 80 hours.

See also [SOS HR 2.3.9 Sick Leave Pool Administration](#).

8.5.4 Emergency Leave

An employee shall be granted emergency leave because of a death in the employee's family. Under this provision, an employee's family is defined as the employee's spouse, employees' and spouse's parents, children, brothers, sisters, grandparents and grandchildren.

Refer to [SOS 2.3.12 Employee Leaves and Holidays](#).

8.5.5 Military Leave

A leave of absence shall be provided any TSTC Harlingen employee who is called to active duty with the National Guard or Reserves by the Governor of Texas. Request for such leave shall be accompanied by a copy of the employee's orders. Employees shall be entitled to such leave from their respective duties without loss of vacation time or salary on all days during which they shall be engaged in authorized training or duty ordered for a period not to exceed fifteen (15) working days in any one federal fiscal year.

An employee called to active duty during a national emergency by a reserve branch of the United States Armed Forces shall have a leave of absence without pay. The employee shall continue to accrue State service credit while on active duty but shall not accrue vacation or sick leave. However, the employee shall retain any accrued vacation or sick leave balances and shall be credited with such balances upon return to work.

In order to be eligible for such leave, the employee must provide a copy of official orders. Contact the Human Resources Office for further details.

See also [SOS 2.3.12 Employee Leaves and Holidays](#)

8.5.6 Volunteer Fireman Duty

An employee who is a volunteer fireman shall be granted a leave of absence with full pay to attend training schools conducted by State agencies provided such leave does not exceed five (5) working days in any one fiscal year. The leave of absence shall in no way be charged against the employee's vacation or sick leave.

In order to be eligible for such leave with pay, the employee must provide certification of training completion, including date(s), upon return to work.

8.5.7 Leave for Care of Foster Child

A State employee who is a foster parent to a child under the conservatorship of the Department of Protective and Regulatory Services is entitled to a leave of absence with full pay for the purpose of attending staffing meetings held by the Department of Protective and Regulatory Services regarding the child under the foster care of the employee or to attend the Admission, Review and Dismissal (ARD) meeting held by a school district regarding the child under the foster care of the employee.

In order to be eligible for leave with pay for such absence, the request must be accompanied by documentation of meeting(s) and/or session(s) attended by an administrator of either the school district or the Department of Protective and Regulatory Services.

See also [SOS 2.3.12 Employee Leaves and Holidays](#).

8.5.8 Disaster Services Volunteer Leave

An employee who is a certified disaster service volunteer of the American Red Cross or who is in training to become such a volunteer, with the prior authorization of the supervisor, may be granted a leave not to exceed ten (10) days each year to participate in specialized disaster relief services for the American Red Cross, upon the request of that agency and with prior approval of the Governor's Office, without loss of pay, vacation time, sick leave, or earned overtime and/or compensatory time.

In order to be eligible for pay for such leave purpose, the employee must furnish to the supervisor upon return to work certification of completion of service/training by the American Red Cross.

8.5.9 Leave for the Blind

An employee who is blind is entitled to a leave of absence with full pay for the purpose of attending a training program to acquaint the employee with a seeing-eye dog to be used by the employee. This leave of absence may not exceed ten (10) working days in a fiscal year. Such leave shall be in addition to any other leave to which an employee is otherwise entitled, and the employee shall continue to accrue vacation and sick leave while on leave, if the employee is otherwise entitled to vacation accrual.

To be eligible for such leave with pay, upon return to work, the employee shall provide to the supervisor certification of training completion including beginning and ending dates.

See also [SOS 2.3.12 Employee Leaves and Holidays](#).

8.5.10 Parental Leave

An employee is entitled to a parental leave of absence not to exceed twelve (12) weeks for the birth of a natural child or the adoption of a child under three years of age. This period begins with the date of birth or the first day an adoptive child is formally placed in the home of the employee.

An employee may elect to use any combination of available vacation leave, compensatory time off, or leave without pay for this period. The use of sick leave is strictly limited to those situations clearly falling within the definition of sick leave contained in the foregoing "Sick Leave" section.

The unpaid leave portion of Parental leave is counted as time authorized by the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA; see the following section on FMLA). No combination of vacation, compensatory time, or leave without pay will exceed the twelve (12) week period for parental leave.

See also [SOS 2.3.12 Employee Leaves and Holidays](#).

8.5.11 Federal Family and Medical Leave

An employee who has been employed by TSTC Harlingen for 12 continuous months and has worked at least 1,250 hours during that same period of time is entitled to family and medical leave in accordance with the provisions of the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA). FMLA provides up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job protected leave to eligible employees for any of the following reasons: to care for an employee's child after birth, or placement of/for adoption, to care for an employee's spouse, son or daughter, or parent who has a serious health condition, or for a serious health condition that makes the employee unable to perform the employee's job.

A maximum of 12 weeks unpaid leave is available under the provisions of FMLA during any 12-month rolling or continuous period (not calendar or fiscal year). Normally colds, flu and other such reoccurring illnesses do not qualify for FMLA absence.

Except as discussed below, employees must use all accrued sick and vacation leave prior to the start of unpaid FMLA leave. Employees who are on FMLA leave and are receiving temporary disability benefit payments or Workers' Compensation benefits cannot be required to use their paid vacation or sick leave while on FMLA leave. Contact Human Resources Office for further details.

See also [SOS 2.3.12 Employee Leaves and Holidays](#) and [SOS 2.3.13 Family and Medical Leave](#).

8.5.12 Administrative Leave

In addition to any other leave benefit provided elsewhere, administrative leave with pay may be granted by the President. Requests for two (2) or more unearned leaves of absence with pay in any one (1) twelve month period requires prior approval of the Board of Regents. Employees scheduled for dismissal due to reorganization or

reductions-in-force may be allowed to take administrative leave for job referrals and interviews. Paid Administrative Leave requests for terminating employees should normally not exceed 30 days.

Paid Administrative Leave may also be requested to participate in work-related training or conferences, such as participation on a federal or state grant selection committee. Generally, the duration of these requests should normally not exceed five (5) days.

8.5.13 Jury Duty

Jury duty is treated as paid administrative leave. Employees called for jury duty must complete a leave request with the jury duty portion completed and submit a copy of the court order/notice to Human Resources.

See also [SOS 2.3.12 Employee Leaves and Holidays](#)

8.5.14 Holidays

The number of holidays is established by the Texas Legislature. The holiday schedule is established for employees of TSTC Harlingen by the Board of Regents and conforms to the academic calendar, with the concentration of holidays typically occurring at the end of the calendar year. All regular benefits-eligible employees of TSTC Harlingen are eligible for scheduled holidays with pay.

Staff and faculty holidays may differ from student holidays which are set forth in the College Catalog; however, staff members are entitled to the same number of holidays as other State employees, as authorized by the State Legislature for each fiscal year.

Benefits-eligible part-time employees shall be paid only for their scheduled hours on the approved holiday(s). Employees will receive equivalent time off if: (1) they are required to work on a scheduled holiday; or (2) scheduled holiday(s) fall on the regularly assigned day off.

It is the decision of Texas State Technical College Harlingen to accept, with understanding, the religious beliefs of its employees and to seek to accommodate those views in a reasonable way with flexibility and sensitivity on the part of management.

Wherever possible, TSTC Harlingen will make reasonable accommodations to permit the employees to observe major religious holidays when such request are made in time for rescheduling hours worked and TSTC Harlingen and the employee agrees on the conditions by which work time will be rescheduled.

TSTC Harlingen can reject such requests when it is determined that such approval would significantly hamper the operations of the school in such areas as security, maintenance, safety, delivery of specialized services-for example, registration, housing assignment, food service, special course offerings, etc.

See also [SOS 2.3.12 Employee Leaves and Holidays](#).

8.5.15 Sick Leave for Educational Activities

TSTC Harlingen cooperates with local school districts by allowing employees with school age children up to eight (8) hours of sick leave each fiscal year to attend educational activities of the employee's children who are in pre-kindergarten through 12th grade. The employee must give reasonable notice of his or her intention to use this leave. Educational activities are school-sponsored activities, including parent-teacher conference, tutoring, volunteer programs, field trips, classroom programs, school committee meetings, academic competitions, and athletic, music, or theater programs as enacted by the 83rd Legislature.

8.5.16 Accrued Leave of Deceased Employees

The estate of an employee who dies while employed by TSTC Harlingen is entitled to payment for all the employee's accumulated vacation leave and for one half of accumulated sick leave or 336 hours – whichever is less. The payment shall be calculated at the employee's rate of pay at the time of death.

8.6 Leave Without Pay

An employee may be granted leave without pay subject to the following provisions:

1. Except for disciplinary suspension, active military duty, parental leave, Federal Family and Medical Leave and workers' compensation situations, all accumulated paid leave entitlements must be exhausted before granting such leaves, with the additional provision that sick leave must be exhausted only in those cases where the employee is eligible to take sick leave. The President is authorized to approve up to 30 days of leave without pay. Leave without pay beyond 30 days and up to twelve (12) months requires authorization by the System Chancellor.
2. Subject to fiscal constraints, approval of such leave constitutes a guarantee of employment for a specified period of time.
3. The President may grant exceptions to these limitations for such reasons as interagency agreements or educational purposes.
4. Except in the case of an employee returning to employment from military leave without pay, any full calendar month (i.e., from the first day of a month through the last day of a month, inclusive) in which an employee is on leave without pay, shall not be counted in the calculation of total State service for purposes of longevity pay or vacation leave entitlements. No employee shall accrue vacation or sick leave for such month. Further, any such full calendar month of leave without pay shall not constitute a break in continuity of employment but shall not be included in the calculation of the six continuous

months of employment relative to the probation period and merit salary eligibility.

Requests for leaves of absence without pay will be considered for extended periods of illness, temporary disability, recuperation from accident, or similar justifiable causes and must comply with the provisions set out in the foregoing paragraphs.

In no event shall a leave without pay exceed twelve (12) months. Request for unpaid leave must be submitted through prescribed administrative channels to the President.

See also [SOS 2.3.12 Employee Leaves and Holidays](#)

8.7 Opportunities for Education and Training

TSTC Harlingen supports and encourages in-service training for faculty and staff on the college campus. A program of in-service education and training to upgrade occupational knowledge and skills is available to regular full-time faculty members and other employees.

Programs of training for administrators and supervisors are conducted periodically to improve leadership skills and update knowledge of college policies, procedures and obligations under State and Federal laws and regulations.

8.8 Educational Leave & Tuition Assistance Program for Employees & Dependents

Texas State Technical College Harlingen allows release time from regular working hours for employees enrolled in graduate or undergraduate educational programs when such employee education is related to either improving the individual's skill and knowledge in their current position or will extend their potential for future promotion with the College. Educational Release time is available for staff and 12-month faculty. Nine-month faculty are not eligible for Educational Release time.

Regular full-time, permanent employees with less than one year of service are eligible for the reduced tuition rate of \$16 per semester credit hour.

Regular full-time, permanent employees with one year of TSTC service immediately prior to the beginning of the term in which the course is to be taken are eligible for an employee scholarship. Employee may be awarded up to two courses per semester, with a maximum of 16 college credit hours per fiscal year.

Employee dependents who meet the criteria are eligible for the reduced tuition.

Refer to **COP HR 3.17** [Employee Release Time](#) & **COP HR 3.19** [Employee Education-Release Time, Scholarship, Dependent Tuition](#)

9. EMPLOYMENT

9.1 Employment Procedure

It is the policy of Texas State Technical College Harlingen to fill each position with the best-qualified applicant without regard to race, gender, age, color, religion, national origin or disability.

All vacant positions are regularly publicized on the College online hiring system, electronic media, social media, community media and Texas Workforce Commission. Staff employees seeking advancement are encouraged to apply for a vacant position through our online system.

To facilitate and encourage upward movement of employees, when a vacancy occurs and a current employee within the hiring department is imminently qualified by virtue of experience, training/education, knowledge of the working environment and functions of the position/hiring unit and bids on the open position, the posting may be waived with the approval of the Human Resources Executive.

Refer to **SOS HR 2.1.14** [Employment](#)

9.2 Nepotism

Texas State Technical College Harlingen will not employ, appoint, promote or transfer any person who is related within the second degree by affinity (marriage) or within the third degree of consanguinity (blood) to any person employed by TSTC Harlingen whose duty would involve acting in any official capacity upon such an employment, promotion, or transfer, regardless of the source of funds for payment of salary; nor shall any person be employed if either person would come under the administrative supervision of the other; or if either would have any official voice in recommending salary increases or promotion in rank for the other.

Refer to [SOS HR 2.1.4 Nepotism](#)

9.3 Dual Employment

The college will compensate an employee who holds two positions within the State government as follows:

1. Completely separate leave records will be maintained for each employment.
2. Time worked in one position may not be used as additional tenure credit for purposes of longevity or annual leave accrual for other positions.
3. Upon termination of one employment, the leave balances accrued under that employment may not be transferred to the remaining employment.
4. The State contribution towards the employee's portion of social security tax liability will be subject to the overall limit specified by Statute.

5. The total State contribution towards the employee's group insurance will be limited to no more than the amount specified by the Statute.
6. The employee will be entitled to receive longevity payment for no more than one employment.
7. Overtime compensation will accrue to each employment totally independent of the other except when an employee works in a dual employment capacity where the employee is subject to the overtime provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). In either employment the college must consider all combined time worked in excess of 40 hours per week as overtime and compensate the employee in accordance with the FLSA provisions applicable to joint employment relationships.
8. In cases where the dual employment is with two separate agencies, the two agencies shall coordinate in order to determine which agency shall have the responsibility to assure that the employee is properly compensated in accordance with such provisions.

9.4 Probationary Period

It is the policy that exempt staff and classified non-exempt employees will serve a probationary period of 6 months while members of the faculty will serve a 12-month probationary period. These periods of probationary status provide an opportunity for the evaluation of work performance and to allow time to make an effective adjustment to the new position and job responsibilities. However, satisfactory completion of the probationary period does not constitute an agreement of continuing employment for an unlimited period of time.

Probationary employees may not transfer or be promoted to another position for at least four months. However, exceptions to the four-month restriction may be granted by the head of the department with the President's approval on a case-by-case basis.

In the event that an employee transfers to a different position prior to completion of the probationary period, an additional period of probation may be required. The degree to which the new position and job title differs from the position previously held will determine the length of the additional probationary period. In such event, the additional period of probation must be documented in writing and include the employee's signature acknowledging the status.

Staff members moving to new positions via internal job bids (promotions or voluntary demotions) are subject to a new probationary period.

For staff members, each period of probationary status beyond the original six months shall not be in excess of six (6) months. Additionally, in no event shall the total period of probation exceed twelve (12) months. Probationary periods may be extended to provide

new employees additional time to increase job knowledge and reach an acceptable level of performance.

Probationary periods for new faculty may be extended to allow for improvement in job performance; however, the extension will not create a new contract obligation. The performance of the probationary employee shall be evaluated by the supervisor no later than the end of the fourth month of employment to ensure that guidance is being provided to attain successful job performance. This performance review will take the form of a written evaluation.

At any time during the probationary period, an employee may be dismissed without prejudice by the college. The same level of approval is required for dismissal as for appointment.

See [SOS HR 2.2.7 Employee Probationary Periods](#)

9.5 Termination of Employment

Employees who resign are expected to give adequate notice to the supervisor to allow for an orderly transition of work activities. Faculty involved in student instruction are expected to continue employment at least through the end of the school's semester.

In order to be considered as having resigned from a position in good standing, a staff employee should give official written notice to be provided to supervisor and Human Resources at least two weeks in advance of the date of termination. A Clearance form will be originated by Human Resources. Remaining clearances are to be obtained in the order presented on the form.

Each terminating employee is to be instructed either by the department supervisor or a member of the Human Resources staff to arrange for an appointment in Human Resources in order to provide the required benefits information and to afford each terminating employee an exit interview in the Human Resources Office.

This process is established to ensure that: (1) all outstanding obligations have been met prior to receipt of the last payroll check; (2) instructions and a current address of record are available to ensure correct mailing of future correspondence; and (3) federal and state requirements have been met with regard to extension of benefits.

9.6 Performance Appraisal

This procedure was established to provide a systematic review and evaluation of job performance to reinforce good performance, direct future efforts toward improved results and to provide a line of communication between the employee and supervisor.

Each employee who has completed at least one year of service will receive an annual performance evaluation from the rating supervisor. The evaluation is to be conducted in a private discussion between the supervisor and the employee and should result in a clear understanding of duties and performance standards; establishment of goals and objectives; and identification of actions which the employee and supervisor agree will be taken to improve areas in which standards have not been met.

See also [SOS HR 2.2.3 Employee Performance Appraisals](#)

9.7 Attendance

According to state law, all full-time salaried employees, including nine (9) and twelve (12) month faculty members, are required to work no less than forty (40) hours per week, except for approved leaves of absence to include sick and vacation leaves. Punctual and regular attendance is expected of every employee. When an employee is unable to report for work or expects to be late, the supervisor should be notified at the earliest possible time so that alternate work plans may be made. Attendance is one of the factors taken into consideration in the performance evaluation process.

9.8 Conflict of Interest

It is the policy of Texas State Technical College System that no employee or appointed officer shall have any interest, financial or otherwise, direct or indirect, or engage in any business transaction or incur any obligation of any nature which is in substantial conflict with the proper discharge of his or her duties.

See [SOS HR 2.1.12 Officer and Employee Ethics](#).

9.9 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)/ Employees with Disabilities

It is the policy of Texas State Technical College Harlingen to provide employment and promotion opportunities in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and State of Texas Statutes.

See **SOS HR 2.5.2** [Americans with Disabilities Act](#).

10. WAGE AND SALARY

10.1 Salary Administration

The Human Resources Office is vested with the responsibility and authority to administer the Salary Administration Program. All personnel transactions requiring a change in an employee’s status must have the written approval of the Vice President and/or President prior to Human Resources implementing the change.

TSTC Harlingen administers the compensation of employees as follows:

	Staff	Faculty
Salary Ranges	Non Exempt \$16,000 - \$46,250 Exempt \$28,000 - \$115,175	\$36,999 - \$64,748
Evaluation	Annual evaluation with goals and coaching	Annual evaluation with goals and coaching
Performance-Based Increase	Annual increase possible based on availability of funds, performance rating and salary rating within range.	Annual increase possible based on availability of funds, performance rating and salary rating within range.
College Degree	Increases resulting from completion of a college degree as part of a personal development plan: Associate degree: 2.5% Bachelor’s: 5.0% Master’s: 5.0% Doctorate: 7.0%	Increases resulting from completion of a college degree as part of a professional development plan: Associate degree: 2.5% Bachelor’s: 5.0% Master’s: 5.0% Doctorate: 7.0%
Promotion	Market-based wage consistent with the new range.	No increases related to advancement in rank.
Additional Duty Pay	As appropriate with a significant increase in responsibility.	Additional compensation when workload exceeds the standard teaching load.
Longevity Pay	State plan provides \$20/month for every two (2) years of service.	Academic employees are ineligible.

For more information on salary administration, refer to [SOS HR 2.2.10 Staff Compensation](#) and [SOS HR 2.2.9 Faculty Compensation](#).

10.2 Classification

Texas State Technical College Harlingen has established a position classification process to ensure that the concept of “equal pay for equal work” is based on the requirements of each job.

The Human Resources Office is responsible for implementing, and administering the position classification program.

It is the joint responsibility of all levels of supervision and management to assist in classification administration by recognizing the need for and initiating the necessary actions to accomplish the establishment of new positions or reclassification of existing positions because of significant or substantial changes in duties and responsibilities.

10.3 Job Descriptions

Official job descriptions for classified positions are on the Human Resources Office and website. Employees and supervisors are encouraged to access these descriptions in defining responsibilities and accountability.

10.4 Work Schedule

Each full-time job, as nearly as possible, shall be structured to fit into a forty (40) hour workweek schedule. Recognizing, however, that all jobs have a variation in volume of work from time to time, it may be necessary on occasion to alter the normal work schedule. Therefore, TSTC Harlingen will establish individual work schedules at the departmental level using the following guidelines:

1. All administrative offices shall remain open from 8:00 a.m. to 12 noon and 1 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except for designated holidays. Offices may be open beyond the normal schedule as required by individual departmental needs.

Offices shall remain open during the noon hour each working day with at least one person on duty to accept calls, receive visitors, and transact business. Exceptions may be made by the division administrator where it is not practical to stay open during the noon hour.

2. The standard workweek consists of forty (40) hours.

The official workweek is from Monday 12:01 a.m. until Sunday 12:00 midnight.

3. Lunch breaks will not normally be on paid time and may vary according to the needs of the department. The specific time and length of the lunch break will be determined by the employee’s immediate supervisor. A meal opportunity of at least 30 minutes once every four (4) hours will be provided to all employees, in accordance with the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA).

4. Rest (coffee) breaks will be on paid time and may be granted only when the work allows. The length, time and place of these breaks will be at the discretion of the immediate supervisor. The immediate supervisor will be responsible for seeing that breaks do not interfere with the normal completion of the work involved. Normally, breaks will occur at least once, approximately midway in every four (4) hour period for at least fifteen (15) minutes.
5. The normal workday begins at 8:00 a.m. and ends at 5:00 p.m.
However, each department head may establish, on an individual basis, different starting and quitting times to meet the needs of the department.
6. The department head may also use flex time scheduling to allow individualized subordinate work schedules within the parameters established by the supervisor. The starting time, lunch time, quitting time, or number of hours worked on a regular basis may vary for individual employees as long as all the following conditions exist:
 - a. The variation in schedule does not interfere with the normal work performance of the individual or the work group.
 - b. The employee is at work or on approved leave during the core hours designated by the department head.
 - c. The employee works at least 40 hours per week, unless leave is requested and approved.
7. Changes in work location must be approved by the head of agency.

10.5 Overtime

1. Employees Subject to FLSA (Non-exempt Employees):

A non-exempt employee who is required to work hours in excess of 40 hours in a workweek is entitled to compensation for the excess hours either by:

- a. The supervisor allowing (or requiring) the employee to take compensatory time off at the rate of 1½ hours for each hour of overtime, or
- b. At the discretion of the supervisor, in cases in which granting compensatory time off is impractical, the employee receives pay for the overtime at the rate equal to 1½ times the employee's regular rate of pay. Any paid leave (including sick leave) or holidays taken are not counted as hours worked in determining overtime hours under the preceding paragraph.

Each employee may accumulate overtime credit of not more than 240 hours, except employees engaged in a public safety activity, an emergency response activity, or a seasonal activity who may accumulate not more than 480 hours. Employees must be paid for overtime worked in excess of the limits on accumulation at the rate equal to 1½ times the employee's regular rate of pay.

If an employee has not worked more than 40 hours in a workweek, but the total hours worked and paid leave or paid holidays exceeds 40 hours, the employee shall be allowed equivalent time off equal to the number of hours in excess of 40 hours (straight time).

If an employee has worked more than 40 hours in a workweek and the total of hours worked and hours of paid leave or paid holidays exceeds 40 hours after subtracting overtime hours worked, the employee shall be allowed equivalent time off for such excess hours (straight time).

2. Employees Not Subject to FLSA (Exempt)

Full-time executive, administrative and professional employees, defined as exempt employees, are expected to work a minimum of 40 hours per week in fulfilling the requirements of their positions. Some positions may routinely require more than 40 hours per week in order to meet the workload. However, when extraordinary circumstances necessitate work hours beyond those routinely required for the position, those employees may, upon recommendation by the College President and approval by the Chancellor, be granted equivalent compensatory time off in an amount equal to the time worked in excess of that routinely worked.

Compensatory time off cited in the foregoing paragraph must be taken during the 12 month period following the workweek in which the excess time is accrued and may not be carried forward past the end of the 12 month period. An employee may not be paid for unused compensatory time off.

See also [SOS HR 2.2.8, Compensation for Overtime](#).

Faculty members are defined as professional, exempt employees in accordance with FLSA. It is within the purview of the department chair to allow a faculty member to be absent from work without leave for brief periods to take care of personal business or to compensate for an irregular extra duty undertaken outside regular workweek hours (for example, Saturday duty at a College Preview). Such arrangements must not be made in lieu of the faculty member taking vacation or sick leave on occasions when such leave would usually be warranted.

10.6 Online Leave Management System

An attendance record must be maintained for each employee and the online management system shall be used to submit leave each time the employee is absent or anticipates being absent from the workplace during normally schedule work hours. The submitted request will be sent to the supervisor for final review and approval. Go to portal.tstc.edu and after logging in, select Leave Request under Quick Links.

10.7 Compensation

TSTC Harlingen is a state agency, and as such, all employees are state employees subject to wage and salary administration rules and regulations.

Salary increases fall into one or more of the following categories:

- Merit salary increase
- Equity review
- Reclassification to higher salary group
- Promotion to higher salary group via job bid
- Increased individual and supervisory responsibility (significant temporary or permanent increases in responsibility)
- Across-the-board salary increases allocated by TSTC Harlingen, TSTC System and/or by State appropriations

10.8 Longevity Pay

Full-time support staff and administrative employees after the completion of a full two (2) years of state employment, are entitled to receive longevity pay of \$20.00 per month. With the completion of each additional two (2) years of service, up to and including 42 years of service, another \$20.00 a month will be added to the pay.

Refer to **COP HR 2.03** [Longevity Pay](#)

10.9 Hazardous Duty Pay

All commissioned law enforcement officers (to include public safety officers and patrolmen) are eligible for hazardous duty pay of \$10 per month for each full, completed year of hazardous duty service up to and including 30 years.

Refer to **COP HR 2.05** [Hazardous Duty Pay](#)

11. EMPLOYEE RELATIONS

11.1 Standards of Conduct

1. No State officer or State employee shall accept or solicit any gift, favor, or service that might reasonably tend to influence him in the discharge of his official duties or that he knows or should know is being offered him with the intent to influence his official conduct.

2. No State officer or State employee shall accept employment or engage in any business or professional activity which he might reasonably expect would require or induce disclosure of confidential information acquired by reason of the official position.
3. No State officer or State employee shall accept other employment or compensation which could reasonably be expected to impair independence of judgment in the performance of official duties.
4. No State officer or State employee shall make personal investments which could reasonably be expected to create a substantial conflict between the private interest and the public interest.
5. No State officer or State employee shall intentionally or knowingly solicit, accept, or agree to accept any benefit for having exercised one's official powers or performed one's official duties in favor of another.

The manner in which the employee conducts himself or herself on the job has a direct bearing on the effective accomplishment of duties and responsibilities. In addition, the direct contact of employees with the public can play a significant role in molding the public's attitude toward State services in general and TSTC Harlingen in particular. This attitude is influenced both by the way employees serve the public and the manner in which they conduct themselves publicly.

11.2 Standards of Dress

All employees are expected to practice good hygiene and arrive at work clean and well groomed. All clothing should be clean, neat, and free from tears. Hair must be clean and neat; if it is colored, it must be a color that is a normal, natural hair color (i.e., not green, blue, purple, etc.). To prevent loss and injury, jewelry should be kept to a minimum.

Other rings or "piercings" through the nose, tongue, or other body parts may not be worn while at work. The purpose of these appearance standards is to promote a comfortable working environment that is free of unnecessary distraction.

Employees' dress and grooming should not draw attention or interfere with the performance of work duties. Employees who report to work inappropriately groomed or attired may be asked to leave and change into acceptable clothing.

11.3 Performance Improvement

It is the policy of Texas State Technical College that all non-faculty and non-contract employees shall maintain standards of conduct and performance established by the College, and that non-compliance with these standards will be remedied and subject to corrective action.

Texas State Technical College has established performance standards for all employees, and each employee is required to acquaint him/herself with the required

performance criteria for his or her particular job, including the rules, procedures and standards of conduct established by the employing unit, division or department. Any non-compliance with established standards will subject an employee to a range of corrective actions, from coaching to dismissal.

Refer to [SOS HR 2.4.1 Employee Corrective Action](#)

11.4 Complaint and Grievance

Texas State Technical College Harlingen affords opportunity for the resolution of complaints without fear of interference or reprisal. It is the policy of Texas State Technical College that all employees shall be treated fairly. The process is to be administered so that these issues may be resolved through good faith effort by both parties.

A grievance must allege a violation of a specific College rule, regulation, policy or practice pertaining to the employment relationship between the grievant and the College. Use the following link for details on what may or may not constitute a grievance, and on the steps which must be followed in the grievance procedure.

Refer to [SOS HR. 2.4.14 Conflict Resolution – Complaint and Grievance](#)

11.5 Prevention of Workplace Violence

Workplace safety and health hazards affecting employees have traditionally been viewed as rising from unsafe work practices, hazardous industrial conditions, or exposures to harmful chemical, biologic or physical agents, not from violent acts committed by other human beings. Recently, though, Public Safety Agencies have recognized the need to provide for prevention and safety measures to protect employees from workplace violence. As a state agency, TSTC must follow guidelines designed to stop workplace violence. Employees who utter threats of bodily violence, either written or stated, against any other TSTC employee or student will be terminated.

Refer to [SOS HR 2.4.8 Prohibiting Workplace Violence](#)

11.6 Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment of employees or students will not be tolerated and is expressly prohibited at Texas State Technical College Harlingen. Offenders are subject to disciplinary action up to and including discharge.

Sexual harassment is defined as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:

1. Submission to such conduct is made, either expressly or by implication, a term or condition of an individual's employment or educational opportunity or advancement;
2. Submission to, or rejection of, such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for academic or employment decisions affecting such individual; or
3. Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work or academic performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive educational or working environment.

If an employee believes he/she has been subject to sexual harassment, such perceived offense should be immediately reported to the local Human Resources Office, Extension 4042 or TSTC Systems HOD at (254) 867-4810.

Refer to [SOS HR 2.4.3 Prohibiting Sexual Harassment](#)

11.7 Reduction in Force and Reorganization

TSTC Harlingen shall provide an equitable system for selection of employees to be separated or dismissed when circumstances require or make advisable a reorganization or a reduction of the employee work force. Any plan for a reduction in force or reorganization must give consideration to the retention of those employees who have skills and talents which best suit the continued accomplishment of the mission of the college. Separations caused by a reorganization or reduction in force are not based on employee misconduct or inadequate work performance.

Refer to [SOS HR 2.1.11 Reduction in Force](#)

11.8 HIV Infection /AIDS

Texas State Technical College Harlingen has a policy which allows employees with HIV or AIDS to exercise all rights and privileges of their employment as long as they are able to perform their duties and responsibilities satisfactorily. The policy also allows students with HIV infection or AIDS to register, attend class, participate in activities, reside in campus housing and exercise all rights and privileges of other students as long as they are physically and mentally capable.

TSTC Harlingen will increase awareness and education to its students and employees about HIV and AIDS.

Refer to [SOS HR 2.4.4 AIDS/HIV in the Workplace and Learning Environment](#).

11.9 Drugs and Alcohol

Texas State Technical College Harlingen is committed to creating and maintaining a safe, healthy and drug-free environment for educational and work experience purposes.

The college seeks to ensure work and learning environments free of the unlawful possession, use or distribution of illicit drugs and alcohol.

Employees and students determined to be in violation of this policy shall be subject to disciplinary measures as prescribed by policy guidelines.

Refer to [SOS ES 3.08 Drug-free Schools & Campuses and Work Place](#).

11.10 Use of Tobacco

Use of tobacco products is permissible only in designated areas. Without exception, employees should observe “no smoking” guidelines and directives.

11.11 Identification Cards

The employee Identification Card issued to regular employees serves as identification when using services on campus requiring employee status. The ID card integrates with many services offered around campus in the nature of meal plans, stored value credit, electronic access control security, copies, printing, vending, and automated financial aid refunds. The ID Center located in the Student Center offer support and customer service with any of your card related needs.

11.12 Key Control

Keys to access buildings will be issued by completing a building access request form and receiving the required administrative approvals. The Police Department will process the request and notify the employee when the keys are ready.

12. RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

12. 1 Wellness & Sports Center

The WSC consists of Basketball Courts, Volleyball Courts, two Racquetball Courts, Men’s and Women’s Locker Rooms, a weight room, a cardio room and an aerobics room.

12. 2 Wellness & Sports Center Athletic Fields

The WSC Athletic Fields are used as the main arena for most outdoor Intramural activities consists of flag football, softball and soccer fields. A 3/10th mile long walking/jogging track on the perimeter of the athletic field area is also available.

The WSC is located northeast of the field and houses the restrooms, a water fountain and storage area. Tennis courts and a sand volleyball court are located in the housing area adjacent to the fields. Two outdoor basketball goals are available for use plus pavilion and picnic tables.

13. PROTECTION OF PROPERTY AND PERSONNEL

13.1 Public Safety

TSTC Harlingen maintains commissioned peace officers to protect people and property. The mission of the College Police is to provide a safe, secure, and orderly college environment. College Police will work to maintain a proactive approach to crime prevention and problem solving through professional, effective, and fair practices and by providing guidance through education and working in partnership with the College community.

13.2 Parking Regulations

All motor vehicles operated or parked on campus must be registered with the TSTC College Police Department. A parking decal is issued every fiscal year at no cost. As an employee, it is your responsibility to become familiar with the traffic and parking regulations of the College. [Traffic and Parking Regulations](#)

13.3 Theft of State or Personal Property

Theft of State or personal property by an employee of TSTC Harlingen is cause for immediate termination and for prosecution under the law.

Vigilance on your part in reporting acts of theft, destruction, or misappropriation of resources and your assistance in bringing offending parties to the attention of College Police are the best ways of reducing personal and college losses.

13.4 Fire Protection/Emergency

In the event of fire or medical/police emergency, call 911 (4-911 on campus phones) immediately. The TSTC Harlingen campus is covered by the Harlingen Emergency Response System, which is designed to respond to fire, medical and police emergencies as quickly as possible. It is extremely important that the 911 (9-911 on campus phones) system be used only for emergencies. Calls to 911 should be followed up with a call to TSTC College Police.

13.5 Safety

The Safety Office provides assistance in identifying and correcting hazardous conditions, unsafe equipment and poor work habits. You should thoroughly familiarize yourself with all equipment and operations under your control and insist that accepted standards of safety be maintained. You should report immediately to your supervisor any condition that may endanger life or property.

All injuries occurring in the course of your work, regardless of how slight they may seem, must be reported to your supervisor at once. The supervisor will arrange for necessary medical treatment should the need arise.

Supervisors are required to contact the Safety Officer, Ext. 4205, as soon as possible to report any on-the-job injury.

14. GENERAL INFORMATION

14.1 New Employee Orientation

Texas State Technical College Harlingen shall provide each new employee with a thorough introduction to the college and its operations. A formal orientation program will be provided by the Human Resources Office and will include a general introduction to the college, employee benefits, policies, and procedures. This will be followed by a detailed orientation to specific job duties and responsibilities of the position provided by the supervisor and supported by presentations from other departments when appropriate.

The immediate supervisor will, during the next two-week period after orientation is conducted, provide a specific job orientation including, but not limited to, the information listed on the orientation check list and will at the end of the period, meet with the new employee to cover any items of concern regarding conditions of employment, training, benefits, job content, working conditions, department standards, etc.

14.2 Travel

The College has established employee travel procedures that are in compliance with the State of Texas Travel Allowance Guide, the State Travel Management Program administered by the Texas Building and Procurement Commission.

TSTC employees may receive reimbursement of travel expenses only when the purpose of travel clearly involves official state business and is in accordance with the legal responsibilities of TSTC.

All requests to travel at TSTC's expense must be submitted on a Travel Request form. All Travel Request forms must be approved by the traveler's supervisor prior to travel. The travel requests should be submitted for departmental approval far enough in advance to assure arrival in the Business Office at least 3 working days prior to travel.

A Travel Voucher form must be completed immediately upon completion of travel. This is the final reimbursement request document and employees will be reimbursed based on this document.

For additional information on travel including the current reimbursement rates, use of contracted travel agency services, credit card program, use of contracted hotel/motel establishments, and use of contracted airlines and rental cars, refer to <http://www.tstc.edu/harlingentravel/> or contact the College Travel Coordinator in the Business Office at extension 4422. “Travel Training for Travelers” sessions are also available at the Training Resource Center.

Refer to [SOS FA.6.1 Official TSTC Travel Paid from Educational and General Funds and from Perkins Funds](#)

14.3 Purchasing Materials, Supplies and Services

It is the policy of Texas State Technical College to procure goods and services in an effective and efficient manner in accordance with Education Code 51.9335, the General Appropriations Act of the Texas Legislature, the State of Texas Purchase Voucher Guide, and Federal and State grant regulatory requirements, where applicable.

The Purchasing Office has the responsibility and sole authority to obligate funds for procurement in compliance with applicable state and federal laws and in accordance with established federal, state and college regulations.

See also [SOS FA.1.16 Purchasing Authority](#)

14.3.1 Unauthorized Purchases

TSTC Harlingen Purchasing Policy and the State of Texas Purchasing Policies require issuance of a Purchase Order prior to purchases of goods and services. This includes the ordering of subscriptions, previewing of merchandise or equipment, (including previewing textbooks with the exception of complimentary copies) and requesting services. TSTC will not bear the liability and the person(s) ordering the goods or service will have to pay for said goods or services.

See also [SOS FA.1.16 Purchasing Authority](#)

14.3.2 Emergency Purchases

An emergency purchase is defined as a purchase of goods or services so badly needed that a department will suffer financial or operational damage unless they are secured immediately. In the case of an emergency, departments must notify the college Purchasing Office immediately, providing full written justification of the circumstances creating the emergency. If the emergency happens after normal business hours, the department shall notify the college Purchasing Office on the next business workday. Failure by a department to plan ahead in the acquisition of goods and services does not create an emergency.

See also [SOS FA 1.16 Purchasing Authority](#)

14.3.3 Historically Underutilized Businesses (HUB)

Texas State Technical College Harlingen (TSTC) is committed to making a Good Faith Effort in contracting with and assisting Historically Underutilized Businesses (HUBs). TSTC also ensures a competitive procurement process that provides fair and equal access to all business. TSTC believes that this is the ethical and appropriate method of business. We will maximize opportunities for Historically Underutilized Business (HUB) firms to supply materials, supplies, equipment, and services needed to support the mission and the administrative and logistical operations of the college.

For additional information on Purchasing refer to:

<http://www.tstc.edu/harlingenpurchasing/>.

Purchasing trainings are also available at the Training Resource Center.

14.4 Cashiers

TSTC Cashiers are located in the Consolidated Student Services Building to provide a variety of services, including:

- 1) Check cashing – All TSTC employees may cash a personal check weekly in the amount of \$50.
- 2) Receiving and receipting funds – All funds received by any department on campus need to be presented at the Cashier's Office to be deposited. The person presenting the funds should be aware of the appropriate account number for accurate deposit. The depositor should also wait for a receipt to be issued for the deposit.

14.5 Accounts Receivable

Any returned check fee is \$25.00. If the returned item and the return check fee are not paid in full within 30 days of notice, the returned item will be sent to the District Attorney's returned check department.

A staff member whose check is "NSF" or refused by the bank for any reason, will not be able to pay or cash checks at TSTC for one semester.

14.6 Library Materials

Each faculty member should assist the Library in establishing and maintaining adequate library holdings in areas in which the faculty member teaches. Faculty members are encouraged to submit requests for materials. Requests may be made on official order cards, by memo or e-mail submitted to the Director of the Library.

Refer to **COP ES.3.72** [Learning Resource Center Collection Policy](#)

14.7 Work Orders

Work Order Request for services of the Physical Plant are made by work orders. The two types used are routine maintenance work order, and projects for removal, installation, modification and major repair. Work order requests, after approval by a supervisor authorized to expend funds, are channeled to the Physical Plant for scheduling. Service request needs of an emergency nature may be called in to the Physical Plant. All other requests must be submitted through an online work order. See portal.tstc.edu

14.8 Gifts

The Office of Institutional Advancement should be advised of offers to donate equipment or supplies by business firms or others in order to give proper recognition to them.

14.9 Grants

Assistance in the identification of potential sources for external funding for enhancing instruction and student services is available through the Office of Resource Development. Faculty and staff are encouraged to contact the Associate Vice President of Workforce Development to initiate these processes.

14.10 Commencement

Formal commencement exercises are held at the end of the fall, spring and summer semesters. Faculty members are encouraged to attend all exercises adorned in graduation regalia for participation in the procession.

14.11 News Releases and Press Conferences

All media contact, including media releases, public service announcements, and media conferences, shall be coordinated and approved by the office of the Marketing Office. Official campus statements are made only by the president or his/her designee(s), and the Director of Marketing.

All statements of policy or institutional philosophy must be approved by the Chancellor or President.

14.12 External Communications

To ensure integrity and quality of materials, products and messages, Marketing Office shall approve all external publications and communications before printing and/or distribution. These include, but are not limited to, recruitment materials, handout

literature, articles, program brochures, videos, posters, direct mail literature, and promotional specialties.

14.13 Intellectual Property

TSTC Harlingen is committed to fostering and supporting work and teaching environment which for employee and students encourages development and use of "state-of-the-art" instructional materials, equipment, processes, methods and/or technology that may result in inventions useful to TSTC so long as that development is in accordance with institutional plans and purposes. It is the intent of TSTC to permit an individual to receive recognition and reward for intellectual and innovative inventions and to protect TSTC from exploitation. When inventions that may be patented, licensed, or copyrighted are in development, the ownership and equity shall be prescribed in advance of the development.

See [COP ES.1.01 Intellectual Property](#)

14.14 Crisis Management Plan

TSTC Harlingen is committed to providing employees with direction/guidance in the event of an emergency situation. A Crisis Management Plan handbook is distributed to all employees during New Employee Orientation. The handbook consists of a crisis notification chart which includes the crisis, the chain of command which should be followed, the procedure, the aftermath plan and any additional resources.

14.15 Acceptable Use of Computer Resources

Texas State Technical College Harlingen owns and operates computer resources that are provided for TSTC students, faculty, and staff and other authorized users in support of college business and programs used for administration, education, research, academic development, and public service only. Personal use for profit is specifically prohibited. All authorized users are responsible for seeing that computer resources are used in an effective, efficient, ethical, and lawful manner.

Rules and prohibitions that define acceptable use of these computer resources within TSTC are in addition to and do not supersede any Texas state or federal laws or any other TSTC policies regarding confidentiality, information dissemination, or standards of conduct. Unacceptable use is prohibited and is ground for loss of privileges, termination, and/or legal sanctions under federal, state, and local law.

See also **SOS GA 5.2** [Computer Resources – Acceptable Use](#)

15. FACULTY

15.1 Definition

Faculty includes those employed in teaching, instructing, or lecturing for the purpose of imparting knowledge to students.

15.2 Employment of Faculty

Faculty selection is primarily the responsibility of the Department Chair in charge of the program in which a prospective faculty member will teach. Other faculty members in the same program, as well as staff from Instructional Administration, may be asked to participate in the interview and selection of a prospective faculty member. For information on degree and certification requirements, refer to **COP ES 1.11 [Faculty Credentials](#)**.

Upon recommendation of the Department Chair and subsequent approval of the Division Director, Vice-President for Student Learning and the Human Resources Executive, for EEO compliance purposes, a formal offer of employment will be issued. A contract setting forth the conditions for employment will follow.

All subsequent appointments are made on an annual basis and are contingent upon satisfactory work performance, the need for the position, and the availability of funds.

See [SOS HR 2.1.9](#) Faculty and Executive Contracts

Language Proficiency

It is the practice of TSTC to hire applicants for faculty and laboratory assistant positions only if those applicants are proficient in oral and written communication in the language in which the course(s) will be taught.

15.3 Faculty Ranking System

The faculty ranks are:

- a. Instructor
- b. Senior Instructor
- c. Master Instructor
- d. Associate Professor
- e. Professor

Generally, new faculty members begin their employment at TSTC with the rank of Instructor. Faculty members who are not benefits-eligible are classified as Instructors and do not advance in rank.

For complete information on advancement in rank, refer to [SOS ES. 1.07 Faculty Ranking](#).

15.4 Adjunct Faculty

Texas State Technical College provides an instructional delivery system for technical instructional programs and general education departments based primarily on the utilization of full-time faculty members. The employment of adjunct (part-time, temporary) faculty members is authorized when necessary to eliminate teaching overloads or when an adjunct teaching load develops in a curricular area in which currently employed full-time faculty members are not qualified. The employment of adjunct faculty members will conform to the same requirements as those for full-time faculty, as outlined in Southern Association of Colleges and Schools' principles, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's guidelines, and TSTC Harlingen COP ES 1.11 Faculty Credentials.

Refer to **COP ES 1.12** [Employment of Adjunct Faculty](#)

15.5 Academic Freedom

Faculty members have the freedom to teach and conduct classes in the manner in which they determine best enables them to meet the occupational learning objectives specified in the course syllabi for the courses they are assigned to teach. Restrictions on this freedom are imposed only to the extent that all faculty members are expected not to infringe upon the rights of colleagues, also engaged in conducting classes, and to utilize practices and maintain decorum commensurate with an institution of higher learning. Radical departures from accepted teaching practices in technical and vocational education are considered experimental. Experimentation is acceptable and valuable; however, it must be planned and must have received advanced approval.

Where doubt may exist about the propriety of utilizing a given teaching method or technique, the faculty member should seek the advice of the Department Chair and appropriate Division Director.

Technical education courses are based on occupational learning objectives. These objectives are established by the faculty through use of industrial consultants, School-Industry Cooperative Committees, and Advisory Committees. The objectives are established collectively and must be changed collectively in an orderly manner. Until changes have been examined and approved, the College and its faculty are committed to directing learning activities toward, and conducting courses to meet, the prescribed objectives. Faculty members are urged to constantly search, question, and advance suggestions for alterations in objectives, teaching methods, and curriculum organization which will improve the quality of the teaching efforts.

Faculty members may not be dismissed over an issue of academic freedom. Faculty members may only be disciplined or dismissed for cause due to poor work performance or misconduct. Refer to [SOS HR 2.4.1 Employee Corrective Action](#).

The faculty member is entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing his or her subject, but is expected not to introduce into his or her teaching controversial matter that has no relation to his or her subject. For details on procedures for dealing with charges of misconduct refer to [SOS ES 1.06 Academic Freedom and Responsibility](#).

15.6 Liability and Insurance

The laws governing liability for injuries sustained by students are vague, and the extent to which faculty may be held liable is inconclusive. All faculty members are cautioned that the vagueness of their legal liability status leaves them in a precarious position, and all reasonable precaution should be exercised to avoid the possibility of being held liable for accidental injury.

To minimize the likelihood of being held liable for damages, certain rules can be stated.

1. Students must never be permitted to use equipment which is unsafe.
2. Students should never be exposed to undue/needless hazards or dangerous situations.
3. Students should never be permitted to use equipment without prior instruction about its safe operation and only then after the student has demonstrated to the instructor's satisfaction that the student knows and understands how to operate the equipment in a safe manner.
4. Students should never be left unsupervised. Faculty members assigned the responsibility of supervising a classroom, shop or laboratory are inviting lawsuits in the event injuries occur during their absences. Adequate precautions should be taken in those instances when students are permitted in shops and laboratories on an individual basis to do make-up or additional work. Similarly, regulations should be established to safeguard against unscheduled use of equipment by students.

All regular full-time employees are covered by a blanket liability policy which is retained at the TSTC System Office.

15.7 Research and Grants

Opportunities for participation in research in technical education are rapidly increasing. Faculty members interested in research are urged to seek sources of funds and submit proposals for research grants. Federal and State sources of research money can often be supplemented by grants from private foundations and industry.

Refer to **COP GA 3.01** [Grants and Contracts](#)

Externally funded grants and contracts must be related to the purpose of the College.

In addition, TSTC Harlingen policy dictates that the teaching effort must never be compromised by research activities, and that the researcher must be granted freedom to investigate and report results. TSTC Harlingen retains control over research and instruction.

Temporary funding of limited term projects create budgeting, administrative and manpower situations which must be accommodated by advance planning. In the event that a grant proposal includes personnel needs, the Director of Human Resources should be consulted early in the process in order that position classification actions may be undertaken and completed in a timely manner. Grant-funded positions must adhere to the same procedures and guidelines as any other position. Individuals employed by grant funded programs should be aware that employment will end upon expiration of the grant, and that the college has no obligation to offer employment beyond the grant end date.

15.8 Curriculum

Texas State Technical College faculty have the prerogative of teaching their classes in the manner which they judge will enable them to most effectively achieve the learning objectives for which the curriculum is designed.

Curricula are designed through cooperative efforts between a program's faculty and its Advisory Committee, selected from industry for their knowledge and experience. All programs are approved by the Coordinating Board, and changes must be approved by the Curriculum Review Committee prior to being implemented. Changes in curriculum can only be accomplished through a prescribed procedure for purposes of meeting learning objectives or improvements in meeting those already established. Faculty members are urged to constantly seek ways of improving the teaching programs. They are encouraged to make recommendations to their Department Chairs either informally or formally (by written memoranda) or in faculty meetings.

15.9 Faculty Development

The coordinating office for faculty development is the Organizational Development office. All new faculty members must participate in an Instructor Level Certification Course available through Organizational Development. This department provides on-going faculty development using workshops, seminars and teleconferences.

15.10 Faculty Productivity

Faculty shall have a faculty workload which will generally not exceed 40 clock hours a week. Faculty are employed in the exempt classification, and they may occasionally be requested to work more than 40 hours a week without added compensation.

See **COP ES 1.15** [Faculty Expectations and Workload](#)

15.11 Program Chair/Department Chair Assignment

With over 30 programs of study, the instructional program is divided by Division Clusters. A Division Director is assigned to each cluster. Within each program of study, a Program/Department Chair is assigned. These positions are assigned by the Vice President of Student Learning. A list of programs is available on our website at www.harlingen.tstc.edu/instruprograms.htm.

See **COP ES 1.15** [Faculty Expectations and Workload](#)

15.12 Responsibilities to the College

Faculty primary duties include teaching or supervising in the classroom, laboratory, educational or clinical setting, as well as the administration of duties related to the teaching of students. Faculty members are also responsible for participation in either elected or appointed committees and for attendance at faculty meetings. When possible, faculty members are encouraged to participate in College and community activities that do not interfere with any of their primary duties.

15.12.1 Class Projects and Live Work

Live training projects involve partnerships with external businesses and provide student learning experiences in a realistic context. Such projects are encouraged because such real-life accomplishments add an invaluable dimension to the learning experience.

However, class work must never be exploited solely to accomplish outside objectives. All class projects must be designed and scheduled to achieve learning objectives, never as a means to accomplish other objectives.

15.12.2 Faculty Schedules

Department chairs have the responsibility of supervising the teaching activities in their program, making faculty assignments, scheduling instructional staff and establishing operational procedures in keeping with campus policy.

Faculty who are appointed for at least four and one-half months and at 50% FTE or more shall be available on campus during the normal workday. The department supervisor shall be responsible for work schedules.

All faculty members are expected to be at their classes and laboratory sessions promptly at the scheduled time and present until class is dismissed.

On occasions when the instructor is unable to meet the scheduled classes, arrangements to cover the class shall be made in advance and with the approval of the Department Chair.

15.12.3 Lesson Plans, Syllabi, and Course Design Documents

Instructional staff shall develop lesson plans which enable them to achieve prescribed learning outcomes. Current syllabi and course design documents must be kept on file in the Department Office, the appropriate Division Director's office, and in the Curriculum Office.

In accordance with Texas House Bill 2504, all faculty members will post syllabi for all courses currently being taught. All faculty members should also post a current instructor vitae to the Online Profiles system found at <https://secure.harlingen.tstc.edu/Profiles20/login.aspx>.

15.12.4 Placement of Graduates

The successful placement of graduates in careers for which they were prepared, the number of employment opportunities offered each graduate, and their salary offers are used as indicators to predict and assess the need for the future of technical programs. These are major factors considered in the allocation of resources.

Job placement of graduates is the responsibility of the program from which the student graduates. Thus, it is a responsibility to be met by the Department Chair with the assistance of the faculty. Continuous contact with industrial representatives through active Industry Advisory Committees and Cooperative Education Programs are excellent ways to maintain an effective placement program.

The Career Services Office assists programs with a wide variety of placement activities, such as developing employment sites, providing student seminars, assisting students with resume writing, and maintaining an interactive website. The Career Services Office is responsible for compiling, reporting and communicating all statistical data related to placement to the programs, the College, and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

15.12.5 Program Enrollment

A dynamic, viable program must have a strong enrollment. The College conducts an active public information and recruiting program through College Information Office. However, additional measures to assure a healthy enrollment require faculty participation on behalf of their own programs.

Faculty members are encouraged to accept invitations to visit high schools and/or to participate in program recruiting activities through personal appearances before student groups and civic and professional organizations. These visits should be coordinated through College Information Office to avoid duplication of effort and possible conflicts.

15.12.6 Class Enrollment

The name of each student must appear on the Validation Roster, issued by the Admissions and Records Office on the census date of each semester. A student is not officially enrolled in a class unless listed on the Validation Roster. Students whose names do not appear on the Validation Roster, but who are attending the class, should be sent to the Admissions and Records Office to clear up discrepancies and correct their enrollment. Students should not be allowed to attend the next class meeting until these corrections are made.

Students requesting to add a class after the start of the semester in which that course begins must process the official Course Schedule Change form and submit to the Admissions and Records Office.

15.12.7 Attendance and Grade Reports

The College has no formal attendance policy; therefore, no official attendance records are kept. Individual instructors may keep attendance if they choose, and individual departments may have certain requirements. When the Validation Rosters are sent out (after the census date of the semester) faculty are required to indicate which students have not participated since the beginning of the semester. This aids the Admissions and Records Office in determining the official headcount for State reporting.

Mid-term and final grades are inputted into Web Advisor by the instructor of record for each class and are due by the stated deadlines. Students may access their grades through Web Advisor.

Many students are sponsored through various Federal and State agencies that require regular and periodic reports on progress and participation.

15.12.8 Student Attendance

The College has no formal attendance policy for students. It is expected that students will attend each regularly scheduled period of instruction. This does not nullify or otherwise override any attendance requirements which may be dictated under Federal or State laws or standards.

15.12.9 Change of Grade

The instructor of record is the only person authorized to initiate a grade change, except as noted below, once a grade has been assigned. The change may be accomplished by forwarding the new grade on a "Change of Grade" report form or by written memo to the Admissions and Records Office.

NOTE: If the instructor who recorded the grade is no longer with the college, the

Department Chair with approval of the Vice President for Student Learning may execute the change of grade procedure.

15.12.10 Off-Campus Learning Activities

Instructors may conduct trips away from the campus when such trips are for the purpose of placing students in an instructional atmosphere not available on this campus. Approval of the Department Chair must be obtained prior to the proposed activity.

15.12.11 Classroom Conduct

Faculty members are responsible for enforcing the regulations regarding smoking, drinking, and eating in classrooms, laboratories and shops.

Smoking is permitted only in designated areas.

To assist the custodial staff in maintaining the facilities, the consumption of soft drinks, candy and other food items should be restricted to lounge areas. In many laboratories, eating and drinking are hazardous of the toxic nature of lab materials being handled.

15.13 Responsibilities to Students

Faculty members have specific responsibilities to students:

1. The faculty member shall issue a syllabus to students with the first 10 day of the semester.
 - a. The syllabus will contain the faculty member's contact information including the office phone number, office hours, e-mail, and any other pertinent contact information.
 - b. The syllabus will contain a complete list of required texts and classroom materials.
 - c. The syllabus will disclose the faculty member's grading system and policies regarding makeup work and absences.
 - d. The syllabus will contain a tentative course outline in chronological order.
2. The faculty member shall notify each class of all major exams, and return results of these exams to students within a specified time period.
3. The faculty member will notify students of classroom assignments along with the assignment due dates.

15.13.1 Tutoring

Faculty members may not accept pay for tutoring students during regular working hours (either privately or in groups) in courses of study offered on this campus. However, a faculty member may charge for such services after regular working hours, weekends,

and/or during holidays provided the student is not, at that time, enrolled in any section of the course the faculty member is assigned to teach.

Peer tutoring is available through the Student Success Office and/or the Support Services office.

15.13.2 Release of Student Information

Student records are considered to be the property of Texas State Technical College Harlingen and are compiled, retained, and/or released in accordance with the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974.

It is the policy of this College to regard student scholastic records as confidential information. Information contained in these records will be released to persons or agencies outside Texas State Technical College only upon receipt of proper legal authorization, or with the written consent of the student concerned (FERPA Subpart D, Section 99.30). The Admissions and Records Office is the only department authorized to release copies of student scholastic records.

Faculty and staff members having legitimate need for information in a student's file for purposes of advising, counseling, or conducting authorized institutional studies may have access to student scholastic records as required for these purposes.

15.14 Advising and Counseling

All technical programs students are to be assigned a faculty member to serve as an advisor. The advisor should be from the student's major field of study. Students taking general education courses for transfer are advised in the Academic Advising Center.

It is the responsibility of the advisor to work with students as they advance through the program and to advise them about their enrollment and progress toward graduation.

The faculty advisor should assist students who are graduating with the completion of necessary forms. All students should be notified of the deadline to apply for graduation.

Personal guidance counseling cases should be referred to professional counselors in the Counseling & Testing Center located at the Consolidated Student Services Building. Faculty members who feel a student might profit by receiving such counseling should assist the student in contacting the Counseling & Testing Center to make an appointment to see a counselor.

When a student is not making satisfactory progress or is excessively absent, the instructor should report the matter to his/her department. The department may then contact the Counseling Office with a request for counseling. Continued cooperative efforts between the counselor and instructor may establish the cause for poor performance and result in significant personal development for the student.

15.15 Credit by Examination

Comprehensive examinations for course credit may be authorized by the appropriate Department Chair when a student appears capable of meeting course objectives because of previous training and/or experience. Students who make satisfactory grades will receive the grade of “CR” (credit) and will be relieved of formally enrolling in the course. Credit for the course is counted toward graduation, but grade points are not assigned nor included in calculating grade point ratios.

The information in the Faculty & Staff Handbook is subject to change and is updated periodically.

