



An open letter to employers

**From: Dr. Richard W. Oliver, CEO
American Sentinel University**

If you are reading this letter, you most likely have an employee who has applied to American Sentinel University and is requesting tuition reimbursement. I hope you will seriously consider it.

I spent more than 25 years of my career at the DuPont Company and Nortel Networks and the last 15 years in education at Vanderbilt and Cornell Universities. Now I am CEO of American Sentinel University, founded as a Vanderbilt University Technology Company.

In the past I've been a recipient of tuition reimbursement for my own advanced education, a manager making decisions about supporting employees who want to go back to school part-time, and later a professor working with students receiving tuition assistance. I can tell you categorically that it is rewarding for all concerned—for students, employers, and yes, for us.

You Make the Difference

To help your best and brightest reach their full potential, we need your help. Your critical support for tuition reimbursement can make a significant, positive difference for your employee, but most importantly, for your organization. We believe that education at American Sentinel University provides an attractive ROE (Return on Education) for all concerned.

Workplace Performance & Productivity

We find that students receiving tuition assistance are especially dedicated to their studies and do exceptionally well at work after graduation. Seeing working professionals succeed and prosper is the reason we started the school (whose first courses date back to 1988).

But don't for a minute think online learning is easier than traditional studies. As one of my colleagues responsible for online learning at a traditional university says, "There's no back of the room online. Students are expected to perform." Virtually all graduates in our business programs, for example, took on increased work responsibilities and/or received promotions during or following their course work. Most of our graduates report similar experiences.

World Class Faculty & Programs

We believe that our students do so well because our faculty create and teach world class courses tailored to working professionals. **Working part-time, on their own time, your employees learn the best practice management and technology ideas that they can bring to the workplace on a daily basis.**

Our faculty typically have a PhD but are also working fulltime. We train them to teach online, but as working professionals themselves, they must stay current in their respective fields. They bring that practical experience to their courses.

No Lost Time from Work

At American Sentinel University students study on their own time. We have no daily requirements for class attendance, so students can time shift their studies. We are flexible at times when the occasion calls for it, but are rigid in our requirements that students complete courses and programs completely and competently. Time is flexible, but demonstration of skills and competency is not.

National Accreditation Recognized by the US Dept. of Education

One of the key questions employers ask me is about accreditation. **We have already (since 2000) achieved the demanding accreditation approval of the national accreditation agency Distance Education and Technology Council (DETC), which itself is accredited by the US Dept of Education. We are also committed to adding regional accreditation and various program and technical accreditations.**

All such accreditations take time and resources. We are committed to achieve all of the applicable institutional and program accreditations for our university. Few outside education recognize the requirements for various accreditations, but if you want more information, please see our companion document, A Guide to Accreditation at http://www.americansentinel.edu/Employer_Guide/index.php.

Online Education Achieves Market/Academic Acceptance & Acclaim

When I first started in online education, some people questioned its quality. No more! In fact, not just wholly online schools such as American Sentinel, but traditional schools now almost universally offer online education. One in seven US students in higher education study exclusively online, while 50 percent take at least some classes online. In fact, one of the most important and unbiased observers of online education, the Sloan Consortium*, recently reported that:

- 99 % of colleges and universities with more than 15,000 students offer online courses and programs,
- 2/3 of chief academic officers at public colleges and universities rate online learning as equal to or better than traditional classroom learning.

Today's Workplace: Learning Something New Every Day

Let me say the last word on my role at American Sentinel University. I started my remarks at our recent graduation like this:

In most organizations, CEO stands for Chief Executive Officer. At American Sentinel University however, I much prefer to think of myself as Chief Education Officer, because, as I frequently remind people, my primary job is to educate students.

No part of my job gives me more pleasure than to participate in this graduation ceremony.

Technically graduation marks the end of one's education. In today's environment, however, it is really just the beginning. It is a cliché to use the phrase "life long learning" but each of us, just to keep pace with societies' demands, must learn every day.

I believe that we must all become life-long learners to remain competitive in today's fast paced environment. And I have lived it personally. I completed my undergraduate education in the traditional way, four years after high school, but I worked part-time on my masters (while at DuPont) at age 30 and, with the support of Nortel Networks, my doctorate at age 41.

Cultivating a Climate of Leadership

We are passionate about creating leaders. We recognize that not every student, nor every employee, will be a CEO. **But we believe that leadership is needed at every level of an organization.**

As such, we work to instill leadership training as an integral part of the students' experience at American Sentinel University. Our program, ***Leadership Across the Curriculum*** aims to achieve the following seven leadership principles:

- Oral/written communications
- Interpersonal communications
- Critical/creative thinking
- Ethical insight
- Global awareness
- Information fluency
- Numerical reasoning

Our programs seek to sharpen the management and technical skills of our students, while at the same time providing them the skills to achieve leadership in their functional responsibilities, their respective organizations and in their lives. At American Sentinel University it is our solemn obligation to educate the whole person, to create a culture of leadership, a willingness to embrace change and an appreciation for learning throughout life.

The Bottom Line: Return on Education and Motivating the Best

Research on human resources issues has shown that **support for additional education is among the most important of employee motivators.**

As this White paper (www.americansentinel.edu/news/measuring-rol-and-roel.pdf) identifies, employers can expect to get back from 20 to 200 % return for every dollar invested in education and training. Further, research demonstrates that employees who receive tuition assistance are most likely to **perform better and stay loyal to their employers.**

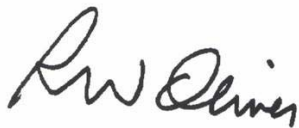
This latter point becomes more critical daily as baby boomers reach retirement. Nationally, this is becoming a major problem, with some 20 percent of the current workforce being 55 or older just five years from now. Meanwhile, unemployment among college graduates is already around 2%. If 98% of the desirable employees are not even looking for a job, it is more important than ever to encourage your best people to stay and grow with you.

Retention becomes critical in an era of an aging workforce. Recent research has concluded that “employers aren’t really going to have a choice. There aren’t as many young workers coming into the ranks as those preparing for retirement.”

Tuition reimbursement is not an expense. It is **an investment in the loyalty, skills and productivity of your most important asset: your employees.**

Please seriously consider supporting your employee with tuition reimbursement. If you still have questions about tuition reimbursement or American Sentinel, please feel free to contact me at rick.oliver@americansentinel.edu or at 615-300-5555. Or contact any of our admissions advisors at admissions@americansentinel.edu or 800-729-2427 at any time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "R.W. Oliver". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr. Richard W. Oliver

*Source: The Sloan Consortium and Southern Regional Education Board (SREB)'s report Making the Grade: Online Education in the United States, 2006, Southern Edition