Benefits Corner: Four New Benefit Options for 2009

UGA Human Resources recently announced several new benefits options to provide employees with additional protection against financial hardship in the event of an illness or injury. Participation in these benefits is completely voluntary, and employees who choose to enroll will pay the premiums through a post-tax payroll deduction. Employees will pay the full premium with no contribution from the University of Georgia.

**Who is eligible?** Employees who work a minimum of 20 hours per week in benefit-eligible positions

**When is the enrollment period?** Employees who enroll in one or all of the new benefits by May 15th, 2009 will have their insurance coverage take effect July 1, 2009. If employees do not sign up during the initial enrollment period, they must wait until the annual open enrollment period in the fall.

**What benefits are available?**

- Boston Mutual short-term disability insurance
- Boston Mutual critical illness insurance
- Aflac Cancer insurance
- Aflac Accident insurance

**Where can I get more information about these voluntary benefits?** Through May 15, 2009, employees may contact the Enrollment Call Center at 1-888-936-7555 to speak with a benefits specialist. Please take time to review the insurance information to determine if these plans would be beneficial for you. Plan details and rates may be viewed online at: www.hr.uga.edu/benefits/bensumm/vol_ben_summ.html

Training and Development: Classes Available for CAES Faculty and Staff

Are you looking for a way to hone your management skills? Would you like to learn how to effectively communicate with your co-workers and clients? Does your department need a refresher on a particular UGA policy?

If you have answered yes to any of these questions, CAES Human Resources would like to offer our assistance.

Training and development classes are currently available for CAES faculty and staff. Topics include: Alcohol and Other Drugs, Coaching, Conduct, Discipline and Documentation, Dealing with Challenging Employees, Effective Communication, FISH, Handling Personnel Issues on Outlying Stations, Hiring (the Right Person), Leadership Skills, Legal Issues in HR, People Skills in the Workplace, Performance Management, Progressive Discipline, Stress Management, Supervising 101, ‘Top Ten’ List, and UGA’s Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy.

A full description of classes may be found at www.caes.uga.edu/unit/hr/employment/documents/CAESClasses.pdf

If you are interested in any of these classes for yourself or your department, please contact CAES Employee Relations Coordinator, Debbie Gausvik, at dgausvik@uga.edu or (706) 542-8575.

For classes open to all UGA faculty and staff, please visit Training and Development at www.hr.uga.edu/careerdev/career.html
Best Practices: Equal Opportunity in CAES

The University of Georgia College of Agricultural & Environmental Sciences offers its educational programs, assistance, and materials to all people regardless of race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, or veteran status and is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer. UGA is the 1862 land-grant university in the state and a publicly funded institution. Because of this, UGA is subject to federal, state, and local laws regarding day to day operations with special emphasis on Title VI and Title IX of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. These laws require any organization that receives federal monies to ensure that its employment and operational practices (and those of any related organization as well) are performed in a nondiscriminatory manner. As CAES employees, we each have an individual responsibility to uphold equal opportunity practices in all aspects of our work.

To find out more about Equal Opportunity or to see how it applies specifically to you in your position, contact Steve Gibson at sgibson@uga.edu or (706) 542-1147.

Did You Know...

Employees of the University System of Georgia may be entitled to up to 12 work weeks of job-protected leave during any 12-month period?

Consistent with the provisions of the federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) of 1993, Employees may take FMLA leave for the following reasons:

- The employee’s own serious health condition
- The care of an immediate family member with a serious health condition
- The birth and care of a newborn child
- The placement of a child with the employee for adoption or foster care
- An immediate family member being on active duty or having an impending call to active duty in the Armed Forces.

Employees eligible for FMLA have worked for the University System at least 12 months and have worked at least 1,250 hours in the 12 months immediately preceding the leave. FMLA leave runs concurrently with, not separate from, other types of leave. See the example above of the FMLA “Umbrella.” For more examples, visit www.hr.uga.edu/fmla/fmla_umbrella.pdf.

Employees should give their supervisors at least 30 days notice of foreseeable leave and as much notice possible in the event of an unforeseeable leave situation.

In order to request FMLA leave, employees must complete two forms: the Family & Medical Leave Request and the Certification of Health Care Provider. Both forms may be found here: www.usg.edu/employment/benefits/fmla/

Please send completed FMLA forms to Whitney Gaughan in the CAES Business Office. You may contact Whitney with questions at wgaughan@uga.edu or (706) 542-9002.

Teachers Retirement System: Your Pension is Safe

In its bi-annual newsletter for active members, the TRS Retirement Report, Teachers Retirement System of Georgia features a letter from Executive Director, Jeffrey L. Ezell, reassuring employers, active members, and retirees of the soundness of the state retirement system.

Ezell writes, “It is important to recognize and remember that the time horizon of the TRS investment portfolio is measured in decades, not days, weeks, or months. Much attention is paid to what is happening now, but the goal is to use periods of market fear and exuberance to TRS’ long-term advantage.”

“The funds used to pay retirement benefits are derived from employer contributions, member contributions, and investment income. These funds are invested in a mix of high quality bonds and stocks. Because TRS invests in a well-diversified portfolio, when one company or asset class under performs, the stability of the other asset classes offsets that negative performance. Simply stated, the companies making headlines today are just a small fraction of our overall portfolio.”

For the article in its entirety, view the TRS Retirement Report newsletter here: www.trsga.com/uploadedforms/trsrad85f.815442005935507PM.pdf

The current issue of the TRS Retirement Report also includes topics such as purchasing service credit and introduced legislation that affects TRS.