

Frequently Asked Questions about Changes in Policies for Non-Represented Employees

Q. Which non-represented employee groups and policies are affected by the changes?

A. The policy revisions affect non-represented hourly and salaried employees, the Management Group, Presidents and Chancellor. The revisions primarily affect policies regarding notice and severance benefits related to layoff (discontinuance of employment for budget or program reasons). There are also changes to policies for length of initial term of appointment, notice of at-will discontinuance, and appointments of Presidents and Chancellor. There are no changes in policies related to non-represented faculty.

Q. Why did the Board of Trustees revise policies for non-represented employees?

A. UMS policies for notice and severance have been found to be far more generous than peer universities and the State of Maine. The benefits available to University employees when their positions are eliminated result in substantial costs to UMS. In times of pressing financial constraints, as we are now experiencing, these costs make it very difficult for UMS to reduce expenses in response to reduced revenue. Policies which are far more generous than those of other employers with whom the University competes also raise concerns about the University's use of limited financial resources among Maine citizens whose taxes support our public universities.

Q. How do notice and severance policies for non-represented employees compare to those for represented employees?

A. For non-represented hourly employees the policies for notice and severance have provided much greater benefits than are available to represented employees. For non-represented salaried employees, the benefits have been equal to those for represented employees.

Q. With the changes how will notice and severance policies for non-represented employees compare to those for represented employees?

A. Notice and severance for non-represented hourly employees will be similar to benefits for represented employees (slightly more or less depending on length of service). For salaried employees, the notice and severance benefits will generally be less than those available to represented employees.

Q. Will layoff policies also change for employees who are represented by unions?

A. Policies that apply to represented employees are changed through collective bargaining. UMS has contracts with all six represented units that will expire in 2011. Any discussion of changes to layoff policies for represented employees will take place during future contract negotiations.

Q. Why not apply changes equally to all employees or only to new employees?

A. In developing the policy changes the University was sensitive to the potential impact on longer term employees who receive the greatest benefits under the existing policies. The three-tier implementation provides that current policies will continue to apply to all employees with 15 or more years of continuous regular service (hired July 1, 1995 or earlier). Employees with at least 5 but less than 15 years of continuous regular service will be in a second tier of benefits. Employees with less than 5 years of continuous regular service and new employees will be in a third tier. Tiers one and two will eventually be phased out as these employees leave University employment. The tiers, based on the employee's length of continuous regular service as of July 1, 2010, are intended to avoid dramatic changes that could disrupt career and financial plans of long service employees.

There are two reasons why the policies are not designed to apply only to new hires while continuing existing policies for all current employees:

- If the revised policies were applied only to employees hired in the future, it would be many years before any cost reductions would be experienced.
- Current policies provide lower levels of notice and severance to employees with less than five years of service, and the policy changes make smaller adjustments to notice and severance for shorter service employees.

Q. How will years of service be counted for determining which tier of benefits applies to an employee?

A. The assignment to a tier of benefits will be based on continuous regular service with the University of Maine System. This includes all regular (i.e., not temporary) employment, regardless of campus or bargaining unit, as long as there has been no break in service.

Examples:

- An employee hired 6/30/95 in an UMPA-unit position who transferred to a non-represented position in 2002 will have 15 years of continuous regular service as of 7/1/10 and will be eligible for Tier 1 benefits.
- An employee who was initially hired on 7/1/95, who left University employment in 1999 and was re-hired 6/30/2005 will have five years of service as of 7/1/10, and will be eligible for Tier 2 benefits.
- An employee hired at UMA on 12/15/1990 who transferred to UMF on 3/15/2007 will have 19 years of service as of 7/1/2010 and will be eligible for Tier 1 benefits.

Q. Do employees move from one tier of benefits to another as they reach 5 or 15 years of completed service?

A. No, the tier placement is based on completed years of continuous regular university service as of July 1, 2010.