



**Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL)
Executive Office**

To: All IHL Executive Office Employees

From: Cheryl Mowdy, Director
Support Operations

Date: August 1, 2008

Re: Annual Reminders

Please take note of the following requirements, changes, and new information.

Outside Employment

In accordance with Board Policy 801.08, employees who engage in outside employment, including consulting, must complete the form *Application for Permission to Engage in Outside Employment or Practice of Profession* prior to employment. This form requires the approval of the Commissioner and must be maintained in the employee's personnel file in Human Resources. The form must be completed or updated at the end of each fiscal year or each time the outside employment changes, whichever occurs sooner. The form should be completed even if the employee is not receiving pay. If the employee works/consults during regular business hours, the employee must charge this time to personal (vacation) leave. It is the responsibility of the employee's supervisor to ensure the employee complies with these policies.

An employee is *not permitted* to engage in an outside business or profession that competes with a similar business or profession over which he or she has direct supervision, inspection, or purchasing authority, such being a conflict of interest.

If an employee paid from one unit does work for another unit with the IHL Executive Office and is paid for the additional work, the employee must have the approval from their supervisor prior to beginning work.

Handbook

Employees are encouraged to read the handbook annually. The handbook is accessible on the homepage of the IHL website at www.mississippi.edu.

Beneficiaries

It is the employee's responsibility to ensure that the proper beneficiaries are recorded for retirement or insurance purposes. Any member of the Public Employees' Retirement System of Mississippi (PERS) with at least **4 years** of membership service hired into the State of Mississippi System *prior to July 1, 2007* or **8 years** of membership service if hired *on or after July 1, 2007*, who dies prior to retirement is assured that his or her spouse and dependent children automatically will be entitled to monthly benefits **unless** the spouse waives rights as a beneficiary eligible for benefits prior to the member's death.

Insurance - Wellness

Effective January 1, 2008, participants must complete a Health Risk Assessment (HRA) in order to receive coverage for adult wellness/preventive services. Upon completing an HRA, participants over the age of 18 are eligible for a maximum of \$1,000 in first-dollar coverage for certain wellness/preventive services.

Participants who do not complete an HRA will not be eligible to receive any adult wellness/preventive service coverage. To complete the HRA, participants can log on to www.healthytogether.net/Mississippi. The HRA can also be accessed through a link on the State Health Plan's website at <http://knowyourbenefits.dfa.state.ms.us> or the IHL home page, www.mississippi.edu.



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In order to be covered, adult wellness/preventive services must be rendered by a participating AHS State Network provider. Subject to the new \$1,000 maximum, the Plan will continue to pay 100% of the allowable charge for adult wellness/preventive office visits and certain diagnostic tests. For a complete list of covered adult wellness/preventive services, please visit the Plan's website at <http://knowyourbenefits.dfa.state.ms.us> or call Blue Cross Blue Shield at (800) 709.7881.

Advanced Application for Selection - Retirement

Employees who have accumulated at least 25 years of creditable service, regardless of age, or have at least **4 years** of membership service if hired into the State of Mississippi System *prior to July 1, 2007* OR have at least **8 years** of membership service if hired into the State of Mississippi *on or after July 1, 2007* and are at least 60 years of age, are eligible to file an Advanced Application for Selection of Optional Retirement Benefits form with PERS to provide monthly benefits to the beneficiary in the event of the employee's death before retirement. The option and/or beneficiary may be changed at any time prior to retirement by filing another Advanced Application. Furthermore, the employee may also change the option and/or beneficiary upon the actual date of retirement. The **most common reasons** for filing an Advanced Application are: (1) the member has no spouse, (2) the member has been married less than one year, (3) the member has been married more than one year but will not be selecting Option 2, or (4) the member wants to protect multiple beneficiaries under an optional benefit payment plan. (**NOTE: Those employees who have been married for at least one year and who wish to have their spouse as their primary beneficiary does not need to complete this form.**) Before you can file an Advanced Application, you must obtain an estimate of benefits from PERS. The Office of Human Resources can do this for you, or you may order the estimate through the PERS web page, which may be accessed via the PERS Web page, which is www.pers.state.ms.us. If you have questions, please call Susan Erickson at 2-6134.

Benefits-Cafeteria Plan

The cafeteria plan permitted under Section 125 of the Internal Revenue Service Code, which allows certain benefits to be paid with before-tax dollars, allows for benefit selection decisions on an annual basis. Therefore, once an employee makes a selection, the benefits may not be revoked or changed until the following plan year, unless there is a change in family status such as a divorce, marriage, birth of a child, death, or loss of job by spouse and subsequent loss of employer-provided insurance. Any change is subject to the rules of each benefit program. **Open Enrollment period is typically scheduled in October; however, the Office of Human Resources will communicate the specific date in advance.**

Tax Sheltered Annuities

The Internal Revenue Service Code 1954, as amended in Section 403 (B) allows an employee to take advantage of certain tax advantages by excluding a portion of his/her gross salary to purchase an annuity for retirement purposes. Contribution amounts have maximum limits based on age, salary and years of service. The IHL Executive Office offers two authorized annuity programs –AIG VALIC and MS Deferred Compensation Plan and Trust. Additional information related to the advantages of participating in a 403 (B) program and how to sign up will be provided by the Office of Human Resources.

Insurance - Network

The Department of Finance and Administration states that it is the employee's responsibility to verify his or her physician's status each time an appointment is made (to make sure the doctor is still in the network). Blue Cross/Blue Shield will not pay claims at the network rate if the physician is not in the plan – even if the physician was in the plan at the beginning of the contract. Additionally, hospital stays and certain medical services must be pre-certified by **CareAllies**, the state's health insurance utilization board. Visit <http://www.mississippi.edu/hr/> and under General Information, select **Medical Services Requiring Pre-Certification** for a listing or call Intracorp at 1-800-523-8739.



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Dependents

It is the responsibility of the employee to add any new dependents to the existing health plan within **60 days** of the dependent's eligibility for that dependent to be covered. Additionally, if an employee has a dependent who is between the ages of 19 and 24 (until dependent's 25th birthday), the employee must notify Blue Cross/Blue Shield, annually, as long as that dependent is still a full-time college student. A notice is normally sent to the employee during the summer.

Leave and Leave of Absence

If an employee is out due to an illness, the employee may use medical leave only after the first 8 hours are charged to personal leave. A doctor's excuse is required for each absence due to illness of thirty-two (32) or more consecutive working hours (combined personal and medical leave). Once an employee has used up his/her sick leave, then the employee must use personal leave. Any leave of absence must be approved by the employee's Assistant Commissioner and the Office of Human Resources. In no instance are leaves of absence granted automatically. An application for leave and medical certification (if leave of absence is for medical reasons) must be submitted to the Office of Human Resources before a leave of absence is considered. The employee's Assistant Commissioner must approve all leave.

Claiming of Leave Time

If an employee is off from work, the employee must claim either sick or personal leave depending upon the circumstances. If an employee does not have available leave time, the time away from work will not be compensated. State law prohibits employees from going into a deficit balance on leave hours. All employees must submit a monthly Time Record (timesheet). Non-exempt employees must complete weekly time sheets to be given weekly to the immediate supervisor.

Current Names, Addresses and Telephone Numbers

Employees should make sure the Office of Human Resources has their current legal name (as shown on their social security card), addresses and telephone numbers. This information will be forwarded to the retirement system and IHL insurance providers applicable to the individual.

Degree Compensation

For clarification purposes, the policy of compensation for degrees pertains to **first degrees only**. For example, if an employee already has a master's degree, he or she will not be compensated for this second degree.

Dependent Tuition Waivers

In order for dependents to receive tuition remission, the parent must be a full-time employee of the IHL Executive Office. The dependent must be single and must be under the age of 25. The *Application for Scholarship for Dependent Children of Staff* form may be obtained from the Office of Human Resources. The requesting employee must complete the form and return to the Office of Human Resources for approval before forwarding to the Commissioner.

Faculty /Staff Tuition Waiver

IHL Executive Office full-time employees are allowed to take six hours of coursework free of charge each semester. Employees must maintain a cumulative 2.0 grade point average on his/her coursework to continue to receive the free courses. Employees must meet all admission requirements to the University and to any particular program.



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The *Application for Staff Tuition Waiver* may be obtained from the Office of Human Resources. The requesting employee must complete the form and return to the Office of Human Resources for approval before forwarding to the Commissioner. A copy of the waiver will be kept on file in the Office of Human Resources. The employee is only entitled to 3 hours per week to be away from work before personal leave must be used.

New Policies and Web Page

As new policies are issued, we will update them on the IHL website. Please refer to the handbook on the IHL website (www.mississippi.edu) for further clarifications of any policy.

If you have any questions, please contact the Office of Human Resources at 2.6134.