



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

The following is a summary of the fringe benefits offered by the **Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL) Executive Office**. For more information, please contact the Human Resources Office – Susan Erickson at 601.432.6134.

***Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS)***

Membership is required for all state employees who work more than 20 hours per week or are employed more than 80 hours a month. The State of Mississippi mandates participation in the retirement system as a condition of employment. The employee contributes 9.00 percent and the employer contributes 12.93 percent of the employee's salary up to \$245,000.

Members who join the Retirement System before July 1, 2007, are vested with four years of membership service and can retire at age 60 with at least four years of membership service or any age with 25 years of credible service. Members who join on or after July 1, 2007, are vested with eight years of membership service and can retire at age 60 with at least eight years of membership service or any age with 25 years of credible service. New members who join on or after July 1, 2011, are vested with eight years of membership service and can retire at age 60 with at least eight years of membership service or any age with 30 years of credible service. There are ways a person can retire on disability through the retirement system – an employee must be vested to apply for disability, or if an employee has a work-related injury, he/she may retire without regard to time on the job.

If an employee terminates before he/she becomes vested with PERS, the employee has three options: 1) withdraw his/her contributions with a 20 percent penalty on early withdrawal, 2) transfer the contribution to a qualified retirement account, or 3) leave the contribution with PERS in anticipation of returning to covered employment. If the employee moves to another state agency, the funds *must* remain in PERS.

***Tax Sheltered Annuity/Retirement Plan***

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. The plan defers taxes on the income and the growth of the income until the monies are withdrawn from the program. Once the funds are withdrawn, the funds are treated as ordinary income and taxed at the current rate of the employee at that time. Contribution amounts have maximum limits based on age, salary and years of service. The IHL Executive Office offers one authorized 403(b) program – VALIC.

The Mississippi Deferred Compensation Plan and Trust is a supplemental retirement savings plan regulated under Section 457 of the Internal Revenue Code and is administered by Mississippi PERS. Deferred Compensation is a governmental tax-deferred savings plan. The minimum amount that may be deferred with the MS Deferred Compensation Plan and Trust is \$25 per month. Any employee of the State of Mississippi is eligible to participate.

***Cafeteria Plan (Section 125 Plan)***

IHL offers a pre-tax program permitted under Section 125 of the Internal Revenue Service Code which allows an employee to select from a variety of available benefits. The plan is typically referred to as a *cafeteria plan*. The program allows certain benefits to be paid with before-tax dollars rather than with after tax dollars, increasing the amount of take-home pay, lowering tax liability and lowering the cost of the benefit for the employee.

The program does not affect the state retirement contributions, or in any way, change benefits available to employees when they retire. However, the employee may incur a slightly reduced social security benefit at the time of retirement. Research shows the resulting difference in social security benefits at retirement is insignificant, especially when compared to the savings available during the employee's career.



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IHL's cafeteria plan administrator is Southern Administrators and Benefit Consultants (SABC) ([www.sabcflex.com](http://www.sabcflex.com)) The medical insurance programs included under the plan are group medical insurance (dependent coverage), cancer and intensive care insurance, hospital confinement insurance, dental expenses, etc.

The cafeteria plan also permits an employee to establish a medical reimbursement plan and/or a dependent child care plan. The medical reimbursement plan helps the employee pay for out-of-pocket medical expenses not covered by the employee's health plans. The employee decides how much of his/her salary to set aside, before taxes, to pay for the unreimbursed medically-related expenses. Cafeteria plans are made pursuant to a salary reduction agreement to allow the employer to pay for the benefits.

The dependent day care plan enables an employee to redirect a portion of his/her salary, on a pre-tax basis, to pay for employment-related dependent care expenses. Each plan year, the employee elects the amount to be contributed to his/her account based on estimated dependent care expenses. Qualifying dependents include a participating employee's tax dependents under the age of 13 as well as incapacitated dependents of any age, if the dependent resides with the employee.

Cafeteria plan selection decisions are 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. Otherwise, employees are limited to making changes during open enrollment (typically in October) of each year for the next plan year's cafeteria program. The annual limit for medical reimbursement is \$5,000. The annual limit for dependant child care is \$5,000.

The plan year is January 1<sup>st</sup> to December 31<sup>st</sup>. The medical reimbursement plan incorporates an additional 2½ month grace period (costs incurred through March 15 may be reported); while the dependent child care plan does not include a grace period past December 31. For the medical reimbursement, receipts must be received by SABC by April 15 of the following year.

### ***Health Insurance***

The State of Mississippi offers benefit-eligible employees coverage in the statewide, self-insured health plan. The claims administrator is Blue Cross and Blue Shield (BCBS) of MS; they are not the provider. The Department of Finance and Administration is the ultimate authority and decides the rules of the plan. The State of Mississippi pays the employee's portion of the health insurance premiums. Dependent coverage is available at the employee's expense. New employees must enroll in the insurance program within the first 31 days of employment and the coverage is effective on the first day of employment. Employees have 60 days to make changes due to a qualifying event. Benefits of the health insurance plan are outlined in the booklet provided by the subscriber or at <http://knowyourbenefits.dfa.state.ms.us>. This link is also provided on the IHL home page, [www.mississippi.edu/ihl](http://www.mississippi.edu/ihl). BCBS mails insurance cards directly to the employee's home address. Replacement cards for lost cards may be obtained by notifying BCBS Customer Service at 800.709.7881.

If an employee leaves employment with IHL, the employee may continue health insurance coverage at the employee's expense through the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA). Also, if anyone in the employee's family becomes ineligible for dependent coverage, the coverage may also be maintained at the expense of the insured through COBRA.

### ***Prescription Drugs***

Plan participants are covered under the co-payment Prescription Drug Plan. Catalyst is the pharmacy benefit manager. With Select Coverage you must meet a \$75 prescription drug deductible before receiving benefits under the program. With Base Coverage you must meet the applicable calendar year



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deductible (medical and/or prescription drug) before receiving benefits under the program. A 30-day supply of generics is \$12.00, preferred brand (listed on preferred drug list) is \$40.00, and non-preferred brand drugs (no generic equivalent) are \$65.00. When a prescription drug is purchased at a retail pharmacy, a generic differential is applied when a brand name drug (non-preferred drug with generic equivalent) is dispensed and a generic is available. When a generic drug is available and the employee receives a brand name drug, the employee will pay the difference in the cost of the brand name drug and the generic drug (generic differential) plus the generic co-payment amount; in other words, the retail price. A mail-order program for prescription drugs (Catalyst) is also available which allows additional savings for the employee. More detail on the prescription drug plan is available in the Health Insurance Summary Plan Booklet or at <http://knowyourbenefits.dfa.state.ms.us> or you may access this link on the IHL home page, [www.mississippi.edu/ihl](http://www.mississippi.edu/ihl).

**Dental and Vision Insurance**

Dental and vision insurance is offered through Starmount Life Insurance ([www.starmountlife.com](http://www.starmountlife.com).) The dental provider is Always Dental and the vision provider is Always Vision. Employee and dependent coverage are available at the employee's expense.

Always Dental Insurance has no deductible for preventive services and a \$50 deductible for basic and major services for new enrollees. The insurance pays up to \$1,500 in a benefit year (includes preventive, basic, major and orthodontic services.) There is a six-month waiting period for major services and a twelve month waiting period for orthodontic services. Please check with the Human Resources Department for current rates and a summary of covered procedures. The Starmount Life link may also be found on the IHL website, [www.mississippi.edu/hr](http://www.mississippi.edu/hr).

Always Vision insurance is a full-service plan with in-network allowances for frames and contact lenses. In-network co-pays are \$10 for an exam and no co-pay for materials at Wal-mart (\$15 materials co-pay at other in-network providers.) For a detailed summary of the vision insurance and coverage prices, contact the Human Resources Department.

**State Group Life Insurance**

Employees are offered a life insurance policy in an amount equal to double the insured's salary at a minimum of \$30,000 and a maximum of \$100,000 (double in case death is a result of an accident). IHL pays 50 percent of the premium and the employee pays the additional 50 percent. The cost to the employee is \$0.12 per \$1,000. Employees interested in obtaining coverage will be enrolled on their first day of employment and a booklet will be provided outlining policy coverage and provisions.

**Other Insurances**

Employees may purchase cancer care, intensive care and dread disease insurance policies for themselves and their dependants at group rates. Premiums are paid by the employee. For a detailed packet and contact information, please contact the Human Resources Department or visit the IHL website at [www.ihl.state.ms.us](http://www.ihl.state.ms.us).

**Optional Life Insurance**

An employee may purchase Optional Term Life insurance in increments of six times his/her salary or a maximum of \$600,000, whichever is less. The employee may also purchase dependent life insurance coverage for his/her spouse and/or children.

The premiums are age-rated in five-year intervals. When an employee enters the next higher age bracket, the premium goes up accordingly. The ages are adjusted annually in January. This program offers various options when an employee terminates or retires to convert coverage to a permanent insurance policy. The employee pays the total cost of the premium he/she elects. Rates are available from the Human Resources Department.



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***Credit Union***

The MS Public Employees Credit Union offers a variety of financial services such as a share savings account, share draft account, debit cards, direct deposit, notary service, club accounts, loans, money orders, etc. An \$11.00 initial deposit is required to open an account. This fee must be submitted along with the application for membership. The Credit Union is located at 613 South West Street, Jackson, MS 39201. The telephone number is 601.948.8191. Additional information may be obtained by contacting the Credit Union or by contacting the Human Resources Department.

***Workers' Compensation***

IHL provides workers' compensation insurance to employees who are injured in the performance of their duties. This coverage protects employees in case of disability or death as a result of injuries sustained at work. Any injury should be reported immediately to the employee's supervisor.

***Unemployment Compensation***

Employees of IHL are provided unemployment compensation coverage as provided under the MS Employment Security Law. Unemployment compensation is intended to provide a reduced level of compensation to those who become unemployed or laid-off from work and meet the specified conditions of eligibility. The final determination for eligibility is made by the Mississippi Employment Security Commission.

***Holidays***

The following days are observed as official holidays by the IHL Executive Office:

- New Year's Day
- Martin Luther King, Jr.'s, Birthday
- National Memorial Day
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day (and the Friday following)
- Christmas (and six additional days)
- Floating Holiday (to be decided in conjunction with the supervisor)

A holiday schedule is distributed each December for the following year. When an employee is required to work on a holiday, state law prevents payment for that day. Another day must be taken with approval of his/her supervisor. Official holidays falling within personal or major medical leave count as holiday time rather than personal or major medical leave. All holiday times must be taken during the calendar year in which the holiday occurs.

***Personal Leave***

Full-time employees are entitled to personal leave benefits beginning on their first effective day of employment with the IHL Executive Office. Employees earn personal leave credit for each month of service. Part-time employees accrue leave on a pro-rata basis depending on the number of hour worked.

Personal leave may be used for vacations or personal business and shall be used for illness of the employee or member of the employee's immediate family requiring an absence of one day or less. Personal leave shall be used for the first day of an employee's illness requiring an absence of more than one day. Personal leave shall also be used by the employee for the first day of illness of a member of the employee's immediate family requiring absence of more than one day. Immediate family is defined as spouse, parent, stepparent, child, sibling, stepchild, grandchild, grandparent, son or daughter-in-law, mother- or father-in-law or brother- or sister-in-law.



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Employees are allowed credit for personal leave computed on the basis of continuous service at the following monthly and annual accrual rates:

<b>Continuous Service</b>	<b>Monthly Accrual Rate</b>	<b>Annually Accrual Rate</b>
1 month to 3 years	12 hours	18 days
37 months to 8 years	14 hours	21 days
97 months to 15 years	16 hours	24 days
Over 15 years	18 hours	27 days

Personal leave will be credited to the employee's leave record after completion of each month's service and is then available for use in the following month. An employee's personal leave balance is printed on his/her pay stub each month.

An employee who terminates and is later reemployed will earn leave as a new employee. Employees transferring from another state agency with no lapse in employment should provide the Human Resources Department with a statement of their accrued personal and major medical leave to be transferred and will earn rate at the previous accrual rate. An employee who leaves employment with IHL to work for another state agency cannot be paid for accumulated personal leave when there is no lapse in employment.

There is no limit to the accumulation of earned personal leave. Upon termination of employment, each employee shall be paid for unused personal leave not to exceed 240 hours, or 30 days. Unused personal leave in excess of 30 days, or 240 hours, shall be counted as creditable service for retirement purposes.

**Major Medical Leave**

Employees are allowed credit for major medical leave computed on the basis of continuous service at the following monthly annual rates:

<b>Continuous Service</b>	<b>Monthly Accrual Rate</b>	<b>Annually Accrual Rate</b>
1 month to 3 years	8 hours	12 days
37 months to 8 years	7 hours	10.5 days
97 months to 15 years	6 hours	9 days
Over 15 years	5 hours	7.5 days

Major medical leave may be used for the illness or injury of an employee or member of the employee's immediate family only after the employee has used one day of personal leave for each absence due to illness, or leave without pay if the employee has no accrued personal leave. Major medical leave may **only** be used without using personal leave when regularly scheduled visits to a doctor's office or a hospital **for the continuing treatment of a chronic disease, as certified in advance by a physician.** For each absence due to illness of 32 consecutive working hours, (combined personal leave and major medical leave) major medical leave **shall be** authorized only when leave was certified by the attending physician.

An employee may use up to three days of earned major medical leave per calendar year for absences due to a death in the immediate family. Personal leave may be used for absences due to other deaths in the immediate family or for additional days needed after three days of major medical leave have been used during a calendar year.

The immediate family is defined as a spouse, parent, stepparent, sibling, child, grandchild, stepchild, grandparent, son-or daughter-in-law, mother-or father-in-law or brother- or sister-in-law.

Regular full- and part-time employees are eligible for major medical leave. Employees earn major medical leave credit for each month of service. Employees who work less than a full work week (40 hours) will be allowed major medical leave credit on a pro-rata basis.



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Medical leave will be credited to the employee's leave record after completion of each month's service and is available for use in the following month. An employee's major medical leave balance is printed on his/her pay stub each month.

An employee who has terminated and later is reemployed will begin a new period of employment for leave purposes.

There is no limit to the total number of hours an employee may accumulate for major medical leave. Unused major medical leave shall be counted as creditable service for retirement purposes.

No payment will be made for accrued major medical leave unless the employee presents medical evidence that his/her physical condition is such that he/she can no longer work in a capacity with IHL. In such case, the employee may be paid for not more than 120 days of unused major medical leave.

***Administrative Leave***

Administrative leave with pay may be granted to an employee for services as a witness, juror or party of litigant, as verified by the clerk of the court. Special leave is not granted for court attendance when the employee is the defendant or is engaged in personal litigation.

Administrative leave with pay may be granted in the event of extreme weather conditions or in the event of man-made, technological or natural disaster or emergency.

Administrative leave is not counted against the earned credit of employees.

***Elections***

Most employees live or work close enough to the polls to vote before or after working hours. Should this not be possible, the employee may have time off to vote in county, state or federal elections with the prior approval of his/her immediate supervisor.

***Military Leave***

Employees who are called to active military duty as the result of national emergencies may be granted a military leave of absence (without pay) beginning on the date of the call to military service.

A leave of absence **with pay** may be granted for no more than fifteen work days per calendar year to a regular employee who, as a member of the National Guard or official militia of Mississippi, or as a member of any of the reserve components of the armed forces, is ordered to active duty.

***Tuition Remission***

Full-time employees of IHL, with approval of the Commissioner of Higher Education, may register without tuition for two academic credit courses per semester at any institution of higher learning under the governance of the Board of Trustees.

***Undergraduate Tuition Remission for Dependents***

Single, dependent children (24 years-old and under) of full-time employees at IHL are eligible for undergraduate tuition remission at any state institution of higher learning under the governance of the Board of Trustees.

In order to receive a 50 percent tuition remission or, if eligible, full tuition remission, a dependent must gain admission to one of the universities under the governance of the Board of Trustees and make a formal written request to the Office of Financial Aid of the respective institution.



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A dependent may receive undergraduate remission which may be continued until the degree requirements for the first baccalaureate degree are met or the age limitation is met. The scholarship is automatically renewable on a semester-to-semester basis provided the student maintains admission at the institution.