

Job Transition FAQs for Non-Represented Staff

(Represented Employees Should Consult Their Collective Bargaining Agreements)

Background

UVM is experiencing financial difficulty similar to that faced by other institutions of higher education. Specifically, UVM is facing a multi-million dollar budget gap, with planned cuts to the General Fund budget of \$10.8 million for fiscal year 2010.

University leadership is addressing this budget gap from several directions. Expenditures are being trimmed by making cuts in the General Fund budget. At the same time, there may be opportunities for revenue enhancement (e.g., increased enrollment) along with a planned draw upon reserve funds. Unfortunately, however, the reductions to the General Fund budget necessitate the elimination of a number of open and unfilled positions, along with, as necessary, the elimination of filled positions, resulting in layoffs.

By taking these steps, UVM will be able to sustain financial stability for the long term. For additional financial information, visit the **UVM Budget Updates** portion of the President's web site:

www.uvm.edu/president/budgetinfo.

As outlined in the President's memo of February 17, the budget reconciliation process will be accomplished in two phases. In phase one (to be completed February 20), the general fund budget will be reduced and layoffs will occur in areas where current operations cannot be sustained regardless of conceivable changes in projected revenues. In phase two (to be completed in early April), the University may have to make the rest of the recommended cuts and implement additional layoffs—depending on the outcome of state appropriation discussions and other revenue projections (net tuition revenue, indirect cost recovery, investment income, etc.). On February 20, the University informed all staff who will be affected in phase one, and all who may be affected in phase two.

Notice and Separation

What is the rationale for a common notification date for staff whose positions are or may be affected?

February 20 was chosen as a common notification date in order to provide as much notice to staff as possible, so that employees can have time to begin planning their job transition while still working at UVM.

Is there a common separation date for all affected staff positions?

No. Separation dates are tied to a variety of variables, including whether a position is being eliminated for fiscal year 2009 or 2010.

Non-represented staff whose position has been terminated due to a fiscal year 2009 budget reduction will be given as much notice as possible, based on budgetary considerations.

Non-represented staff positions identified under the budget reduction plan for fiscal year 2010 will typically terminate on June 30, 2009, unless individuals work less than a 12 month year, in which case their end date will be the end of their fiscal year 2009 appointment period.

For represented staff employees, notification procedures will be handled according to the provisions of the applicable collective bargaining agreement.

If I am informed that my position has been eliminated, what should I do?

The termination letter you receive will outline next steps for you. An Employee Advisor from Human Resource Services will contact you to schedule an appointment. Employee Advisors can review benefits and payroll questions as well as introduce you to the Job Transition Service. This service includes career counseling, resume writing workshops and job search methods.

There will be a temporary change in the recruitment process that will give laid off employees the opportunity to apply for jobs before they are posted externally. (More information is given below under the heading "Job Transition Services and Reemployment.")

What should I expect if I am on vacation or out sick the day that employees are notified?

The University is making every effort to contact those who are away. Those who cannot be reached will be personally notified by their supervisor and/or department head on the day that they return to work.

How and when will the remaining staff be told of the layoffs? Do employees who are being terminated have to be present at that meeting?

Management will meet with the remaining staff soon after the affected employees have been notified to discuss what has happened and how the workload will be addressed moving forward. Those employees whose positions were affected will be given a choice about attending the meeting.

Where should questions regarding resources for people impacted by the layoffs be directed?

When position eliminations are announced, managers will provide employees with a handout that provides an overview of transition resources available to them. Additionally, all staff who need support—whether their job is being eliminated or not—are encouraged to utilize the services offered by the [UVM Employee Assistance Program](#).

Can I appeal the elimination of my position?

Employees have the right to appeal the decision if they believe that it was made without due consideration for the facts. Appeal rights vary and your rights will be clarified in the individual separation letters prepared for each affected employee. Non-represented staff may appeal the selection of their position directly to the vice president or dean in their area by March 10, 2009.

If my position was identified for possible elimination in April, do I have immediate appeal rights?

There is currently no appeal process for notification of a *possible* position elimination. If the elimination of your position is confirmed in April, then you can follow the process outlined above and you will be informed of the timeframe for an appeal. In the meantime, you can take advantage of the various job transition services being offered by Human Resource Services.

Will I be paid after I am told my position is eliminated and must I work until the termination date?

Whether you will be required to work during your notice period will be determined in discussion with your supervisors. If you stay until June 30, 2009, you will receive your paychecks as usual. If you are paid in lieu of notice you will be placed on administrative leave and paid on the regular schedule. If you are required to work your notice period, but choose to resign before the end of your notice period, you will only be paid for time worked. Each of these actions has implications for benefits coverage.

How is an individual's separation from the University related to eligibility for Vermont unemployment compensation?

All employees at the University are covered by unemployment insurance. The determination regarding an individual's eligibility to receive unemployment compensation is a decision made by the State of Vermont based on the facts and circumstances in each individual case. An individual's decision to resign a position is generally considered a voluntary separation and as a rule leaves the individual ineligible for unemployment benefits. Layoffs generally are involuntary separations and therefore may qualify the individual for unemployment benefits.

How will unemployment compensation amounts be determined?

The state of Vermont decides eligibility for unemployment insurance. They will use your history of prior earnings to determine your weekly benefit amount. The number of weeks of pay you receive in lieu of notice and the number of weeks of accrued vacation you are paid will be applied to the weeks immediately following your separation date, and therefore disqualify you for unemployment compensation benefits for those weeks.

If I choose to draw upon money from my UVM 403(b) or 457 retirement savings plan, how will that affect my eligibility for Vermont unemployment compensation?

Income received from UVM's retirement savings plan does not affect an individual's unemployment compensation benefit. The decision by an employee to draw upon retirement funds is separate and distinct from the decision to collect unemployment compensation.

What about those who weren't laid off? Will they be asked to take on more work? If so, will they be compensated for that work?

Division and departmental leaders have made decisions that will impact levels of service going forward. Expectations will be reset for services or turnaround time, and job tasks may be reorganized. Where a significant difference in scope and responsibility level occurs, position descriptions will be updated. Any change in grade level or associated compensation will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Benefits

Health Insurance

Will someone be available to sit with me and review my benefits and employment options?

Yes, Employee Solutions Advisors in HRS will initiate contact with you. They will work with you to schedule an appointment to answer your questions about benefits, compensation, job search resources and your job transition plan.

When will my benefits end?

Benefits end on your last day of employment (defined as your last day on payroll), except that medical and dental coverage will extend one calendar day beyond your last day of employment for each day of vacation paid at the time of your separation from the University. In addition, the University will extend your medical and dental coverage for an additional two months.

What is COBRA?

COBRA is a federal law that allows employees to continue medical insurance, dental insurance and flexible spending coverage upon termination of coverage for either 18 or 36 months, depending upon the reason for loss of coverage. The loss of employment is a qualifying event for COBRA and you would be eligible to extend your medical and dental insurance as well as your flexible spending account. If you decide to sign up for COBRA, your premiums will be based on the coverage you select, as well as applicable federal rules and regulations.

When does COBRA notification occur?

Prior to the end of your insurance coverage, you will receive a COBRA notification letter which will indicate your coverage end date and explain how to apply for COBRA coverage.

Is dental coverage included under COBRA?

Yes, if you are already covered by dental insurance, you may continue coverage at the full premium amount and at your current level of coverage (Base Plan or High Option).

Can I make changes to my health and/or dental coverage when I apply for COBRA?

Yes, you may make changes to your healthcare coverage when you apply for COBRA, but it must be done during an open enrollment period. UVM's open enrollment period is the month of May, with changes taking effect July 1.

If I can't afford COBRA, what other options are available to me?

For those who cannot afford COBRA, the State of Vermont has programs for uninsured Vermonters. Visit: www.catamounthealth.org or www.greenmountaincare.org for details.

If my FTE has been reduced due to the budget rescission, how does this impact my benefits?

Because there is a great deal of variability depending on your individual situation, the best course of action would be to discuss the implications for your specific circumstances during an appointment with your Employee Solutions Advisor.

Life Insurance

Will employees have the option of converting their group life insurance into an individual policy?

If you wish to continue your life insurance coverage, you must notify the HRS Information Center (HRSInfo@uvm.edu) that you wish to convert your life insurance upon your separation from employment at the University, so that the necessary paperwork can be sent to you. You will be guaranteed acceptance by Standard up to the level at which you are currently covered, with no health exam. The policy, however, is whole life insurance, not term life. You may wish to shop around to see what option will work best for you.

Retirement Savings Account

How will my retirement savings account be handled once I leave my position?

The account belongs to you and your account balance is fully vested. Some of the options you may wish to consider include: 1.) rolling over your account to an IRA; 2.) simply leaving the account with your vendor; or 3.) withdrawing some or all of the funds, (remembering that this withdrawal will be subject to taxes and a penalty if you are not 59 and a half years old). You do not need to make a hasty decision. If you have questions about your retirement savings account, you may bring your questions to the HRS Employee Information Center, or call 656-3150.

Flexible Spending Account

What happens to the money in my Flexible Spending Account when I separate?

Contributions to your flexible spending account will end on your last day of employment. You will have ninety (90) days to file a claim(s) for services that were incurred prior to the last day of employment—up to the amount of your annual pledge. You will not be reimbursed for expenses that occurred after your date of separation unless you choose to extend your Flex account through COBRA. Otherwise, make sure to spend the money in your account before termination. Funds that are not claimed are forfeited.

Is my flexible spending account transferable if my spouse or partner is a UVM employee?

No. According to federal regulations, your flexible spending account is not transferrable. However, a change in your employment does give your spouse or partner the right to sign-up for flexible spending under his/her benefit program, if s/he signs up within thirty (30) days of your coverage termination date.

Tuition Remission

Will I keep tuition remission benefits if I am enrolled in a degree program?

Yes. Employees and their dependents who are currently participating in the tuition remission program will be allowed to continue in the program until their stated degree objective has been completed or the maximum allowance of four years of tuition remission has been provided, whichever comes first.

If my position is terminated, will tuition remission be provided for my child who was accepted on early decision for Fall 2009?

Yes. Dependents within 12 months of eligibility to enroll at UVM (or at one of the five state colleges) at the end of the employee's notice period will be considered for tuition remission.

Retirement

Are individuals eligible for post-retirement benefits if they decide to retire only after learning that they are being laid off?

The opportunity to retire will not be lost if an individual's position is terminated. Staff can choose the timing of the decision with the understanding that when they retire, they need to provide their supervisor with written confirmation of their retirement date.

Equally important, an individual considering retirement should call the HRS Information Center and make an appointment in order to: 1.) learn the implications of the date s/he chooses to retire; 2.) begin the process of completing all the appropriate paperwork; 3.) ensure that post-retirement benefits continue uninterrupted; and 4.) discuss any Medicare implications requiring action (for those 65 or older).

If I receive money in lieu of notice because my position is eliminated and I am eligible for UVM retirement benefits, can I still retire?

Yes, if you are eligible for post-retirement benefits as of the termination date for your position, you can retire. (See also the "bridge to retirement" information below.)

How long will it take for the retirement paperwork to be processed?

Please call the HRS Employee Information Center at 656-3150 to schedule an appointment to discuss post-retirement benefits with an Employee Solutions Advisor. During this appointment the advisor will present you with information regarding medical, dental and life insurance, as well as other benefits and associated costs for these benefits. Approximately thirty-days (30) prior to your departure, you will need to make another appointment to complete the necessary benefits paperwork in order to transfer your benefits from active to retired status.

If my position is eliminated and I will be eligible for retirement in a few months, can I still retire?

Employees who do not meet age requirements for retirement, but are between age 50 and 55, and would otherwise qualify for post-retirement benefits at the time of termination, may elect the "bridge to retirement" option.

Terminated employees who elect to "bridge to retirement" pay the same medical and dental premiums as other active employees pay, until the end of the extended coverage.

During the bridge period, terminated employees between ages 50 and 55 may continue medical and dental coverage by paying 51% of the premium cost to provide medical and dental benefits for you and your family.

At age 55, if you and your dependents have been enrolled in UVM medical and dental plans during the bridge period (which concludes at the end of the month in which you turn 55), and you otherwise qualify for post-retirement benefits as outlined in the Staff Handbook, your coverage will continue. You will be required to pay your portion of the medical and dental insurance premium, as other regular retired employees pay.

If you were not enrolled in UVM medical and dental coverage during the bridge period, you may enroll during any open enrollment period after you qualify for post-retirement benefits as defined in the medical and dental plans.

General Benefits

How long will I be able to access my UVM e-mail and zoo accounts?

For most staff, their NetID and e-mail account will be active for one year after they separate from UVM, though access to programs and data will be adjusted as appropriate. Management may request to override this and have accounts closed closer to the termination date under special circumstances. See the Eligibility Guidelines for UVM Academic Host Accounts on the ETS webpage for details: www.uvm.edu/ets/policies.

How long will my UVM ID be valid?

Your UVM ID will be turned in to your supervisor on your separation date. If you retire with post-retirement benefits, you are entitled to a UVM Retiree ID card issued by the CatCard Office.

Will money on my CatCard be refunded to me?

Yes. Simply request a "Closing Form" from the CatCard office and submit it for processing. See the CatCard web site at: www.uvm.edu/~catcard or call 656-4509.

What will happen to my parking pass?

Current parking passes will be honored until the end of May. For those who have business on campus after their separation date, Parking Services will provide parking through HRS Job Transition Services. Call 656-3150.

Leave Time

What options do I have for using my accrued leave time?

Represented and non-represented employees may be required to take all (or a portion) of their vacation leave during the notice period. Any plans that you make related to the use of leave time require the approval of your manager.

Employees who receive pay for their vacation accrual balances at the time of separation will not be paid more than the equivalent of two times their annual accrual, up to a maximum of 40 days for non-exempt employees and 44 days for exempt employees.

Medical leave, personal time and cultural holidays are not paid out upon separation. However, if you are rehired at UVM within two years of your termination date, your accumulated medical leave days will be returned to you.

What about Compensatory Time?

You will be paid for any compensatory time you have accumulated.

Job Transition Services and Reemployment

What should I expect from the Job Transition Services Team?

This team, which is made up of professionals from Human Resource Services, will offer workshops, articles and web-based resources to help you pro-actively address the impact of job loss and assist you to prepare for and find your next job.

If my position is terminated, what specific job transition services will be available to me?

Job transition services will include: temporary changes to the recruitment process (see details below), job search resources, plus a wide variety of workshops covering skills assessment, goal setting, effective resumes and cover letters, successful interviewing, job search strategies and information about unemployment resources available beyond UVM. Other resources will include assistance through the Employee Assistance Program and personal discussion of benefits and salary issues.

If I am re-employed by UVM, how will my hire date change?

Regardless of your length of service, if you are re-employed by UVM within two years in a position that is 50% or more FTE, you will be reinstated in all benefit programs in which you were previously enrolled without any additional waiting period. The new date of hire will be adjusted to include your previous service. (Note that with regard to life insurance, the intent to purchase any amount of coverage higher than two times your salary will require proof of good health.)

If I find another job at UVM will my salary stay the same?

Not necessarily. Pay band information specific to the job is included with each job posting. Salaries are determined on an individual basis by the management team responsible for the position with consultation from Human Resource Services, taking market data and internal equity into account. Salaries cannot be set below the minimum of the pay band.

Will there be any changes to the recruitment process?

Yes. During the budget reduction period, employees who have been laid off and those whose regular hours have been reduced will have the opportunity to apply for jobs before they are posted competitively on the UVM jobs web site. For a period of two weeks, each vacant position will be open only to employees whose jobs were terminated or whose regular hours have been reduced. Employee Solutions Advisors will notify all affected employees each time a position becomes available. Individuals will be given two weeks to submit their resume and cover letter for the job through a special web link within the UVM online hiring system. The Employee Solutions Advisor will highlight the application of the laid off employee to hiring supervisors and encourage interviews based on the employee's qualifications, experience and ability to perform the duties of the job. Supervisors will have the option of hiring from within this group of candidates.

Will I have to use my accrued vacation time in order to benefit from the Transition Services?

UVM job transition workshops are scheduled and you may attend these as needed. Managers will be asked to provide affected employees flexibility in their work schedule to attend interviews and meetings. Plan such meetings so that they have minimal impact on your responsibilities.

Who can attend the transition services workshops?

The job transition services workshops are only open to employees who have been notified of layoff or possible layoff, those individuals whose regular hours have been reduced, and long-term temporary employees affected by the budget reduction.

How can I find out what workshops are offered?

See the information on the Job Transition Services [overview](#) that is posted on the [HRS](#) web site.

How do I sign up for a workshop?

To register, call Learning Services at 656-5800, or e-mail HRSLearningServices@uvm.edu.

Where will the workshops be held?

The location of each workshop will be sent to you when your registration is processed.

Will there be time in the Resume Writing class to review my personal resume?

The class will cover various resume formats used to highlight your particular background in relation to the job that you are seeking. As a result of the workshop, you may want to revise your current resume. You may schedule a separate meeting with your Employee Solutions Advisor to review your updated resume and compare it to the job requirements of each position that interests you.

Can my spouse/partner attend the workshops with me?

Yes, your spouse or partner may attend the job transition services workshops with you.

Will my supervisor provide me with a reference for a new position?

You should discuss this with your supervisor and your Employee Solutions Advisor.

I don't have a computer, is there somewhere I can go to search and/or apply for positions?

Yes, there are computers available for use in the Human Resource Services office at 228 Waterman Building. The hours are 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM. In addition, there are computers available in the Waterman Cafe, the Bailey/Howe Library, most community libraries, and Vermont Department of Labor offices located throughout the state (www.labor.vermont.gov/). Access to the [UVM job site](#) is available from any computer with a connection to the world wide web.

Employee Assistance Program

What is the Employee Assistance Program?

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a service that provides confidential assistance on a wide variety of issues that could affect the health and welfare of UVM's faculty and staff.

Will my conversation with an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) counselor be confidential, even though it is related to my job?

Yes. EAP counselors are bound to the strictest standards of confidence. They can help you think through how to share news of losing a job with family members, friends and co-workers. They can provide a safe place for personal support as you process feelings and make plans and adjust to changes in your life. They also offer a variety of services in addition to counseling, including connecting individuals to a wide array of community resources.

Can my partner or spouse use the EAP service?

Yes. Your partner or spouse is eligible to use EAP services as long as you are employed at UVM.

How many times may I use the EAP service between now and the end of my employment?

There is no pre-determined limit on the number of sessions you may attend during this period.

What if I prefer to meet with someone other than an EAP counselor or it is not convenient for me to come to campus?

You may call the EAP and obtain contact information for a therapist in your area, or you may call the phone number on the back of your insurance card for access to community mental health providers. NOTE: EAP counseling sessions are free of charge. If you elect to meet with a community therapist, you will pay an insurance co-payment for each session.

How do I contact the counselors at the Employee Assistance Program?

You can see their web site at www.uvm.edu/~uvmeap for information and resources, and/or call 656-2100 to schedule an appointment.

How do I connect with Human Resource Services?

Call the HRS Information Center at 802-656-3150 or e-mail HRSInfo@uvm.edu.