New University Personnel Systems Fact Sheet

Background

The UW System has approximately 69,000 employees, including both unclassified and classified employees. Since the creation of the UW System, the Board of Regents has had authority and administrative responsibility for the unclassified personnel system under Chapter 36 of the Wisconsin Statutes. Unclassified personnel include faculty, academic staff, limited appointees, graduate assistants and student hourly employees, totaling about 57,000 employees.

The UW System also has about 12,000 classified employees, who are part of the state classified personnel system administered by the Office of State Employment Relations (OSER).

The legislature and governor enabled the University, through Act 32 (the state’s 2011-13 biennial budget) to develop new personnel systems – one for UW-Madison employees (HR Design Project) and the other a separate system for all other UW System employees (University Personnel System, or UPS) as part of efforts to provide the University with greater operational flexibility.

- Act 32 requires both systems to include civil service systems, a grievance procedure for employees who are dismissed, and provisions to address employee discipline and workplace safety.
- Act 32 requires the personnel systems to be in place starting on July 1, 2013, after JCOER approval.

On December 7, 2012, the UW Board of Regents approved plans to establish new university personnel systems that will, for the first time, give the Board administrative authority for all UW System employees.

Under the new personnel systems, classified staff – to be known as University Staff – would move under the authority of the Board of Regents. The employees will also gain, by Regent policy, shared governance rights, providing them a voice in the policies and procedures that affect their work lives.

The Regents approved four resolutions:
- The Regents’ overarching authority for university personnel systems;
- First-time governance rights for University Staff;
- A code of ethics policies for the full workforce; and
- Technical statutory changes needed to implement the legislative intent of the statute regarding UW System personnel policies, which were requested to be part of Governor’s 2013-15 state budget.
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The Board of Regents also reviewed the initial personnel policies for all UW System institutions except for UW-Madison. UW-Madison will bring its operational policies for Board review at its April meeting.

Highlights

• Approval of both plans by the Joint Committee on Employment Relations (JCOER) is required prior to implementation on July 1, 2013. In order to train and educate university employees, final approval is desired in early spring 2013.

• The new personnel systems will simplify the university job title structure, protect existing employee rights through just cause and due process, and establish a compensation structure that will allow each institution to recruit and retain a highly qualified and diverse workforce.

• All University employees will continue to be state employees and remain in the Wisconsin Retirement System (WRS) and health insurance program. The state will continue to set contribution levels and premium amounts.

• There are no changes to University Staff titles or pay ranges – all current classified job titles and pay ranges will carry into the new personnel system. Nor will there be any changes to academic staff pay ranges.

• The new systems will include redesigned layoff policies and procedures to balance management flexibility with employee protections.

• There are no changes to sick and annual leave accruals for current employees.

• The state civil service hiring system was designed for state agencies, not institutions of higher education that have needs for different skills. The University will create more timely, efficient and effective hiring processes.

• Vacancies will be filled as Academic Staff positions if they are salaried (and therefore exempt from the Fair Labor Standards Act). Employees paid on an hourly basis (and therefore covered by the FLSA) will be in a new category of “University Staff.” This distinction between salaried and hourly employees is consistent with the approach taken by most other universities and private sector employers.

Note: This effort is not part of the Human Resources System (HRS), the UW System payroll and benefits enterprise system.

A more detailed description of the scope, history and phases of each personnel system are at these websites:

• http://web.uwsa.edu/personnelsystems/
• http://hrdesign.wisc.edu/