

msu human resources Source

Special FSA Edition 2008

www.hr.msu.edu

Spend Less. Save More. Flexible Spending Accounts Open Enrollment

You work hard for your money, why not keep a little more of it? Enroll in a Flexible Spending Account (FSA) and join the thousands of other MSU employees who have discovered the advantages of paying for certain medical and child care expenses with pre-tax dollars.

Don't Miss Out!

FSA Open Enrollment
is November 3 through
November 17.

See Details Inside!

Let's face it, some expenses in life just aren't negotiable. Nearly everybody spends money each year on out-of-pocket medical expenses such as prescription drug and office visit co-pays, prescription eye glasses, dental work and even over-the-counter remedies for the aches and pains of daily living. And many working parents spend thousands of dollars each year on child care.

Many have found that buying these items and services with pre-tax dollars is a sound strategy for saving money. Flexible Spending Accounts, or FSAs, let you trim your taxes while purchasing the medical and child care services you need.

MSU offers eligible faculty and staff two different kinds of FSAs. The *Health Care Spending Account (HCSA)* can be used for eligible medical
(Continued on Page 3)

Enterprise Business Systems Projects Update

Whatever your role is at MSU, you can be certain that EBSP will impact your life in some significant way in the coming months and years. EBSP



stands for Enterprise Business Systems Projects - a collection of initiatives that will streamline and enhance the ability of MSU to collect and use human resources, financial and other types of information strategically.

The Michigan State University Board of Trustees authorized the MSU Enterprise Business Systems Projects on October 20, 2006. The initiative is intended to replace and upgrade the existing financial, research administration and human resource systems. The overall goal is to design an updated set of electronic administrative tools that can be used by faculty and staff to accomplish the business goals of Michigan State
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Advancing Knowledge. Transforming Lives.

A Note from the Assistant Vice President . . .

It's hard to turn on the television, listen to the radio or pick up a newspaper these days without being exposed to a deluge of information about the state of the economy nationally and especially in Michigan.

With the historic fluctuations we've seen in the financial markets over the last month, many of us are undoubtedly concerned about the economy in general and about the state of our own retirement investments in particular.

There are no easy answers or quick solutions to address these concerns. The best defense lies in educating ourselves and taking full advantage of all the resources available to help us understand how the current market conditions are impacting our investments and determine what actions or changes to our investment strategies may be wise.

A great deal of helpful information is available to MSU employees through our base retirement plan (BRP) sponsors. In fact, all three of our BRP sponsors have Web sites available that are specific to MSU investors. Addresses for those sites along with phone numbers for reaching our plan sponsors include:

- Fidelity: <https://www.mysavingsatwork.com/atwork/msu.htm> (800-343-0860)
- TIAA-CREF: <http://enroll.tiaa-cref.org/msu/> (800-842-2776)
- Vanguard: <http://msu.vanguard-education.com/ekit> (800-523-1188)

In addition to the information on these MSU-specific sites, all of these plan sponsors also regularly post information, updates and perspectives on the national financial situation on their general Web sites. To find direct links to some of these resources, visit www.hr.msu.edu, click on the "Benefits" link and then on the link titled "Information on Current Market Events."

Another great resource worth considering is the StraightLine independent investment advisory service recently made available to MSU faculty, staff and retirees. StraightLine can provide you with independent, research-based, third-party investment advice regarding your investments in your MSU 403(b) Base Retirement, 403(b) Supplemental Retirement and 457(b) Deferred Compensation Accounts for a reasonable fee. You can learn about their services at www.myrplan.com/msu or by calling them at 877-EDU-403B (877-338-4032). Because StraightLine doesn't sell any financial products or operate on commission, they can provide MSU employees with sound unbiased investment advice during these troubled economic times. And if you are finding it stressful to view your account balances these days, StraightLine can even manage your accounts and handle account transactions for you so you don't have to deal with the daily ups and downs.

All of these resources can help MSU employees understand and cope with the difficult financial markets we are currently experiencing. As stressful as it can be to see our retirement account balances fluctuating with the market right now, I find it helpful to remember that most investment experts agree that successful retirement investing is a long-term proposition and the best investment strategies keep long-range goals in mind and don't overly focus on day-to-day market changes.




Brent Bowditch
Assistant Vice President
for Human Resources

Brent Bowditch

Flexible Spending Accounts *(Continued from page 1)*

expenses. The *Dependent Care Spending Account (DCSA)* can be used for eligible child and dependent care expenses. See pages four and five for examples of eligible expenses.

Key HCSA Debit Card Facts

- After December 31, 2008, when you use your HCSA debit card, it will draw from your 2009 Health Care Spending Account. Please note that you may continue to use remaining 2008 funds through March 15, 2009, however, you can no longer use the debit card to access 2008 funds after December 31, 2008. Instead, you will need to pay for eligible items or services first and then submit receipts in order to be reimbursed from 2008 funds.
- Debit cards offer you the convenience of paying with the swipe of a card - but you still need to keep those receipts! IRS rules require Flexible Spending Account administrators to substantiate the eligibility of ALL items and services billed to Flexible Spending Accounts, including those transactions using HCSA debit cards. Some types of expenses, like doctor visits or prescription drug co-pays, can be automatically substantiated because co-pays are predictable amounts from medical providers.
- KEEP YOUR 2008 “BENNY” CARD! On January 1, 2009, your existing “Benny” Debit Card will automatically be connected to your 2009 account. You will not be sent a new card for the 2009 year unless you are a new enrollee – so be sure to hold on to your current card or cards. If you need to order additional HCSA debit cards for members of your family that are eligible for coverage, contact Meritain Health at 800-748-0003 or through their Web site at: www.Meritain.com.
- A regulation will take effect on January 1, 2009 that may impact your ability to use your HCSA Debit Card at some pharmacies to pay for over-the-counter (OTC) purchases. After this date, pharmacies will be required to have implemented technology that automatically determines whether OTC items are eligible and declines any ineligible OTC items that you may attempt to purchase with your card. Pharmacies that do not implement this technology by January 1, 2009 will not be able to process the purchase of any OTC items using the HCSA debit cards. You will still be able to use the HCSA debit card at these pharmacies to pay for prescriptions, but you will need to pay for OTC items out-of-pocket and submit a receipt to Meritain for reimbursement. On campus, the MSU Clinical Center and Olin Health Center Pharmacies are in the process of implementing the technology and are working toward having this technology implemented before the January 1, 2009 deadline. 

FSA-Related Deadlines You Should Know

Flexible Spending Accounts can offer some great tax advantages, but it's important you are familiar with the program deadlines. ***If you have not used all of your funds and submitted your receipts by the required deadlines, IRS code requires that remaining funds be forfeited. It is very important to remember that the deadlines for using funds are different for Dependent Care Spending Accounts (DCSA) and Health Care Spending Accounts (HCSA).*** Important deadlines to know for both the 2008 and 2009 program years include:

For the 2008 Program Year

- The deadline to use your DCSA funds is: December 31, 2008
- The deadline to submit receipts for your DCSA is: April 30, 2009
- The deadline to use your HCSA funds is: March 15, 2009
- The deadline to submit receipts for your HCSA is: April 30, 2009

For the 2009 Program Year

- The deadline to use your DCSA funds is: December 31, 2009
- The deadline to submit receipts for your DCSA is: April 30, 2010
- The deadline to use your HCSA funds is: March 15, 2010
- The deadline to submit receipts for your HCSA is: April 30, 2010

Open Enrollment Assistance Sessions

MSU Benefits staff will be available to answer questions and help you enroll online at the following locations and times during the open enrollment period:

Wednesday, Nov. 5, 2008
MSU Union, Green Room
9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Thursday, Nov. 6, 2008
MSU International Center
Spartan Room C
9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Thursday, Nov. 13, 2008
MSU International Center
Spartan Room C
9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

A postcard with information about these sessions was already sent to all benefits-eligible employees in late October. These are the same sessions as those advertised on the postcard.



More Details on Flexible Spending Accounts

How FSAs Work

When you enroll in an FSA, you will need to decide on your annual contribution amount for the 2009 calendar year.

Your contributions will be deducted from your paychecks and will not be taxed.

It is important to estimate as closely as possible how many eligible expenses you are likely to incur in the 2009 calendar year because any funds not used during the plan year must be forfeited under Internal Revenue Code.

When you have paid an eligible medical or dependent care expense, you will fill out a simple reimbursement request form. You submit receipts for the expense with the request form. You're then reimbursed for those expenses with the tax-free dollars from the accounts.

Or, for some expenses like prescriptions and office visit co-pays, you can just pay for the purchase directly with your HCSA debit card. You don't have to fill out any forms when you use the debit card, but you do need to save your receipts.

What Do Dependent Care Spending Accounts Cover?

To be eligible for reimbursement, dependent care expenses must meet some rules established in Internal Revenue Code for dependent child and elder care:

- *The dependent cared for must be under age 13, or, if older, physically or mentally incapable of self-care.*

- *Day care must be necessary in order for you and (if you are married) your spouse to work or attend school full-time.*

- *The person cared for must be claimed as a dependent on your federal income tax return and must reside in your home at least eight hours per day.*

- *Payment for care cannot be made to anyone you claim as a dependent on your tax return, to your spouse, or to your child under age 19.*

- *If care is provided by a center that cares for more than six individuals, it must be licensed.*

What Do Health Care Spending Accounts Cover?

You may use your Health Care Spending Account to pay for the following items. (Please note that you can only use the HCSA to pay for items or portions of items that are NOT reimbursed or paid for through your health insurance.)

DENTAL SERVICES

*Crowns/Bridges
Dental X-Rays
Dentures
Exams/Teeth Cleaning
Extractions
Fillings
Gum Treatment
Oral Surgery
Orthodontia/Braces*

INSURANCE-RELATED ITEMS

*Co-pay and Co-insurance Amounts
Deductibles
Pre-existing Condition Expenses
Private Hospital Room Differential*

LAB EXAMS / TESTS

MEDICATION

*Insulin
Prescribed Birth Control
Prescribed Vitamins
Prescription Drugs*

OVER-THE-COUNTER MEDICATION

Many over-the-counter medicines, drugs, or dietary supplements for a specific medical condition are eligible. Examples include: pain relievers, cold medicines, first aid creams, antihistamines, antacids and more.

OBSTETRIC SERVICES

*Lamaze Class
Mid-Wife Expenses
OB/GYN Exams
Post-Natal Treatment
Pre-Natal Treatment*

PRACTITIONERS

*Allergist
Certified Nurse Specialist
Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist
Chiropractor
Christian Science
Dermatologist
Homeopath
Naturopath
Nurse Practitioners
Osteopath
Physician
Psychiatrist
Psychologist*

OTHER MEDICAL TREATMENTS/ PROCEDURES

*Acupuncture
Alcoholism (inpatient treatment)
Drug Addiction
Hearing Exams
Hospital Services
Infertility
In-vitro Fertilization
Norplant Insertion or Removal
Office Visits
Physical Therapy
Rolfing
Speech Therapy*

*Sterilization
Transplants (includes organ donor)
Vaccinations/Immunizations
Vasectomy and Vasectomy Reversal
Well Baby Care*

OTHER MEDICAL EQUIPMENT SUPPLIES and SERVICES

*Abdominal/Back Supports
Ambulance Services
Arches/Orthopedic Shoes
Counseling
Crutches
Hearing Aids and Batteries
Hospital Bed
Medic Alert Bracelet or Necklace
Oxygen Equipment
Prosthesis
Splints/Casts
Support Hose (if medically necessary)
Syringes
Transportation Expenses (essential to medical care)
Tuition Fee at Special School for Disabled Child
Wheelchair*

VISION SERVICES

*Artificial Eyes
Contact Lenses
Contact Lens Solution
Eye Examinations
Eyeglasses
Laser Eye Surgeries
Ophthalmologist
Optometrist
Prescription Sunglasses
Radial Keratotomy/LASIK*

You will NOT be reimbursed for:

*Cosmetic Surgery or Cosmetic Dental Work
Cosmetics
Electrolysis
Toiletries
Prescription Drugs for Cosmetic Purposes
Vacations or Recreational Activities
Health Club Dues*

Please note that this is a partial listing of eligible and ineligible items and services covered by FSAs.

Contact Meritain Health directly if you have questions about the eligibility of an item or service that does not appear on this list. The phone number for Meritain Health is 800-748-0003. You can also visit their Web site at: www.Meritain.com.

How Much Can I Contribute to an FSA at MSU?


You may contribute up to \$5,000 to your Dependent Care Spending Account (per-household total).

Eligible employees may contribute up to \$5,000 to your Health Care Spending Account. This is a per-eligible individual total. For spouses who both work at MSU and are eligible, this means each spouse may contribute up to \$5,000 for a household total of \$10,000.

Your savings will vary based on your income tax rate and the number of out-of-pocket health and child care costs you typically incur. Please view additional Flexible Spending Accounts information at: www.hr.msu.edu.

Date of Service is Important

Please note that reimbursement is based on the date of service, not the date you submit the claim. Any claims for expenses need to be submitted to the plan administrator, Meritain Health. Claim forms for Meritain Health are on the MSU HR Web site at www.hr.msu.edu. Click the Benefits link and then the Flexible Spending Accounts link.

Don't let another year pass you by without discovering if Flexible Spending Accounts could benefit you and your family! 

Worksheets for FSA Planning

Many people are sold on the tax benefits of using Flexible Spending Accounts, but fail to enroll because they are worried they may withhold the wrong amount and wind up losing money at the end of the year. But with a little advance planning, you can match your FSA withholdings to the amount you are likely to spend on eligible dependent care and health care out-of-pocket costs. Try using the worksheets below to estimate your minimum eligible expenses for the upcoming year and then plan conservatively by selecting withholdings equal to or less than your expected expenditures. This can reduce your risk of losing funds and help you use FSAs effectively.

Estimating annual health care expenses:

- | | |
|--|------------|
| 1. Medical/dental insurance deductibles | \$ _____ |
| 2. Medical insurance co-pays | + \$ _____ |
| 3. Dental and orthodontia co-pays | + \$ _____ |
| 4. Prescription drug co-pays | + \$ _____ |
| 5. Eye examinations | + \$ _____ |
| 6. Glasses or contact lenses | + \$ _____ |
| 7. Contact lens solutions and supplies | + \$ _____ |
| 8. Medically necessary elective surgery (such as LASIK eye surgery) | + \$ _____ |
| 9. Over-the-counter drugs used to treat medical conditions (i.e. pain relievers) | + \$ _____ |
| 10. Other planned medical costs | + \$ _____ |
| 11. Estimated total annual medical/dental expenses for the year | = \$ _____ |
| 12. Divide by the number of times you are paid each year (12 or 26) | / _____ |
| 13. Reduction amount from each paycheck | = \$ _____ |

Estimating annual dependent care expenses:

- | | |
|---|------------|
| 1. # of weeks in the year | 52 |
| 2. Minus the # of weeks with no expenses (i.e. vacation) | - _____ |
| 3. Equals the total number of weeks of dependent care expenses | = _____ |
| 4. Amount you spend weekly on dependent care | \$ _____ |
| 5. Multiply the result of line 3 times the result of line 4 to estimate your annual dependent care expenses | |
| 6. Estimated annual dependent care expenses (from #5 above) | \$ _____ |
| 7. Divide by the number of times you are paid each year (12 or 26) | / _____ |
| 8. Reduction amount from each paycheck | = \$ _____ |

**Enroll online between
Nov. 3 and Nov. 17, 2008 at:
www.hr.msu.edu**



MSU Family Resource Center Honors Outstanding Supervisors

Four MSU supervisors received Outstanding Supervisor Awards from the Family Resource Center in October.

The Supervisor Recognition Award was established by the Family Resource Center in the spring of 2001 to draw attention to MSU supervisors who are highly regarded by their employees for their consistent support of the work/life (professional/personal) needs of their employees.

Various academic and support staff units submitted 30 excellent nominations this year. The nominees and nominators represent a wide variety of departments and position levels.

The following four recipients were selected based on testimony from their employees' nomination letters:

- Dan Bollman – Design Administrator, Engineering and Architectural Services in Physical Plant
- Lynnette Forman – Operations Manager, Parking Unit in MSU Police
- Marie Monroe – Educational Program Coordinator, Dean's Office in College of Human Medicine
- Jessica Moy – Director, Remote Sensing, GIS Research and Outreach Services in the Department of Geography

The letters of nomination illustrated how these supervisors made a personal impact on the

departments they manage. Quotes from the letters included:

“We are encouraged to work to live-not live to work, and therefore we work well!”

“He understands the need for people to have a good home/work balance. He appreciates that people have different life needs and situations.”

He provides opportunities for each of his staff members to have a flexible work schedule to accommodate our needs and responsibilities both at work and at home.”

“The environment is fostered by her leading us with a professional and positive manner.”

“He trusts and expects me to determine whether or not I come into work early and leave early, or if working on weekends is the best use of my time.”

“She always puts other people first.”

“She is flexible in her working with employees regarding their hours, work load and personal responsibilities, adjusting the work setting to accommodate certain concerns, while maintaining the high standards of the office and its productivity.”

“She is the role model for understanding the balance between work and home.”

“Her staff works very hard and they are happy with their work environment. This is evident in that there is very little turnover in the department.”

“I only hope that she stays here until I retire because the thought of losing her keeps me awake at night!”

“Her positive attitude is contagious.”

Nominators emphasized that their own longevity, dedication and loyalty to the department and MSU are a direct result of their supervisors' dedication to providing work/life balance and their positive attitudes, integrity, sensitivity, empowering leadership style and sense of humor.

They all claim to have the “Best Boss” on campus. All of the nominees received Certificates of Nomination, and letters of congratulations.

The recipients were honored at surprise parties with their staff and families, with balloons, cakes and gifts, on various dates surrounding National Boss Day on October 16, 2008.



MSU HR

News You Can Use

Community Charitable Campaign

The Michigan State University 2008 Community Charitable Campaign (MSU CCC) kicked off September 22 and runs through early November. MSU CCC is an annual campaign to raise money primarily for local charities.

Last year MSU faculty, staff, students and affiliated organizations raised more than \$577,000 for local charities!

This year the hard working Campaign volunteers (your friends and co-workers) have a goal to increase this to \$580,000 (with a wink and a nod toward breaking the \$600,000 mark).

“As economic times continue to remain challenging, we recognize the effect is even more pronounced on those not as fortunate as we in the MSU community,” said campaign co-chair Jeff Brodie. “It’s more important than ever to support people in need in our community through this campaign.”

You can learn more about the campaign at the MSU CCC Web site at www.msuccc.msu.edu. Together, MSU faculty, staff, students, retirees and affiliate organizations can make a huge difference in the lives of many local residents through our generous campaign gifts.

Over-Age Dependent Verification Letters

Over-age dependent verification letters were mailed on October 19, 2008 to employees who may have dependents enrolled on their benefits plans whose eligibility for continuing benefits may change due to their age (children age 19 and over and grandchildren, nieces and nephews.)

The letters request information about the age-related eligibility of these dependents for continuing benefits coverage.

If you do not respond to this mailing, health and/or dental care coverage for your dependent will end on December 31, 2008.

Additional information is available at www.hr.msu.edu/HRsite/Benefits/FacStaff/LifeChg/OAD.htm.

Or contact MSU Human Resources Benefits at 517-353-4434, or toll-free at 800-353-4434 or via e-mail at:

benefitsinfo@hr.msu.edu.

Executive Leadership Academy Seminar Series

Information is now available for the Executive Leadership Academy 2008-2009 Seminar Series.

Four sessions will be held between December 2008 and March 2009.

The seminars are targeted to executive managers, deans, chairs, directors and support staff supervisors (levels 15-17).

Upcoming sessions include:

- **December 11, 2008: *Leading Change***. This seminar will be led by Lew Dotterer, Change Management Consultant, Enterprise Business Systems Projects, MSU.
- **January 20, 2009: *Strategic Planning That Results in Action – Not Just a Nice Document***. This seminar will be led by John Hudzik, Vice President for Global Engagement and Special Projects, MSU.
- **February 18, 2009: *Leadership from Within***. This seminar will be led by Debra Nelson Dunbar, University Consultant, Employee and Organizational Development, University Human Resource Services, Indiana University.
- **March 20, 2009: *Inclusive Leadership***. This seminar will be led by Linda Marchesani, Manager, Workplace Learning and Development, University of Massachusetts-Amherst.

To find out more about the series and register online, visit the following Web site:

<http://fod.msu.edu>

The Executive Leadership Academy and the annual Seminar Series are jointly sponsored by Academic Human Resources and Human Resources.

Have You Checked Out the Healthwise Knowledgebase?

As an MSU faculty member, staff member or retiree, you have ongoing access to a wonderful resource for finding accurate medically reviewed information about health-related topics. Check out the Healthwise Knowledgebase online at:

www.healthwise.msu.edu.

Seeking Your Feedback on the Source Newsletter

Human Resources is considering a new approach and format for our Source newsletter and we want to give our readers a chance to let us know what you think before we make any decisions.

The new approach would involve making editions shorter but more frequent. We're considering dropping from a 12-16-page format down to a 4-page format with shorter articles than the current version but increasing our frequency to every other month.

Some things we think we might be able to achieve with this

approach include:

- Getting information to you more quickly about changing forms, processes or events.
- Saving our readers time by making the newsletter more scannable and digestible in a shorter length of time.
- Decreasing the number of special mailings we currently do to reach you with critical information between Source editions.
- Support of MSU's commitment to environmental stewardship by using less paper. (Even though we'll be communicating more frequently, we would use close to 60,000 fewer pieces of paper per year.)
- Better integrating the content we send out in our newsletter with the information available on our Web site.

But what really matters is what you, our readers, think. We would like to invite your feedback on the


Source newsletter and whether you think we should pursue a more frequent, shorter and quicker-to-read format.

Please share your opinions with the Source editor via e-mail at smitha@hr.msu.edu or, if you don't have access to e-mail, via phone at 517-884-0111.

Let us know what you think of Source so we can make it a better tool to communicate with you!

Holiday Schedule

Michigan State University will be closed for the holidays on the following dates:

- Nov. 27 and 28, 2008
(Thursday and Friday)
- Dec. 25 and 26, 2008
(Thursday and Friday)
- Jan. 1 and 2, 2009
(Thursday and Friday) 

EBSP Update *(Continued from Page 1)*

University. Since that time, much has been achieved, with more happening each day.

The project has a Web site that any interested member of the MSU community can visit to learn more about the project and read regular updates on the progress of the initiative.

The site address is www.ebsp.msu.edu. Visit it often to stay up-to-date with project news.

Faculty and staff will have more opportunities in the coming weeks and months to help shape the future business systems of the University by participating in a variety of discussions and presentations. As the various projects unfold, sessions on data, business intelligence, accounting, enterprise information stewardship and human resources applications will be held.

Watch the project Web site at www.ebsp@msu.edu for upcoming events or send an e-mail to watersd@msu.edu to be placed on a mailing list for EBSP-related news and invitations. 

Information on Reference Checks for Faculty, Staff and Students:

Michigan Law Regarding Reference Checks

Michigan law provides immunity from liability to supervisors/unit administrators who disclose documented performance information to prospective employers.

“Prospective employers” are defined as any person to whom an employee or former employee has submitted an application for employment.

There is no immunity from liability under the statute where a supervisor or unit administrator discloses information in bad faith. “Bad faith” is defined as disclosing information that the individual knows is false or misleading; disclosing information with a reckless disregard for the truth; or disclosing information where the disclosure is prohibited by state or federal statute. Supervisors or unit administrators who have questions about this law may contact the Office of General Counsel at 517-353-3530 for additional information.

Reference Checks for Faculty, Academic and Support Staff

The University does not have a policy regulating employment reference checks. Supervisors and unit administrators may provide references for faculty, academic, and support staff when they feel it is appropriate to do so. Individuals providing references should, however, only provide opinions and information about current or former employees that can be substantiated by documentation contained in the personnel record.

Guidance about what should be

contained in employee personnel records is located on the MSU HR Web site at www.hr.msu.edu. (Click on the “Policies, Union Contracts, Handbooks” link then look under the “University-Wide Policies and Procedures” link.)

If a supervisor/unit administrator wishes to provide information about areas for improvement that were not specifically documented in the personnel file, that information may still be shared if there is a record of having discussed or shared the performance deficiencies with the employee.

A good general rule is that you may provide information or an opinion in a reference check so long as you can verify and substantiate your information or opinion with facts.

Types of Information Typically Provided

- Explanation of job description for positions held by the individual
- Dates of employment
- Information that can be substantiated by documents in their files regarding goals, objectives, skills, abilities, strengths and areas for growth

Employment verification differs from a reference. The verification indicates dates of employment and job titles; a reference provides information about their work and how they performed.

A common question you may be asked is: “Would you rehire?” You may answer the question as long as you believe you can substantiate the reasons.

The extent of the information that is appropriate to share in response to a reference check is case-specific and depends on the circumstances surrounding the particular employee’s employment. When in doubt, supervisors/unit administrators should contact Human Resources at 517-353-3720 or Academic Human Resources at 517-355-1526 for guidance.

References for Grad Assistants and Student Employees

A signed release from the graduate assistant or student is required before you can provide a reference.

Federal law states that when a student is employed in a job that only a student may hold, information about that student’s employment is subject to the same confidentiality protections as other academic information contained in the student’s records. Therefore, University employees may only provide information about graduate assistant and student employees to those individuals who have a signed release from the student.

If you have a signed release, you may provide the same type of information that you would provide for a faculty, academic, or support staff employee as long as you do not provide any academic information.

If you are contacted about an employment verification for a student on the student employee payroll, please refer them to the Student Employment Office at 517-355-9520.

Medical Information

It is important to note that medical information (including

Information on Reference Checks *(Continued from page 10)*


information about leaves of absence or reasonable accommodations) should never be provided in response to a reference request.

When You Cannot Provide Any Reference Information

Occasionally, the University enters into a “special agreement” with employees related to the termination of their employment. If a special agreement exists, the agreement must be reviewed to determine whether it contains any limitations on the provision of an employment reference. Supervisors/unit administrators who are in doubt as to whether a

“special agreement” exists in a particular situation should contact Human Resources, Academic Human Resources, or the Office of General Counsel to obtain additional information.

Internal Unit-to-Unit References

If another MSU department contacts you for a reference, you may discuss performance and recommendations for improvement in a fairly open fashion. *However, medical information (including information about reasonable accommodations or medical leaves of absence) must never be shared.* 

HEALTH RISKS AND MEDICAL CONSEQUENCES OF ALCOHOL AND DRUG ABUSE

For the user, abuse of alcohol and illegal drugs presents significant health risks and medical consequences:

- Addiction to alcohol or other drugs is a progressive disease, which, if untreated, is fatal.
- Alcohol abuse can result in liver damage and disease, gastrointestinal problems, and brain damage.
- Abuse of alcohol and marijuana during puberty can cause imbalance of sex hormones resulting in reduced muscle mass and shrinkage of testicles in males, and menstrual difficulties and infertility in females.

Users of other types of drugs face these serious problems:

- Marijuana is extremely psychologically addicting, and causes two problems of significance to academic performance – short-term memory problems and a motivational syndrome (laziness/lethargy).
- Long-term use of stimulants (uppers, including speed, crack, methyl, crystal, etc.) may cause permanent damage to the brain, heart, lungs, and other organs.
- The use of cocaine and amphetamines can result in heart attacks; people who lack an enzyme called pseudocholinesterase in their bodies can die from a single minute dose of cocaine.
- Inhalants (poppers, rush, laughing gas, sniffing of glue or paint thinner, etc.) may cause mental confusion, mood swings, delusions, or hallucinations.
- The use of hallucinogens, especially PCP (angel dust), can result in an irreversible drug-induced psychotic state and/or delusions of omnipotence, which can trigger life-threatening behavior.
- Depressants (downers, ludes, reds, 714s, barbs) greatly increase the risk of accidents and automobile crashes because they affect vision, judgment, coordination, and other physical skills.
- Intravenous drug users (users of heroin and other opiates) risk infection with Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) from sharing needles.

Of course, there are psychological and social consequences of drug abuse as well, including loss of intimacy, friends, job, and marriage; creation of a dysfunctional family system; and heightened feelings of depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, guilt, and loneliness.

East Lansing Ordinances

East Lansing ordinances prohibit the possession of any alcoholic beverage in an open container or a container with a broken seal in any public place or private area open to the public, except a licensed liquor establishment or elsewhere as provided by ordinance. Partying and tailgating on public property with alcoholic beverages is prohibited within the City's jurisdiction.

City ordinances also prohibit the use of any type of false identification to enter a bar or to purchase liquor from a carry-out store and require liquor establishments to confiscate suspected false identification and turn it over to the Police Department.


Violations of all East Lansing ordinances except Minor in Possession of Alcohol (MIP) and Open Alcohol are punishable by a maximum sentence of 90 days in jail or a \$500 fine or both.

Penalty for Open Alcohol is a fine up to \$100 for first violation. For second and third violations punishment is not more than 90 days imprisonment and/or fines up to \$250, or \$500. Maximum penalties for MIP are up to \$100 for first violation, \$200 and/or up to 30 days imprisonment for second violation, and \$500 and/or up to 60 days imprisonment for third violation. Possible community service and substance abuse screening at own expense, and/or driving license sanctions may also be imposed for Open Alcohol and MIP violations.

Persons unlawfully possessing marijuana or cannabis are guilty of a misdemeanor under City of East Lansing ordinances. Violations of marijuana or cannabis ordinances are punishable by a fine of up to \$25, 45 days of community service, substance abuse screening or treatment, or some combination of these. A second offense within ten years of the first raises the



possible fines to \$100, and potential community service days to 90.

Students are encouraged to become familiar with their responsibilities under East Lansing ordinances, which may be obtained at East Lansing City Hall. East Lansing Ordinances may be obtained on the internet at <http://www.cityofeastlansing.com>. 

Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Crime Statistics

On October 1, 2008, in accordance with the Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act, Michigan State University distributed to all students and employees information related to security issues, crime statistics and educational efforts related to health and safety risks. This information includes:


- Campus policies related to sexual harassment and assault, drugs and alcohol, including penalties for

violations of those policies.

- Telephone numbers of police agencies, campus ride services, counseling and educational resources.
- Information on educational programs on crime prevention, safety, sexual harassment and assault, alcohol and drugs.
- Suggestions for safety awareness on campus.
- Information concerning campus

security and access to campus facilities.

- The annual compilation of crime statistics.

To access the crime statistics for MSU via the Web, go to <http://www.police.msu.edu/cleryreport.asp>. Michigan State University also offers a paper copy of the information that can be requested from the Student Life Department at 517-355-8286, TTY 517-353-0304, or by e-mail at stulife@msu.edu. 

MSU Drug and Alcohol Policy

All-University Policy Applicable to University Employees and Students

Congress has passed and the President has signed the Drug-Free Workplace Act of 1988 and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act Amendment of 1989. The following is Michigan State University's Drug and Alcohol Policy for employees and students.

Employees¹

Consistent with state and federal law, Michigan State University will maintain a workplace free from the unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensation, possession, or use of a controlled substance.² The unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensation, possession, or use of controlled substances, illicit drugs, and alcohol are prohibited on any property under the control of and governed by the Board of Trustees of Michigan State University, and at any site where work is performed by individuals on behalf of Michigan State University.

Pursuant to applicable university procedures governing employee discipline, any employee involved in the unlawful use, sale, manufacturing, dispensing, or possession of controlled substances, illicit drugs, and alcohol on university premises or work sites, or working under the influence of such substances, will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal and referral for prosecution.

The employee must notify the university of any criminal drug statute conviction for a violation occurring in the workplace no later than five (5) calendar days after such conviction. Failure to provide such notice will subject the employee to discipline up to and including dismissal pursuant to applicable university procedures governing employee discipline. The employee shall notify his/her immediate supervisor, who will report the incident to the Office of Human Resources, Academic Human Resources, or Student Employment Office.

Michigan State University supports and sponsors programs aimed at the prevention of substance abuse by university employees. The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provides preventative programs and counseling for employees experiencing substance-dependency problems. Assistance is available on a voluntary basis. Leaves of absence to obtain treatment may be obtained under the medical leave provision of the appropriate labor contract or policy.

Students

Michigan State University's compliance with provisions of the Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act Amendments of 1989 applying to students is achieved through a comprehensive alcohol and other drug prevention

program, which includes policy enforcement, education programs, and treatment services.

General Student Regulations 2.06 and 2.07 prohibit the unlawful possession, use, or distribution, of illicit drugs and alcohol by students on Michigan State University property or as part of any of its activities. These regulations are as follows:

2.06 "No student shall possess, use, manufacture, produce, sell, exchange, or otherwise distribute any drug prohibited by federal or state laws."

2.07 "No student shall possess, consume, furnish, manufacture, sell, exchange, or otherwise distribute any alcoholic beverages except as permitted by state law and university ordinance."

Alleged violations of MSU regulations are adjudicated through the MSU student judicial process. Consequences for violations may include, but are not limited to, some form of disciplinary probation, required attendance at educational programs, referral for assessment and treatment, relocation to a new living environment, and suspension from Michigan State University for sale of illegal drugs or repeated violations of the regulations. In addition, students can expect to be arrested and fined for violations of state law on campus.

Michigan State University supports and sponsors programs aimed at the prevention of substance abuse by students. Information about education and treatment services may be obtained from Olin Health Education Service's Alcohol and Other Drug Program.

President

Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

Vice President for Finance & Operations & Treasurer

Vice President for Student Affairs and Services

Board of Trustees, October 12, 1990

¹ This policy applies to all university employees, including but not limited to: faculty, academic staff, support staff and student employees.

² Five schedules of controlled substances are defined in the comprehensive Drug Abuse Prevention and Control Act of 1970, 21. U.S.C. 812.

More information about laws governing the sale and possession of alcohol and other drugs, as well as penalties for violations of these laws, may be obtained from the MSU Police, the Main Library, or the MSU Employee Assistance Program.

Federal and State Penalties for Sale and Possession

The federal government decides if and how a drug should be controlled. Psychoactive (mind-altering) chemicals are categorized according to Schedule I to V. This schedule designates if the drug can be prescribed by a physician and under what conditions. Factors considered in this categorization include a drug's known and potential medical value, its potential for physical or psychological dependence, and risk, if any, to public health. Penalties for the illegal sale or distribution of a drug are established using the designation of Schedule I to V.

Schedule I drugs have a high potential for abuse with no medical uses. Production of these drugs is controlled. Examples include GHB (gamma-hydroxybutyrate), heroin, methaqualone, all hallucinogens (except phencyclidine [PCP]), marijuana, and hashish. Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), depending on its form, can also be a Schedule II drug.

Schedule II drugs have high potential for abuse, but have some medical uses. Production of these drugs is controlled. Examples include opium, morphine, codeine, other narcotics, barbiturates, cocaine, amphetamines, and phencyclidine (PCP).

Federal and State of Michigan penalties for selling Schedule I and II drugs vary with the quantity of the drug. Additionally, if death, rape, or serious injury is associated with the sale and/or if it is a second offense, penalties are more severe. When establishing penalties for sale, marijuana and hashish are separated from this designation according to the schedule. The penalties for sale of marijuana and hashish, however, are similar to those set for Schedule I and II drugs.

The federal penalty for first offense sale of small amounts of Schedule I and II drugs is imprisonment for not less than 5 years and not more than 40 years; if death or serious injury results, the penalty changes to imprisonment

for not less than 20 years or more than life, a fine of not more than \$2 million for an individual, or both. Federal penalties on first offense for individuals who illegally manufacture, deliver, or knowingly possess GHB (gamma-hydroxybutyrate) include imprisonment for up to 20 years. If death or serious bodily injury results from the usage of GHB, penalties include imprisonment for no less than 20 years, and no greater than life, including additional fines of up to \$1,000,000 for an individual and \$5,000,000 if the defendant is other than an individual, or both.

The State of Michigan's penalty for "unlawful manufacture, delivery, or possession with intent to deliver" less than 50 grams of a Schedule I or II controlled substance or narcotic drug is a felony which results in imprisonment for up to 20 years, and/or a fine of up to \$25,000 and is a felony. Use of a Schedule I or II controlled substance or narcotic drug is a misdemeanor that has a penalty of imprisonment for up to one year, a fine of up to \$2,000, or both. Michigan law provides for up to 7 years imprisonment and/or a \$5,000 fine for individuals who manufacture, deliver, intend to deliver, or knowingly possess GHB.

The manufacture, distribution, or possession with intent to distribute or dispense up to 45 kilograms of marijuana or between 20-200 marijuana plants is punishable by up to seven years imprisonment, a fine of up to \$500,000 for an individual, or both. In Michigan, the "unlawful manufacture, delivery, or possession with intent to deliver" of less than 5 kilograms of marijuana or a mixture containing marijuana, or fewer than 20 marijuana plants, is a felony, punishable by imprisonment for up to four years, a fine of up to \$20,000, or both. Possession of marijuana is a misdemeanor, punishable by imprisonment for up to one year, a fine of not more than \$2,000, or both. Use of marijuana is also a misdemeanor,

punishable by imprisonment for not more than 90 days, a fine of up to \$100, or both.

Schedule III, IV, and V drugs include those most citizens would categorize as "prescription drugs". Schedule III drugs have some potential for abuse, but less than those on Schedules I and II. The potential for abuse of Schedule IV drugs is less than those on Schedule III, and the potential for abuse of those on Schedule V is less than those on Schedule IV. All Schedule III to V drugs have medical uses and their production is not controlled. Examples of these drugs include some narcotics, chloral hydrate (IV), barbiturates (III & IV), benzodiazepines (IV), glutethimide (III), other depressants (III & IV), amphetamines (III), and other stimulants (III & IV).

The federal penalty for first offense sale of a Schedule III drug is imprisonment for not more than five years, a fine of not more than \$250,000 for an individual, or both. The federal penalty for first offense sale of Schedule IV drugs is imprisonment for not more than three years, a fine of not more than \$250,000 for an individual, or both. The federal penalty for first offense sale of Schedule V drugs is imprisonment for not more than one year, a fine of not more than \$100,000 for an individual, or both.

Sale of some Schedule III drugs is a felony in Michigan with a penalty of imprisonment for up to seven years, a fine up to \$10,000, or both. In Michigan, the sale of Schedule IV drugs is a felony with a penalty of imprisonment for up to four years, a fine up to \$2,000, or both. Sale of Schedule V drugs in Michigan is also a felony and has a penalty of imprisonment for up to two years, a fine of up to \$2,000, or both.

MICHIGAN STATUTES AND UNIVERSITY ORDINANCES REGARDING ALCOHOL VIOLATIONS

VIOLATION	SUMMARY OF VIOLATION	SUMMARY OF POSSIBLE PENALTIES
OUIL (drunk driving)	A person licensed or not, under the influence of alcohol, drugs, or both, driving in public place.	First offense: misdemeanor, not more than 93 days in jail and/or fine of \$100-\$500, and/or community service not more than 360 hours. As part of sentence, court shall order suspension of operators license for period of six months. Vehicle forfeiture or immobilization may also be required.
0.08 Percent per se	Person driving in public areas with blood alcohol level containing 0.08 grams or more per 100 ml of blood, per 210 liters of breath or per 67 ml of urine.	Same as OUIL.
Permitting person under the influence to drive	Allowing intoxicated person to drive in area open to the public.	Misdemeanor: not more than 93 days in jail, or fine not less than \$100 or more than \$500, or both; vehicle can be impounded.
Minor possessing or transporting in motor vehicle	Person under 21 years may not possess or transport alcohol in a vehicle.	Misdemeanor: not more than 90 days in jail, fine of not more than \$100, and may be ordered to perform community service and undergo substance abuse screening and assessment at own expense; vehicle can be impounded. License sanctions may also be imposed.
Impaired driving	A person driving in area open to public while impaired from alcohol, drugs, or both.	First offense: one or more of following: community service for not more than 360 hours; imprisonment for not more than 93 days; fine of not more than \$300; may be required to forfeit or immobilize vehicle.
Purchase/possession/consumption by minor	Person under 21 years of age may not purchase, possess, or consume alcohol.	Misdemeanor: first arrest - fine of not more than \$100, or court ordered diversion; second arrest - not more than \$200, and/or up to 30 days imprisonment if in violation of probation due to preceding violation or for failure to follow court orders regarding preceding violation; third or subsequent violation - fine of not more than \$500, and/or up to 60 days imprisonment if in violation of probation due to preceding violation or for failure to follow court orders regarding preceding violation. May be ordered to participate in substance abuse prevention or substance abuse treatment and rehabilitation services. May be ordered to perform community service and undergo substance abuse screening and assessment at own expense. Licensing sanctions may also be imposed.
Consumption on public highway/open alcohol in vehicle	No alcoholic beverage can be consumed on public highways; no alcohol item can be open, uncapped, or seal broken in passenger area of vehicle.	Misdemeanor: not more than 90 days in jail, a fine of not more than \$100, or both. May be ordered to perform community service and undergo substance abuse screening and assessment at own expense. Licensing sanctions may also be imposed.
Disorderly person intoxicated	Intoxicated in public place and (1) danger to self or others, (2) causing disturbance.	Misdemeanor: not more than 90 days in jail, a fine of not more than \$500, or both.
Minor consuming alcohol while driving	Person under 21 years who is driving cannot have any bodily alcohol content, which means an alcohol content of more than 0.02 grams but less than 0.08 grams per 100 ml of blood, per 210 liters of breath, or per 67 ml of urine. Requires screening and assessment to determine if there is likely benefit from alcohol education program.	Four point misdemeanor. Refusal to take breathalyzer test is a two point civil infraction. Driver's license reinstatement fee \$125, may be ordered to pay costs. Minors with no prior alcohol convictions - 30-90 days license suspension and one or both of the following: not more than 45 days community service and/or up to \$250 fine.
MSU ordinances	Use/possession of alcohol prohibited except as allowed by state law.	Not more than 90 days in jail, fine of not more than \$100, or both.

Brent Bowditch

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