2015 IRS Retirement Contribution Limits

The IRS recently announced the retirement plan limits for 2015. Please be aware that:

• The annual contribution amount increased from $17,500 to $18,000 for 403(b) and 457(b) plans.
• Age 50 catch-up contribution amount increased from $5,500 to $6,000 for 403(b) and 457(b) plans.

If you would like to contribute as much as you can, MSU Human Resources provides a tool to assist you in maximizing your contributions to the annual IRS limit. There is a display in ESS that shows the remaining amount of retirement contributions you have available before reaching one of the limits, and the equivalent percentage of your pay to help you spread that out for the year. A tutorial is available that will walk you through the process at http://www.hr.msu.edu/benefits/benefits_docs/RetirementView-Change0112.pdf. (If you are an Academic Year faculty member or a Voluntary 403(b) Base participant age 50 and over, contact Human Resources for further assistance in calculating your contribution percentage.)

Our web pages found at http://www.hr.msu.edu/benefits/retirement/ provide the following additional information:

• Retirement plans available at MSU
• How to enroll or make changes
• How much you can contribute, including online percentage calculators
• Retirement planning tools, including educational opportunities and online tools

For assistance or questions, please contact SolutionsCenter@hr.msu.edu or 517-353-4434.

Free Tobacco & Nicotine Cessation Program

If you, or your benefits-eligible family member, are ready to quit smoking, consider attending the next MSU Breathe Easy: Tobacco & Nicotine Cessation Program orientation session. The next orientation is on Wednesday, January 28 from 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. in room 247 of the Olin Health Center.

You can become tobacco and nicotine-free by summer, and the free Breathe Easy program can help! Attending the orientation session allows you to learn about this free program without committing you to enroll. Learn more at http://health4u.msu.edu/breathe/.

Inside this Edition

Page Two
• Guidelines for Maintaining Critical Functions & Services
• CREF Annuity Expense Ratio Reduction in Retirement Plans
• RNT: Retirement Programs

Page Three
• Terminations and Separations from the University
• Call for Student Employee of the Year Nominations
• Ruth Jameyson Award Deadline Jan. 30

Page Four
• Autism Benefit Update
• MSU Community Charitable Campaign Needs Your Help
• New Options to Jumpstart Your Leadership Skills

Page Five
• Featured Blog Articles

Page Six
• Education Opportunities

Visit the SourceLive Blog: www.SourceLive.hr.msu.edu
Like us on Facebook: facebook.com/MSUHumanResources
Follow us on Twitter: www.twitter.com/msuhr
hr.msu.edu
jobs.msu.edu
Guidelines for Maintaining Critical MSU Functions and Services

Circumstances may arise that force Central Administration at Michigan State University to modify, interrupt, suspend or curtail certain operations or services for a period of time. The university as a whole, however, never shuts down. This means that certain functions critical to keep the university open must always be maintained.

The university recently developed a set of guidelines for departments to use in the event of emergency conditions due to weather, natural disaster, major utility failure, health or environmental crisis, or other unforeseen circumstances that might cause a modification of operations. These guidelines along with a toolkit to assist departments are located on the HR website at: http://www.hr.msu.edu/documents/critical_functions_services/.

Supervisors/unit administrators are responsible for working with their Dean, Director or Chair to identify critical functions/services and create a communication plan for all faculty, staff and student employees in their department. Tools such as a departmental Facebook page, text messaging, email messages or simply having employees call into a designated phone number for instructions are ideas to use for communication.

Departments have been asked to submit a Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) and distribute copies to all faculty, staff and student employees by the end of January. If you have not received information on your department’s communication plan, please ask your immediate supervisor or unit administrator.

If you have any questions regarding the guidelines, please contact Employee Relations at 517-353-5510.

CREF Annuity Expense Ratio Reduction in Retirement Plans

TIAA-CREF, one of our two approved vendors for the MSU retirement plans, has announced upcoming changes to their eight CREF variable annuities. The changes, which are expected to take place in late April, will only affect the expense ratio of each of the CREF annuities. Specifically for MSU, the expense ratio will be lowered on the available CREF annuities for participants of our retirement plans and accounts, including both the new accounts (for contributions since January 2012) and the legacy accounts (for contributions prior to 2012).

These changes will happen automatically and you will not be required to take any action. The changes for MSU retirement plan participants will mean that transactions will take place from the current CREF annuity structure to the new lowest cost CREF “R3 class” annuity in late April. A participant will receive a confirmation statement from TIAA-CREF after the transaction is processed.

If you have a MSU retirement account with TIAA-CREF, you will receive more detailed information in the next month or two from them about the CREF annuity changes. These changes only apply to the CREF annuities, and do not apply to the TIAA Traditional Fixed Annuity, the TIAA-CREF Real Estate Annuity or any mutual funds.

RNT: Road Next Traveled Pre-Retirement Planning Programs

Planning for retirement can feel like a journey, which is why MSU Human Resources staff offer the Road Next Traveled (RNT) program. The RNT program has two one-day sessions to choose from, depending on where you’re at in the retirement planning process.

If retirement is still about three to seven years away, attend RNT: 3-7 Years to Your Retirement. This session covers a range of pre-retirement issues, including retirement from a financial perspective, legal aspects of retirement planning, an MSU benefits overview and preparing to redefine your future.

If you’re just a year or two away from retirement, attend RNT: 1-2 Years to Your Retirement. This session covers critical retirement issues, such as income distribution options, social security benefits and issues and MSU retirement benefits.

The next RNT: 3-7 Years to Your Retirement sessions are on January 27 and April 7. The next RNT: 1-2 Years to Your Retirement sessions are on January 21 and March 31.

The program is free for MSU faculty and staff, and guests are allowed to attend with a $25 fee. To register, log into EBS and select the Training Opportunities quick link under your ESS tab. Contact Nancy Sanchez at 517-884-0169 or sanchezn@hr.msu.edu to enroll your guest.
Terminations and Separations from the University

In today’s highly collaborative work environment, terminations and separations can bring about many unanticipated changes. The termination-separation checklist (http://www.hr.msu.edu/termsep/termsep_docs/TerminationChecklist.pdf) is available to assist units when employees are leaving the university. Beyond the lists of tasks that need to be attended to, such as computer access and returning parking passes and keys, creating a plan to capture crucial elements of a position is essential.

Talk with the employee about their experiences. Capturing this implicit knowledge is not contained in the policy and procedures. Create a practice of conducting these “interviews” in order to minimize risk to the unit when someone retires or transfers to another department. A few questions to consider:

- What kinds of knowledge or skills do you now have that the department will miss most when you leave?
- If you only had one day to “train” a new person, what are the top five things that you want them to know?
- What was your most successful project or initiative? Why?
- What are the most significant risks in your current projects? Why?
- What do you know now that you wish you knew when you started?
- What things do you feel most proud of?
- What are the things you feel you are leaving not quite finished?
- Who would you consider to be most significant to your success at work?
- For supervisors: What are the key attributes of the staff? What positions would cause distress if the incumbent suddenly left the position and why?

Once you have this information, prioritize the areas that are most critical and strategize with your leadership team in order to minimize the risks to the organizations.

Call for Student Employee of the Year Nominations

MSU student employees provide valuable assistance to meet the mission and goals of Michigan State University. The Student Employee of the Year Award Program is your opportunity to recognize these outstanding student employees for their contributions to your department and the university. Nominate your outstanding student employees by February 6, 2015.

National Student Employment Week will take place April 12 through 18, 2015 and the MSU Student Employee of the Year Award Reception will be held on April 15, 2015.

The MSU Student Employee of the Year Recognition Program is sponsored by MSU Human Resources. You can find the full criteria for the award and the nomination form at http://www.hr.msu.edu/hiring/studentemployment/StudentEmployeeAwardForm.pdf.

Ruth Jameyson “Above and Beyond” Award Deadline Jan. 30

The nomination deadline for the sixth annual Ruth Jameyson “Above and Beyond” Award is Friday, January 30. The award is designed for an MSU staff member who is pursuing a post-baccalaureate degree. It will recognize a support staff member who most closely exemplifies the contributions, personal characteristics and commitment to MSU demonstrated by Ruth Jameyson, a former MSU staff member.

A stipend of $2,500 will accompany the award and may be used as determined appropriate by the recipient. The recipient will be honored at the Jack Breslin Distinguished Staff Award reception in spring 2015.

MSU faculty and staff are encouraged to nominate a deserving individual. A nominee must be a regular, active support staff employee with at least five years of service to MSU and must be enrolled and attending a post-baccalaureate program at MSU or elsewhere. A full description of the award and a link to the nomination form is located at: www.hr.msu.edu/recognition/supportstaff/JameysonAward.htm.
Autism Benefits Update

In order for our MSU health plans to be in compliance with the Affordable Care Act, the age restriction for autism coverage has changed to cover dependents through age 19 effective January 1, 2015. Recall prior to January 1, 2015, the age restriction was through age eight. All other provisions for autism coverage remain in place. Please direct questions to Blue Cross Blue Shield at 1-800-322-4447, Blue Care Network at 1-800-662-6667 or to MSU Human Resources at 517-353-4434.

MSU Community Charitable Campaign Needs Your Help

At MSU we have the unique ability to help many organizations through one fundraising campaign – the MSU Community Charitable Campaign. Through this campaign, Team MSU has been a reliable source of support to charitable organizations throughout the mid-Michigan area.

There are two ways to make your pledge. First, you can go through the Employee Self Service tab within EBS. Simply click on the University Information link to bring up the electronic pledge form. For those who prefer the traditional method, however, you can still print a pledge form and fill it out. To do so, visit http://msucc.msu.edu/pledgeform.htm and click “Print Out a Pledge Form to Mail.” Follow the instructions at the bottom and your pledge will be processed!

How you choose to make your pledge, campaign volunteers are asking faculty, staff, retirees and MSU affiliates to continue the spirit of giving that has helped make our community a better place to live. Through your generous gifts, initiatives like the Women’s Leadership Council, Learning from Birth to Young Adult, and any charitable organizations throughout the local area that you wish to support can continue to provide services that are so desperately needed in the community.

Thanks to all of you who have already made your pledge. If you have not yet done so, please consider making a pledge and helping mid-Michigan become a better place for everyone!

New Options to Jumpstart your Leadership Skills

Are you fully prepared to lead in a high performance organization? Professional Development Services is ready to help you take on this charge by offering a number of new, compelling leadership programs to help you to be innovative and effective while creating sustainable change. You can sign up for the programs in EBS. Visit your ESS tab and select the Training Opportunities quick link.

Creating an Environment of Innovation - Feb. 25

Leaders at MSU have been called to increase innovation in their teams, but how? In this half-day session, you will be introduced to nine different tools that your team can use to promote innovation. You will use these tools to brainstorm and craft ideas, and then take the tools with you to apply to your own team and projects.

Influencer - March 3 and 5

Learn what you need to do to create lasting change in your organization. This research-based class will help you identify the behaviors you should focus on, diagnose the real causes behind behavior problems, effectively motivate and enable others, and create behavior change strategies that yield rapid, lasting results.

Visionary Leadership: A Personalized Process for Success - April 23

Leadership is about vision, alignment and execution—and even more important, the best practices that you can exercise to lead change effectively. You will appreciate the researched and proven process you will learn in this class. Utilizing the DiSC Work of Leaders, this program connects unique leadership styles to real-world demands.

Whether you are a current or aspiring leader, you can boost your skills by utilizing the wealth of resources available through the online learning tool, elevateU, at your convenience. There you can find courses such as Inspiring Your Team, Developing a High Performance Organization and Leading with Emotional Intelligence. There also are thousands of books available which you can access at any time, including titles from authors such as John Maxwell, Steven Covey, Patrick Lencioni and Chip Heath. And don’t forget the videos available through the Leadership Channel in Books 24/7. There you will find a huge range of topics, including Ditch the Drama to Get Results, Leadership Tips for New Managers and Building Employee Engagement.

Call Professional Development Services at 517-355-0183 to get assistance with charting and executing your own development plan.
What you may have missed this month on our blog...

The Spartan Experience: An Update

The Spartan Experience program addresses the key concepts, habits and vital behaviors that are universal to providing excellent service and creating outstanding experiences. The program provides the foundation and tools that equip staff supervisors and managers to define the service experience in their specific unit. It helps all participating understand how they help MSU distinguish and embrace a high-performance customer-service culture. Since its start in October 2013, over 1,600 employees have participated in The Spartan Experience from over 30 departments. More than 400 supervisors have attended Leading the Spartan Experience, designed to introduce them to the concepts and resources available.

Don’t hesitate, register for The Spartan Experience today! To do so, log into EBS and select the Training Opportunities quick link under your ESS tab.

Visit our post to see the spring class dates. 🌼

Winter Exercise Alternatives

As temperatures drop lower and lower, it can be tempting to stay inside, curled up in front of the TV, surrounded by unhealthy holiday treats. However, with the right methods in place, exercising during the winter can be a breeze! There are many creative ways to get active.

Indoor Walking Tracks
Indoor walking tracks provide low-impact exercise while avoiding winter’s bitter cold temperatures. IM Sports East features an indoor track for public use.

Indoor Pool
Swimming is a great form of total-body exercise and can help you imagine being in a tropical oasis as opposed to an arctic wasteland. Visit IM Sports Circle or IM Sports West for indoor swimming.

Click here to read the rest of the blog post. 🌼

Project 60/50: Across Generations Video Contest

Often, the elders in our lives prove to be our most vital influences. What we gain from conversation with these role models is truly invaluable.

The Across Generations: VideoFest contest invites young people to tape a conversation with an important elder (anyone 60+ years of age.) This contest not only aids young people in learning more about the elders in their lives, but provides a platform for older adults to share their stories.

View this blog post for more details! 🌼
Professional Development Services’ Education Opportunities

To register or get more information on any of these upcoming HR Professional Development Services (PDS, formerly HRD) courses, look at the SpartansLearn.msu.edu catalog on the Human Resources website at www.hr.msu.edu or go to SpartansLearn.msu.edu. The current catalog is available under the “What’s New” section of the HR website.

Essentials of Project Management
Tuesday, January 27, Wednesday, January 28, and Thursday, January 29, 8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Presenter: Alice Wilken. $450.
Learn techniques to become skilled at managing projects. This three-day workshop is designed to arm you with the tools you need to manage projects and bodies of work that deliver results on time and on budget, regardless of size or nature.

Conducting Successful Focus Groups
Wednesday, February 4, 2 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Learn to develop a shared vision of success that will help you drive team performance, build trust, set goals and provide feedback to help enhance employee engagement and working relationships. Practical, critical tools are provided to enhance the long-term success of your team.

Advanced Communication Skills for Bilingual Professionals
Thursdays, February 5, February 12, February 19, and February 26, 2:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Presenter: Carol Arnold, MSU English Language Center. $250.
Target Audience: MSU professionals who are advanced speakers of English as a second language.
Speaking more than one language is an amazing asset, yet sometimes in this fast-paced world it’s difficult to find the words or expressions to say exactly what we want to say. This series of workshops will cover written and oral communication strategies, grammar, and guidance for effective personal interaction.

New! Crucial Conversations
Wednesday, February 18 and Thursday, February 19, 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Presenter: Christy Turner, MSU Human Resources. $225.
Learn step-by-step tools for promoting open, honest dialogue around high-stakes, emotional, or risky topics—at all levels of your organization. By learning how to speak and be heard (and encouraging others to do the same), you’ll begin to surface the best ideas, make the highest quality decisions and act on your decisions with unity and commitment.

Contact HR
For most HR-related questions or concerns, you should contact our HR Solutions Center at:

• 517-353-4434
• SolutionsCenter@hr.msu.edu

The following areas of HR can be contacted directly:

• 517-355-0183 or ProDev@hr.msu.edu for questions related to professional development courses.
• 517-353-5510 or hr.er@hr.msu.edu for questions related to unions, grievances, arbitration and employee discipline.