

The University of Kansas Classified Senate Newsletter

September 2003

INSURANCE GOING UP AGAIN THIS YEAR?

Insurance Benefit Information From Staff Benefits:

What will happen to our health insurance benefits? Unfortunately, the State of Kansas has not yet shared this information with us. Various proposals are under discussion and we are not privy to what final decisions have been made and the cost associated with those choices.

It is our understanding that premiums will increase and out-of-pocket expenses (deductibles and copayments) will increase with design changes that will occur to all plans (HMOs, PPOs, and Kansas Choice). The amount of premium increase and extent of plan design changes have not yet been shared with us.

Again, as always, open enrollment is during the month of October. Human Resources will offer informational meetings that we encourage employees to attend. Representatives from Division of Personnel Services, as well as from the insurance companies, attend the meetings too. We would encourage employees to come to those meetings to express their concerns and complaints to ensure their voices are heard by the DPS reps who negotiate the plans and prices for the State of Kansas program.

KU OPEN HOUSE-SEPTEMBER 20, 2003

The Classified Employees will again be represented at the annual KU Open House to be held on Saturday, September 20 from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM. We will have a table along Jayhawk Blvd. on the corner of Sunflower Road and Jayhawk Blvd. We will have information about Classified Employees of the Month, our position paper, the Classified Employees; brochure and other information.

Volunteers are needed to be at the table to hand out information and ask questions about who we are and what we do. Please contact anyone on the Communications Committee or the Classified Senate if you are willing to spend some time at the table. You can volunteer for as little, or as long, as you like. We would also like to have volunteers to set up at 9:30 am and to take everything down after 2.

ALTERNATIVE TO CIVIL SERVICE SURVEY JULY 2003 — EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

From Carrie Towns, OIRP

Purpose

All classified staff were surveyed in an effort to understand the most important issues regarding whether there is support to pursue an alternative to State Civil Service. Respondents were asked to identify which features of the new proposed system they liked, and which they didn't like.

Highlights

Respondents reported the following as the best-liked features of the new proposal.

	Overall % who LIKE this feature
Appeal of performance evaluations comparable to current practice	82%
Lay-off procedures comparable to State Civil Service	77%
Portion of salary increases to be awarded based on performance	73%
Salary increases determined by the University administration rather than the legislature	71%

The feature that respondents DISLIKE the most is: 50% DISLIKE – Performance portion of salary awarded at the discretion of supervisor

Although the percentage of respondents who DISLIKE this feature differed by job classification, it was the MOST DISLIKED feature across all job classifications.

Percent of each Job Class
Who DISLIKE This feature

Secretarial/Clerical	46%
Skilled/Craft Maintenance	64%
Service Worker/Protective Services	49%
Technical	56%
Professional	48%
Overall	50%

About one-third of the respondents had extreme opinions about the proposal, either responding that they LIKE EVERY feature of the new proposal, or that they DISLIKE EVERY feature.

26% of the respondents reported that they LIKE EVERY feature of the new proposal.

The percentage of respondents who LIKE EVERY feature of the new proposal only differed slightly by job classification.

	Percent of each Job Class Who LIKE EVERY Feature
Secretarial/Clerical	25%
Skilled/Craft Maintenance	21%
Service Worker/Protective Services	23%
Technical	29%
Professional	29%
Overall	26%

7% of the respondents reported that they DISLIKE EVERY feature of the new proposal.

The percentage of respondents who DISLIKE EVERY feature of the new proposal differed by job classification.

	Percent of each Job Class Who DISLIKE EVERY Feature
Secretarial/Clerical	5%
Skilled/Craft Maintenance	17%
Service Worker/Protective Services	2%
Technical	10%
Professional	2%
Overall	7%

Approximately 40% of the respondents offered verbatim comments, either offering additional features they would like to have added to the proposal, or sharing their opinion about the proposal, in general. Common themes in the comments were:

Suggested Additional Features:

- Include an "opt-out" option
- Assurance of fair raises
- Changes in the current performance evaluation process/safeguards against unfair performance evaluations
- Additional options for retirement/increase in employer match
- Maintain longevity bonus in lump sum payment

Other Comments:

- Don't want to leave State Civil Service
- Don't trust the University to fairly administer the new proposal
- Concerns about supervisors determining performance portion of salary increase
- In favor of the alternative/continue to pursue the alternative

Response Rate Analysis

Surveys were sent to all 1,465 classified staff via campus mail on July 1, 2003. One follow-up postcard reminder was sent on July 10. Completed surveys were accepted through July 18. Overall Response Rate = 48% (710 surveys responses out of 1,465 surveys mailed).

707	Completed Surveys
3	Verbatim Responses Only/Survey Not Completed
710	Total Responses

	Number Completed	Percent of Total Respondents
Secretarial/Clerical	351	49%
Skilled Craft/Maintenance	96	14%
Service Worker/Protective Services	85	12%
Technical	72	10%
Professional	83	12%
Unknown Job Classification includes 3 returned with verbatim only)		

Total 710 100%

TWO VIEWPOINTS: FOR AND AGAINST THE ALTERNATIVE CIVIL SERVICE PROPOSAL

VOTE FOR THE ALTERNATIVE TO CIVIL SERVICE PROPOSAL

From Mike Auchard

This fall the classified employees at KU will have an opportunity to vote again on the Alternative to Civil Service proposal. Obviously every vote counts. I encourage all of you to vote. The results of this vote will decide which direction we as employees will try to go.

Those of you who have read the last newsletter know that I am in favor of the proposal. You will be receiving more information on the alternative proposal and I encourage all of you to read it and attend any informational meeting that become available. Whether the proposal passes or not, I hope your vote reflects an informed decision.

Before I get into anything more complicated I will state that the main reason to vote for the proposal is that the intention of the proposal has been from the very beginning to increase the pay of classified employees. A vote for the proposal is a vote for more pay.

It seems to me that the main sticking point in deciding this issue is "trust." Do you trust the KU administration more than you do the politicians in Topeka? I have worked with members of both groups over the years and for the most part I think they are equally trustworthy. So the question is not which group is the most honest, but which group has the most reasons to treat employees fairly.

The KU administration has more reasons to be concerned with the welfare of its employees. We all work here. They interact with us every day. We are doing work they want done, and when it doesn't get done because employees can't be hired or retained due to noncompetitive wages, then the KU administration is in a much closer position to hear the complaints and frustration of the departments and students at KU. There is a great deal of highly skilled work that has to be done here, and it requires skilled workers like you to do it. The administration

understands this in a manner and with an immediacy that the state government in Topeka simply do not. It is not a question of which group is more noble or altruistic. It is a question of which group has more of a vested interest in getting the work of the University done, and that is the KU administration.

As far as trusting the state government, one needs go no farther back than the last decade when the state of Kansas, along with the rest of the country, experienced unprecedented prosperity. The same politicians who for years had been telling us that the reasons for our low pay increases were a poor economy and meager tax revenues, when faced with healthy budget surpluses, gave the surpluses away in the form of tax breaks rather than adjustments to the pay matrix reflecting the new health in the economy. These are people who, for the most part, care more about re-election than about you and your job.

Many of you are worried that in a compensation system based partially (1/3) on merit some supervisors will play favorites and give friends better raises than employees who are more deserving. This is a reasonable concern and one the administration should be able to work on. I would be the last person to tell you that I think evaluations are done fairly and equitably in all departments at KU. I have heard the same horror stories as many of you and have even had a little first hand experience with inequitable evaluations myself. However, most supervisors are honest and consider what is best for their work unit. A strengthened appeals system (which is envisioned in the proposal) along with more supervisory training, and the administrative tracking of merit pay increases will mitigate the potential for unfairness.

There is a misconception about the merit component of the proposed system. People tend to see it as an either/or situation. The employee, in this misconception, either gets the maximum merit pay, or she/he does not. That would seldom be the case. As Lindy Eakin, who is the chair of the committee looking into the alternative system, explained, it would be extremely unusual for an employee to get no part of the 1/3 merit component. Many employees would get the entire 1/3. A few employees would get somewhat more than 1/3, and a few employees would get somewhat less than the full 1/3. But very few employees would get no part of the merit pay. So, along with the 2/3 base pay increase, nearly everyone would get some merit increase. Lindy indicated that instances in which an

employee received no merit pay would require an explanation.

Also, bear in mind that the alternative plan envisions larger pay increases than have historically been the case and that, once again, is the main reason to vote in favor of the alternative proposal.

ARE WE SURE THIS PROPOSAL IS WORTH IT?
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From Jean Robart

1) In the letter from Lindy to classified employees dated April 23rd, I cite this statement: "It is the intent of the university to improve staff work life by having the ability to locally address issues, rather than be dependent upon changes implemented on a statewide basis."

This article shouldn't be concerned with the university's intent. It is supposed to be a proposal from, by and for classified employees. I agree that it might be advantageous for the university to have more autonomy in its compensation program--why not just declassify staff as openings develop, and at some future point, with appropriate notice, declassify all remaining positions?

2) As for using tuition funds and block grants in compensation programs--aren't those funding sources subject to market fluctuations just as legislative funding has been? If tuition continues to rise—as we all know it will—doesn't it seem logical that it could have the effect of lowering number of students on campus, thereby turning around and resulting in less money available from tuition for compensation programs? And block grants--grants of any kind--are subject to market effects as well. When a company or foundation is going through rough economic times, what is one of the first items to be eliminated from budgets--grants and financial benefits. If not being eliminated altogether, I think we've all seen statements in the news about how funding dries up due to the economy. If foundations and corporations don't get the money in--they obviously can't dole it out.

3) If we wouldn't be classified employees anymore--what would we be? Unclassified? or some status in between classified and unclassified?

4) Why can't we include in the proposal the need to explore other insurance companies besides BCBSKS for our major medical insurance? At the high premiums we're all paying now, surely there have to be alternatives with comparable benefits and better rates? Or is this one of those items that could be decided on a local basis rather than relying on statewide mandates/legislation?

One of the biggest complaints about our compensation package is what has happened to our cost of insurance and costs out of pocket over the last couple of years. It almost seems as if whoever sets rates for our insurance is trying to steer everybody into an HMO--which doesn't work or just plain isn't the preference for some people. Yet the only mention in the proposal of this is that insurance plan choices would remain the same as currently offered.

5) In the section for "Job Correction/Protection System", the very first item reads as follows: An appeal mechanism for suspensions, terminations, complaints over working conditions and performance evaluations **will be developed in collaboration with Classified Senate representatives, taking into account various models, e.g. University governance.** Yet in the section for "Performance Appraisal" the following appears, which looks like it could be somewhat of a contradiction: "HR coordinates an appeal process with campus appeal committee for the appeal of an evaluation, not for disciplinary action taken. **This process will be developed in collaboration with Classified Senate representatives.**"

6) I know that KPERS has some kind of legislative mandate as retirement for classified people--why do we have to leave our retirement investments there? I ask this in view of the crisis in KPERS funding right now--hardly a week goes by without hearing something about how this committee or that legislator is looking into why the investments by KPERS are doing so poorly. We need a better retirement system than we currently have--this proposal maintains KPERS as our sole option for basic retirement funding. Sure, we can put money away in a voluntary plan--if we can afford to after taxes and insurance come out of our gross pay. The rank and file employee doesn't seem to have much of a chance of doing anything but breaking even--if that.

If I were to even CONSIDER voting in favor of this plan, the biggest changes I'd have to see included would be something other than KPERS for the "mandatory" retirement plan, and a better selection of insurance companies--give us some choices other than plans administrated by BCBSKS.

EDITOR'S NOTE: (BETTE LUTHER)

As a member of the Alternative to Civil Service Committee and a person who handles personnel, payroll and human resource issues for our department I would like to comment on the

insurance & retirement issues. I have also worked for private companies as Human Resource & Payroll Director and have served on committees researching healthcare plans and employee benefits.

It is my sincere feeling that a "no-vote" to the Civil Service Alternative Proposal will not have an impact on what the people in Topeka do with our healthcare or retirement plans. As is stated elsewhere in this newsletter, our healthcare costs are going to go up for the second year in a row. We have no opportunity for input into this decision. Likewise with our KPERS, we have no opportunity for input as to the administration of this plan. In reality, that is probably not going to change. Our healthcare costs would be much higher if the state did not have as many employees in the plan. If any of you have contacted insurance companies to see what it would cost you as an individual to have healthcare, you know what the costs are. Many corporations cannot offer reasonable healthcare plans to their employees because of the high costs. Even KU, with the number of employees it has, could not get as competitive rates as we now get from the state plan.

What we do have a say in is whether or not we want to continue to let the state control our pay rate as well. There are rumors that the Department of Personnel Services in Topeka is planning a major change in the system as we know it as Classified Employees. They are not asking our opinion. They are not holding Town Hall meetings. They are working behind closed doors and will let us know the results when all the i's are dotted and t's are crossed. We, as Classified Employees at KU, will have input into the new system, if it comes into being. We will be working on the evaluation and review process. We will have input in developing a new employee handbook. This is much more than we have now with the state.

I have been working with the KU administration for over a year, attending a countless number of meetings, listening to pros and cons to the CSA proposal, and reading as much information as possible. I know there are trust issues. To some extent, there always will be. However, having met with and having had long conversations with some of the administrators of this university, I have to say I do trust them more than the representatives and senators in Topeka. I believe that if we sit back and do nothing, our healthcare costs will continue to skyrocket, our retirement plans will continue to diminish, and we will have no additional net income to offset the additional financial burden.

CHANCELLOR'S PAY RAISE

From Mike Auchard

Along with the 1.5 percent salary increase that all classified employees recently received, Chancellor Hemenway received a pay raise that was a little more generous. His pay increase amounted to \$50,000.

This has been a lively and frequent topic of conversation around campus. I am not in a position to judge whether the Chancellor's work performance merits such reward. That is technically the job of the Board of Regents, but in this case a wealthy individual who also extended his magnanimity to other Board of Regent university presidents donated the raise. No state or University money was used to finance the increase.

What I know is that from the perspective of most KU employees \$50,000 is a lot of money. To put this into perspective KU still has employees working at Range 9 on the Kansas Civil Service Pay Plan. A career employee working here for over twenty years, who has topped out and moved up to Range 9, Step 15, makes \$9.75 per hour or \$20,280 per year. I think most of you understand that this is not his or her raise, but the entire annual base salary-considerably less than half of the Chancellor's raise.

I believe I have known Chancellor Hemenway as long as most classified employees at KU. I was part of an interview committee who met with him before he was hired. I also had him as an English Literature professor. I have always had the highest regard for him personally and professionally, and this is not meant as a criticism of him. I suspect that among the ranks of university presidents, at universities comparable to KU, his salary is probably reasonable for the job he is doing. Since a large part of his job is to solicit donations for the university from wealthy individuals, he was certainly in no position to decline such generosity and risk offending.

But the other thing I know about this situation is that there is something drastically wrong with a system in which one employee receives a raise that is more than twice as much as another's annual salary. It is not that the Chancellor makes too much, it is that so many make so little.

TUITION ASSISTANCE

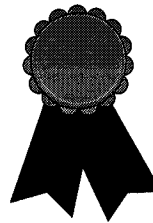
**SPRING SEMESTER DEADLINE IS
5:00 P.M., FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 21ST**

The Tuition Assistance program is available to staff with six months of KU employment. The program normally covers tuition for one class per semester. Classes should be structured courses that meet on a scheduled basis with days and times

published in the Timetable of Classes. The tuition assistance application form is available on the Human Resources website under forms download. For more information, contact Lynn George, at 864-7415. Applications should be forwarded to the Tuition Assistance Committee, c/o Human Resources, 103 Carruth-O'Leary Hall.

Please note: when you are filing out your form, fill in the amount of tuition to the best of your ability. Once tuition rates are set, the amount will be adjusted accordingly on your application.

Important Tax Update: In the past, pursuant to IRS requirements, tuition assistance was considered a taxable benefit for individuals with at least a baccalaureate degree and was reflected accordingly on the employee's annual W-2 form. Beginning with the Spring 2002 semester, awarded tuition assistance for both undergraduate and graduate courses will be excluded from gross income. This exclusion for employer-provided tuition benefits has been expanded and extended through December 31, 2010 by the Economic Growth and Tax Reconciliation Act of 2001.



Congratulations to the following for being named **KU Classified Employees of the Month:**

May — **Cindi Hodges**, Administrative Specialist in the Philosophy Department

June — **Maud Morris**, Accounting Specialist in the History of Art Department

July — **Janet Girnius**, Senior Custodial Supervisor in Student Housing

August — **Georgia Hunter**, Custodial Specialist in Facilities Operations

September — **Georgia Damis**, Administrative Specialist in East Asian Languages and Culture

This newsletter created and designed by Margretta de Vries, Bette Luther, Nancy Brune, Ruth Hatfield, Andy Pritchard, Debby Reed and Sharon Lee Green.

The Classified Senate Communications Committee meets once per month. If you have suggestions for articles, please call Bette Luther (864-4229) or email us at clsenate@ku.edu. ©2003–2005 KU Classified Senate and Margretta de Vries.

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WEB SITE UPDATE

www.ku.edu/~clsenate/

Please visit our website and feel free to e-mail the Webmaster. Your input is appreciated.

clsenate@ku.edu

HELPFUL WEB LINKS**KU Home Page**

www.ku.edu/

KU Staff Benefits

www.ku.edu/~kuhr/faculty_staff/benefits/

Meeting Schedules

For KU Classified Senate
www.ku.edu/~clsenate/

On the menu, select 'Meeting Schedules'. Full Senate meetings are open to anyone who would like to attend.

Visit the **Academic Computer Center**
www.ku.edu/acs/ and check out the new Summer 2003 classes and online registration.

KU News, Arts, & Events are available at www.ku.edu/news/.

THE NEXT MEETING OF THE KU CLASSIFIED SENATE WILL BE ON SEPTEMBER 10TH AT 10:30 A.M. IN THE WALNUT ROOM OF THE KANSAS UNION.

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