

**GEORGE MASON
UNIVERSITY**

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HUMAN RESOURCES & PAYROLL

END - OF - THE - YEAR NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2010

Welcome to the HR & Payroll Annual Year-End Newsletter to help you prepare for 2011. It has been quite a year for the Mason community and for the wider world beyond. Thank you to everyone at Mason for making it the wonderful place that it is. We are all Mason and collectively contribute to it's overall success.

As your life moves and changes, please remember the depth and breath of your resources at Mason. Your colleagues in HR & Payroll are as close as your phone or email and happy to help in whatever way we can.



We wish you the very best!

Happy Holidays!

Linda H. Harber

Associate Vice President and CHRO
Human Resources & Payroll



Recognition Abounds in 2010

A big thank you to Mason's fantastic faculty and staff who make all recognition possible!

[The Chronicle of Higher Education's Great Colleges to Work For Program](#)

Mason has been recognized in the Great Colleges to Work For Program in 2008 (first year of the program), 2009, and 2010. This program does not rank per se, but in 2009 they began an Honor Roll. Mason has been recognized in the Honor Roll category both in 2009 and 2010. The Honor Roll is comprised of those institutions, categorized by size, that are cited the most in individual recognition categories. Mason is in the large school category -- 10,000 or more students. Mason was recognized in 7 categories plus the Honor Roll -- Collaborative Governance, Professional/Career-Development Programs, Job Satisfaction, Work/Life Balance, Confidence in Senior Leadership, Supervisor or Department-Chair Relationship, and Respect and Appreciation.

[Chronicle recognition details](#)

[American Heart Association Fit Friendly Company](#)

The American Heart Association has designated Mason a "Fit Friendly Company" in 2009 and 2010. This program recognizes companies that promote the importance of a healthy workplace and take steps to create a culture of physical activity and wellness.

[AHA Recognition Details](#)

[Corporate Voices for Working Families: Business Champion for Workplace Flexibility](#)

Dr. Merten signed a pledge for Mason to be a business champion for workplace flexibility in this national campaign. The program was launched at a [White House forum on Workplace Flexibility](#) in March. Mason was one of the first universities to sign on. More information is available at

[Corporate Voices](#)

[USA Today](#)

Mason was also featured in a December USA Today insert on Work/Life.

Read all about it at [Work-Life Balance](#)

[Alfred P. Sloan Award for Excellence in Workplace Flexibility](#)

Mason's Fairfax campus was recognized in 2010 for excellence in workplace flexibility in the at-large category. Details at [When Work Works](#).

[TIAA-CREF's Raise the Rate](#)

Mason's faculty, staff, and students came together to win the university portion of the Raise the Rate contest, which sought ideas to raise the US savings rate. The \$25,000 endowment will be used to create a Faculty/Staff Book Scholarship.

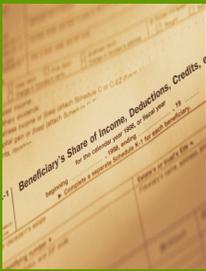
[TIAA-CREF Press Release](#)



UPCOMING FEDERAL HEALTH REFORM CHANGES Dependents & Medical Flex

Dependent children are no longer eligible for health coverage at the end of the calendar year in which they turn age 23. If your child will be age 23 by December 31, 2010, HR & Payroll has contacted you about reducing your membership effective January 1, 2011 and offering COBRA coverage to your dependent. Please note: Dependent health care coverage to age 26 will begin at the start of the next plan year, July 1, 2011* – a provision of the health care reform legislation signed by the President in March 2010. [*Spotlight on Your Benefits, Spring 2010](#)

Also note that effective January 1, 2011, most [OTC drugs and medicines](#) will no longer be eligible for reimbursement without a valid prescription from your attending physician. Participants who wish to continue to purchase tax-free OTCs will need to visit their doctor to obtain a prescription for OTC drugs and medicines. Be sure to check www.myFBMC.com regularly for updates.



Things change - marriage, birth, divorce, etc. Please check your beneficiaries on a regular basis to ensure that your wishes are current.

403(b) Supplemental Retirement Accounts Open to All

We want to take this opportunity to inform all Mason employees that they are eligible to participate in 403(b) Tax-Deferred Annuity (TDA) accounts through TIAA-CREF or Fidelity Investments. To encourage new employees to start saving for retirement as soon as possible, as of 1/1/08, Mason began automatically enrolling new (or rehired) benefits eligible faculty and classified staff in the 403(b) Tax-Deferred Annuity (TDA) program. However, all employees, regardless of classification, are eligible to have a 403(b) account. To review information on universal availability and the auto-enrollment process, please see:

[Universal Availability Notice](#)
[Notice of Automatic Enrollment and Default Investment](#)

Additional information is available on [Supplemental Retirement plans](#).

UNUM Premium Increase

If you are a UNUM participant, you may see a premium increase in December for coverage beginning 1/1/11 due to any age band increase or salary changes that may have occurred in 2010

They Grow Up So Fast! Virginia College Savings Plan

A 529 College Savings Plan allows you to put aside money for future higher education expenses. Money invested in an Internal Revenue Code Section 529 plan grows tax-free and may be withdrawn tax-free if used for qualified higher education expenses. For more information, please visit the [financial page](#) of the work/life website. **Note:** Enrollment is open for the Virginia Prepaid Education Program (VPEP) from 12/1/10 through 3/31/11; for details and enrollment materials please visit the Virginia College Savings Plan [VPEP webpage](#) and review the [program guide](#) which describes VPEP and the other 529 savings programs.

Deferred Compensation: IRS Benefit Limits Unchanged

The IRS annual limits to certain retirement plans have not changed from 2010. The Social Security Taxable Wage Base will remain at \$106,800. Pre-tax employee contribution limits for 403(b) and 457(b) plans limits are \$16,500 for employees under 50 and \$22,000 for those age 50 and older. If you would

like to change your retirement contributions you should complete a Salary reduction Agreement form and mail the completed form to HR & Payroll at MS 3C3.

Forms for both the [403\(b\)](#) the [457\(b\)](#) plan can be found at <http://hr.gmu.edu/benefits/forms.php>

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Part of the Mason benefits package for benefits eligible employees includes an Employee Assistance Program (EAP). The EAP is linked to your health insurance provider with one for Kaiser and one for COVA Care. The EAP is a wonderful resource if you are working through a challenging situation.

Your EAP can assist you with confidential counseling, education, and referral on a range of issues including work/life balance, financial stability, mental health, and more. Your EAP is available 24/7. Questions? Please call us at 3.2600.

Qualifying Events Affect Your Health Insurance and Flexible Spending Accounts

Having a baby? Getting married or divorced? Child becoming self-supporting? Affirmative answers to these and other questions may allow you to make mid-year changes to your insurance and flexible spending accounts, but only if you notify HR & Payroll within 31 days of the event's occurrence. Coverage changes are effective the first of the month following our receipt of the enrollment election form. Failure to notify us within the 31-day deadline may result in loss of insurance for the new dependent or possible exclusion by the state from health care coverage for up to three years.

Reminder for 9 - Month Faculty

Additional deductions will be taken from your pay starting with the first paycheck in March 2011 to cover for health insurance and other benefits premiums for the summer months.

Mason Helps You Help Others

School Assistance and Volunteer Service Leave

A reminder to full-time classified staff and administrative / professional faculty that each January 10 (if you are classified staff) or June 25 (if you are administrative/professional faculty) you receive 16 hours of School Assistance and Volunteer Service. You receive an additional 8 hours per year if you serve with a volunteer fire department, rescue squad or auxiliary unit (leave is pro-rated for part-time).

This leave cannot be carried over from year-to-year and is not paid out upon separation. But it is a wonderful resource to have *and* to use. This leave can be used in two distinct ways, both with your supervisor's approval.

School Assistance You can donate time to your child's school (preschool to grade 12) for a range of activities including parent/teacher meetings, chaperoning a field trip, or attending your child's recital.

Volunteer Service As long as the organization is a non-profit that "is engaged in meeting human, educational, environmental, or public safety community needs," you can use School Assistance and Volunteer Service Leave to make a difference in your community. For example, you can deliver meals to the elderly, donate blood, or be a volunteer fire fighter. You can also make a difference right here in your Mason community by donating time to some of our community endeavors including, but not limited to, [Mason Links](#), [Patriot Pack Out](#), and the [Early Identification Program](#).

The policy itself can be reviewed at [School Assistance and Volunteer Service Leave](#).

Military Family & Medical Leave Act (FMLA)

On January 28, 2008, the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2008 (NDAA), Pub. L. 110-181 was signed into law. Among other things, section 585 of the NDAA amends the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 (FMLA) to permit a "spouse, son, daughter, parent, or next of kin" to take up to 26 workweeks of leave to care for a "member of the Armed Forces, including a member of the National Guard or Reserves, who is undergoing medical treatment, recuperation, or therapy, is otherwise in outpatient status, or is otherwise on the temporary disability retired list, for a serious injury or illness."

The NDAA also permits an employee to take FMLA leave for "any qualifying exigency (as the Secretary [of Labor] shall, by regulation, determine) arising out of the fact

that the spouse, or a son, daughter, or parent of the employee is on active duty (or has been notified of an impending call or order to active duty) in the Armed Forces in support of a contingency operation." For more information on FMLA, please see University Administrative Policy No. 2215, [Family Medical Leave Policy](#).

Mason faculty and staff continue to be called up for reserve or active duty. Information on how leave, benefits, and pay are affected by military service is available on the [military leave page](#) of the Benefits website.

EXPECTING OR ADOPTING?

If you are planning to have a baby or adopt a child in 2011, please call on the Benefits Team. During this exciting time, we would like to share a "New Parent Packet" with you and help ensure that you get the most out of your Mason benefits package. Let us help with the details while you enjoy this wonderful new chapter in your life.

Extended Absences

A reminder that if an employee will be out for an extended period due to a serious or chronic medical condition or he/she needs to take care of an immediate family member (child, spouse, parent) with such a condition, there are resources available for benefits eligible employees. Short-term disability offered through the Virginia Sickness & Disability Program (VSDP) is available for classified employees hired after 1/1/99 and those faculty who enrolled upon hire. For those hired or re-hired on or after July 1, 2009, you become eligible for short-term disability after one year of continuous employment.

Additionally, employees may supplement their pay by using leave they have accrued in an appropriate category. For example, annual and comp leave may always be used. If the employee is the person with the medical condition, then Traditional Sick Leave and VSDP Sick Leave may be used until exhausted. If the employee is taking care of a family member, up to 1/3 of the employee's traditional sick leave or VSDP sick leave balance may be used for this purpose while the employee is on an official FMLA leave.

TURNOVER DEADLINES FOR VSDP FAMILY/ PERSONAL LEAVE AND EXCESS ANNUAL LEAVE

A reminder to **classified staff** that there are limits to the amount of annual leave that can be carried over from year-to-year. For excess classified annual leave, VSDP Sick, and VSDP Family and Personal leave purposes (for both classified staff and faculty enrolled in VSDP), the year runs from January 10-January 9. Unused VSDP Sick and Family and Personal leave will be replaced with a new allotment of leave if not used by January 9, 2011. New VSDP Sick and Family and Personal Leave will be awarded on January 10.

If your annual leave balance exceeds the maximum as of January 9, 2011, you will lose that portion that exceeds the limit.

The limits as defined by the state Department of Human Resource Management can be found on the [leave chart](#).

Things to keep in mind:

- Any unused annual leave may be donated in 8-hour increments. Please complete a leave donor form before January 9, 2011 and submit your completed [leave donation form](#) to the HR & Payroll office at MS 3C3.
- The **12-month faculty** leave year ends each year on June 24th.
- Full time 12-month faculty may carry over 21 days of annual leave.

The [2010-11 Holiday Schedule](#) is available. This should give you plenty of time to plan your vacation for next year.



Direct Deposit Reminder



Just a reminder that George Mason University [Policy #2201](#), "Direct Deposit of Employee Pay" requires that all employees participate in direct deposit as a condition of employment.

To ensure that you receive your pay over the winter break, you

must participate in direct deposit. If you have not enrolled in direct deposit, please do so at this time by visiting [direct deposit](#).

Any paper pay checks can be picked up after winter break, beginning January 3, 2011, in:

HR & Payroll
4087 University Drive
3rd floor
Monday-Friday
8:30am - 5:00pm.

Goal for W2's : 100% Online!

We're on track to have 2010 W-2 forms available on-line in early January. If you need a paper W-2, please send an email to W2info@gmu.edu and it will be put in the mail to you on January 28, 2011.

Additional details will be available on the W2 phone hot line at (703) 993-2311. Thank you for helping us continue to promote a paperless work environment!

W-4 Federal Tax Filing Status Exempt

If you claimed an exemption from withholding on your W-4 for 2010, your exemption expires on February 14, 2011. Please be sure to complete a new W-4 for 2011 by visiting the [Payroll website](#).

Tax Withholding

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has not yet issued new federal tax withholding tables for 2011. As a reminder, if you reached the FICA limit in 2010, you will be subject to FICA withholding again beginning in the new calendar year. There is a proposal before Congress to reduce the Social Security component of the FICA tax from 6.2% to 4.2%. Should this be approved, you will see this reduction in your 2011 FICA-Social Security tax deduction. Please note: The advanced earned income tax credit (AEITC) has been eliminated in 2011.

Although you can make adjustments throughout the year, now may be the best time to evaluate and/or adjust your deductions.

Please see the withholding page of the Payroll website at <http://hr.gmu.edu/payroll/tax.php> for details.

Keep Payroll Up-to-Date

Is Your Permanent Address Updated?

Please make sure your correct mailing address is on file with HR & Payroll. An updated permanent address in the HR & Payroll system is very important. To verify your address and update if necessary, please follow these steps:

1. Log in at <https://patriotweb.gmu.edu/>
2. Select **Personal Information**
3. Select **View Address(es) and Phone(s)**
4. Verify your **PERMANENT** address. If it is not correct, Select **Update Address(es) and Phone(s)**
5. Then **Insert** a new **PERMANENT** address

If your health insurance plan is through Mason you also need to update your permanent address in [EmployeeDirect](#). Please also remember to update your new address with your retirement plan vendors, VRS, TIAA-CREF, Fidelity Investments or ING.

Is Your Emergency Contact Information Updated?

Please make sure your emergency contact information is up-to-date in Employee Self Service as well.

1. Log in at https://patriotweb.gmu.edu.
2. Select **Personal Information**
3. Select **View Emergency Contacts**
4. Verify your emergency contact information. If it is not correct, select **Update Emergency Contacts**.
5. Insert updated information.

Is Your Federal Reporting Data Current?

Please make sure that your Federal reporting data (e.g. race, gender, Veteran status) is up to date. To view your federal reporting data, please log in to Employee Self Service (ESS) at <https://patriotweb.gmu.edu> and select "Employee Services," then:

- * Race and Ethnicity
- * From the drop down menus select race, ethnicity, and veteran status
- * Make any additions/changes
- * Click on "confirm race/ethnicity and submit"

Easy to Check Your Check

Please be sure to check your paystub each pay period. You can do so at Employee Self Service (ESS) at <https://patriotweb.gmu.edu>.

Homecoming 2011: There's No Place Like Mason

Dorothy's ruby red slippers have nothing on Mason's emerald sneakers. Join in the Homecoming festivities from January 31 to February 6. There's something for everyone -- pep rally, pageant, parade, block party, talent contest and much, much more! Departments are invited to show off their spirit by participating in the **Office Decorating Contest**. Decorate so our "Emerald City" really sparkles!

Entries should be received by January 28 and judging will take place the following Monday. [Register your team today](#) (<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/DecorationContest2011>). It culminates with the Homecoming game against ODU on February 5 at 2:00pm. Don't miss out on the fun! Visit <http://homecoming.gmu.edu> for details.

MASON ALUMNI:

Register for any of the alumni events and you'll receive a link to get discounted basketball tickets in the Homecoming alumni section.



Policy & Learning Reminders

Drug and Alcohol Policy

The abuse of drugs and alcohol by employees is incompatible with the goals of George Mason University. The illicit use of drugs and alcohol could create a serious threat to the safety and welfare of the university community, as well as undermine the productivity of the workforce.

Those in need of assistance in dealing with drug and alcohol related problems are encouraged to seek the confidential help of the Human Resources & Payroll Employee Relations team. Benefits eligible employees may also utilize the Employee Assistance Program (EAP). Contact information is available on the [Employee Relations website](#).

The complete policy is available at [Employee Drug and Alcohol Policy](#)

Learning Opportunities

Please consider including professional development in your new year's resolutions. Visit the HR & Payroll learning page to check out our many offerings, including professional career development networking classes in January, orientation for the Administrative Professional Certificate Program in February, and the new cohort of the New SUPERvisor Series beginning in March. We also offer Customer Service Certificate and Advanced Customer Service Certificate Programs, technical training to enhance HR skills, and much more! Supervisors with at least 5 years of supervisory experience at Mason OR those who have completed the New SUPERvisor Series are invited to apply for the Experienced Supervisor Leadership Seminars; the application deadline is in May 2011.

Information on all these programs, applications, our course calendars and registration can be found at <http://hr.gmu.edu/training>.

Conflict Resolution and Grievance Training

All Mason supervisors are strongly encouraged to receive training in conflict resolution and the grievance procedure. Please see the [HR & Payroll Training website](#) for class schedules.

KNOW YOUR WORK/LIFE CHOICES



*“Live well;
age well,
no matter
your age!”*

Flexible Work Options

Find your best work/life balance with flexible work options. With supervisor and departmental approval, you can utilize telework, a compressed schedule, job sharing or flex time. For more information, including policies, procedures, and forms, please visit the [flexible work page](#) of the work/life website.

Test your Work/Life knowledge below

Life Planning and Resource & Referral

Don't wait for a crisis to consider how you're going to care for an aging loved one. Schedule an appointment today and get your resources lined up. Please contact Patrice Winter, our Life Planning & Eldercare Services Coordinator, at 993.1802 or email her at ecare@gmu.edu.

The work/life team can also assist with resource and referral information on other topics as well including relocation resources, dual career assistance and other life events. Let us help you with the research and resource information.

Contact us at worklife@gmu.edu.

Saving Money Starts Here

At HR & Payroll, we are always looking for ways to help save you money. As a Mason employee, you receive discounts from many vendors throughout the area. Put some extra cash in your pocket by using the work/life discount page.

Please visit the work/life [discounts page](#) for a list of participating vendors.

ACROSS	DOWN
2 a work arrangement where two staff members share the responsibilities of one full-time position; each is considered a part-time employee (2 words)	1 an employee's hours of work in the traditional university office or in an alternate work location (2 words)
5 a work arrangement where an employee spends most or all of their working hours outside the traditional place of work located far enough away from a Mason campus that commuting on a daily basis is not possible (2 words)	3 the period from the third Sunday in May through the third Saturday in August when people are encouraged to take a "test drive"
6 a work arrangement where an employee works at an approved alternate work site, with most of their time spent at a university work site	4 an alternative work schedule where the start time and end time of an employee's workday are varied, or the days of the week an employee works are varied
7 an alternate work schedule completed in fewer than 5 full work-days per week (3 words)	

Here's To A Healthy New Year!

RESOLUTION SOLUTION

Proud to partner with Wellness by Mason, Mason Recreation is excited to announce the 2011 Resolution Solution Fitness Challenge. Your department will have the opportunity to compete in a fitness challenge against other Mason departments. Join us to help Mason become healthier and greener in 2011!

Mason Recreation offers state-of-the-art facilities that support a wide range of activities for the university community. Fitness memberships include access to all three recreation and athletic facilities - Aquatic & Fitness Center, the RAC, and Skyline Fitness Center— and are available to both university-affiliated and non-affiliated individuals.

As Mason faculty and staff, you can enjoy all the benefits of a Mason Recreation membership at a fraction of the standard cost! Mason Recreation is excited to offer you a wide array of cutting edge fitness and wellness activities, as well as easy payment methods; including payroll deduction for eligible faculty and staff. No initiation or enrollment fees. \$25/Month or \$250/year. Visit <http://recreation.gmu.edu/memberships> for information on memberships.

Please contact Guy Curtis at gcurtis2@gmu.edu regarding these exciting opportunities with Mason Recreation.

FOLLOW THE SUNFLOWER FOR MORE



WELLNESS OPPORTUNITIES NEAR YOU!

<http://wellnessbymason.gmu.edu/>

GET YOUR TAXES DONE FOR FREE

Organized by Fairfax County Department of Family Services, the NOVA CASH Coalition is dedicated to helping qualified local families who made \$49,000 or less in 2010 avoid the costly fee charged to prepare and file taxes. With the help of dedicated IRS certified volunteers, these families throughout Northern Virginia received over \$5.5 million in federal refunds last tax season.

Join your neighbors and save your dollars.

For more information on the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program including tax preparation sites and how to volunteer to be a tax preparer, please visit [VITA](http://vita.org) or call Thea Frisby at 703-533-5702.

If you have any questions or comments after reading the newsletter, please contact us!

Human Resources & Payroll

George Mason University
4087 University Drive
Fairfax, VA 22030

Voice: 703.993.2600
Email: hr@gmu.edu

Fax: 703.993.2601
Website: <http://hr.gmu.edu/>

Fairfax Campus:

Mason Recreation

<http://recreation.gmu.edu/>

(703) 993-3939

Prince William Campus:

Freedom Center

<http://www.freedom-center.com/>

(703) 993-8444

Arlington Campus:

For wellness options near the Arlington Campus, go to

<http://ulife.gmu.edu/arlington/documents/Fitness-10-09.pdf>



Other Wellness Opportunities

CommonHealth (includes fitness center discounts)

<http://commonhealth.virginia.gov/>

Revolution Health

<https://www.revolutionhealth.com/commonhealthva>

Gold's Gym

Special pricing for all campuses (16 corporate locations in the metro DC area). For details, please see the [work/life discount page](#).

Weight Watchers at Work

50% reimbursement continues in 2011! Look for reimbursement information and upcoming sessions at <http://hr.gmu.edu/training/weightwatchers.php>

Reward & Recognition

So Many Ways to Say "Thank You!"

Even though we are in the midst of challenging economic times, Reward & Recognition is alive and well at Mason. In good financial times or in difficult ones, Mason is committed to recognizing its outstanding faculty and staff. The Reward & Recognition team has many ways to say, "Thanks, you've done a great job!" Check out the choices at [Reward & Recognition](#).



As a thank you for reading this year's newsletter, we are offering you a chance to win a

FREE GIFT

Email worklife@gmu.edu by January 7th with the correct answers to these 4 questions and you will be entered to win a fun prize!

- 1) What is the theme for this year's Homecoming?
- 2) When does the classified leave year end?
- 3) How much School Assistance and Volunteer Service leave is available each year to full-time classified and administrative/ professional faculty?
- 4) What are the 2 upcoming changes to health coverage resulting from federal health reform?