

# Our University

A NEWSLETTER FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESIDENT FOR THE UC COMMUNITY



## October 2009: Printer-friendly version

This printer-friendly version of *Our University* from the UC Office of the President is intended to be posted in order to be accessible to members of the UC community without easy access to a computer at work. The web version is available at:

<http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/ouruniversity/1009/>.

## OPEN ENROLLMENT GETS UNDERWAY OCT. 29 TO NOV. 24

Read about benefits for 2010 and listen to Human Resources Vice President **Dwaine B. Duckett** talk about rising health care costs and what employees can expect.

Like employers everywhere, UC has seen its health care costs rise each year for more than a decade. Since 1999, health insurance costs nationally have gone up by 131 percent, outpacing both wages and inflation.

UC has done its best to shield employees from the full extent of the increases by continuing to pay roughly 88 percent of all health care premiums, a percentage that has remained steady even as costs have climbed.

To hear Dwaine Duckett, UC's Vice President of Human Resources, talk about next year's health care benefits, go online: [http://atyourservice.ucop.edu/open\\_enrollment/](http://atyourservice.ucop.edu/open_enrollment/)

That will be true again in 2010, with UC and employees shelling out nearly \$1.2 billion for health and welfare benefits. UC is paying approximately \$95 million more than in 2009.

"We have a long tradition of investing heavily in employee health and welfare programs," said Dwaine Duckett, UC vice president for Human Resources. "People make UC the great institution it is, so providing excellent employment benefits is a strategic priority."

### Unsustainable cost increases

Duckett and others expect costs to continue on a steep upward trajectory into 2011 and beyond. He says that if UC is going to maintain high-quality health and welfare programs, it must rethink its approach.

Neither UC nor its employees can sustain the continual cost increases, Duckett said.

“We need to start innovating,” Duckett said. “Unless we redesign our programs, we will jeopardize our ability to provide quality care to employees.”

The Human Resources department, together with UC experts and others from the health care field, will spend much of 2010 focused on ways to maintain strong, high-quality health care programs while keeping costs sustainable.

“We’ll be asking staff for their input and feedback,” Duckett said. “We want to know what health care choices are most important to them.”

### **UC pays a larger subsidy than most employers**

UC pays a far larger share of health care costs than most California employers. Nationally, employers pick up about 73 percent of health care premiums, compared with UC’s 88 percent. Even among comparator Universities – a group of peers that UC uses for benchmarks on salaries and other data – UC provides a larger subsidy.

<b>Employer Share of Medical Premiums</b>	
UC	88%
University Peers*	81%
California Avg.	80%
CALPERS	76%
National Avg.	73%
Avg. contribution based on eight comparator universities: Harvard; Univ. of Illinois; MIT; Univ. of Michigan; State Univ. of NY, Buffalo; Stanford; Univ. of Virginia; Yale	

President Mark G. Yudof, mindful of the financial sacrifices already being made under the furlough program, directed Human Resources to keep employee health care costs down as much as possible in the 2010 benefits package. Health benefits are just as robust as in past years, and premium increases have been kept to the absolute minimum.

Open Enrollment, the annual window for making benefits changes, runs from Oct. 29 through Nov. 24. Employees will find that there have been few plan changes in 2010, and in many cases, coverage levels have been expanded.

Under the 2008 Mental Health Parity Act, mental and behavioral health benefits have been expanded. Several health insurers no longer have maximum stays for psychiatric in-patient care, for example.

Co-pays for generic drugs are also lower under most plans. In addition, the legal plan is open for enrollment.

As always, faculty and staff should review all their benefits, and not just health care, with an eye on making the right choices for the coming year.

### **How employees can save money**

In addition, there are some easy ways to save money. The Health Flexible Spending Account is a good way to cover anticipated medical expenses while lowering your federal tax bill, for instance. And if you have supplemental disability coverage, you can save quite a bit by extending the waiting time for benefits from 30 to 90 days. This makes the most sense for employees whose sick leave accruals are sufficient to tide them over until disability benefits kick in.

**Review your benefits and consider changes at:**

[http://atyourservice.ucop.edu/open\\_enrollment/](http://atyourservice.ucop.edu/open_enrollment/)

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## *Solution:* **Seismic Safety**

UC scientists and engineers have used the lessons of the Loma Prieta earthquake 20 years ago to develop practical solutions to make California more quake resistant.

Read more on the lessons of the Loma Prieta earthquake at:

<http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/news/article/22078>

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## **PEOPLE** WHO MAKE A **DIFFERENCE**

UC Irvine neuroscientist Leslie Thompson helped identify the gene that causes Huntington's disease, a fatal brain disorder. Now she's using a powerful new tool to find a cure: stem cells. Read more about Leslie Thompson's research:

[http://zotzine.uci.edu/2009\\_09/thompson.php](http://zotzine.uci.edu/2009_09/thompson.php)

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## **Systemwide News**

### **UC med centers collaborate to revolutionize breast cancer care**

Dr. Laura Esserman is spearheading The ATHENA Breast Health Network, a new initiative that harnesses UC's collective power to accelerate advancements in breast cancer prevention, screening and treatment. Read more about advancements in breast cancer care: <http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/news/article/22001>

### **How will you use your furlough days?**

UC employees at the California Digital Library held a brown bag lunch recently to talk about the furlough plan. In addition to a lively discussion about how to get work done with fewer hours each month, the group also talked about how they would use their time away from UC.

Have plans for your furlough? Share them with us at: [carolyn.mcmillan@ucop.edu](mailto:carolyn.mcmillan@ucop.edu)

"We share ideas for building resiliency through professional development - that is, focusing on one or two things you'd like to improve during the furlough year such as presentation skills, facilitation skills, or taking a class," said participant Lena Zentall. "The question we posed was: 'What would you like to be able to say you've accomplished (professionally) at this time next year?'"

Furlough ideas spanned the gamut from spending more time with family to studying Italian for a trip to Italy, to doing volunteer projects. The common thread was doing something personally meaningful, Zentall said.

We know the folks at the California Digital Library aren't alone in getting creative about using their time off. So let us hear from you: How are you planning to use your furlough time?

Look for a story in January about the different ways that UC employees have responded to this unexpected time off. Email editor Carolyn McMillan to share your story at: [carolyn.mcmillan@ucop.edu](mailto:carolyn.mcmillan@ucop.edu)

## More Systemwide News

### Commission on the Future wants faculty and staff input

[http://ucfuture.universityofcalifornia.edu/documents/gould\\_yudof\\_encourage.pdf](http://ucfuture.universityofcalifornia.edu/documents/gould_yudof_encourage.pdf)

### Academic Senate leaders talk issues with UC president

<http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/news/article/22142>

### UC Health site launched

<http://universityofcalifornia.edu/news/article/22145>

### UC adds two Nobel laureates

<http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/nobel/>

### Campuses, medical centers ramp up flu plans

<http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/news/article/21987>

### UC Irvine launches UC's first automated bike-sharing program

[http://uci.edu/features/feature\\_zotwheels\\_091005.php](http://uci.edu/features/feature_zotwheels_091005.php)

### A little Bliss to cure a year of budget blues

[http://www.dateline.ucdavis.edu/dl\\_detail.lasso?id=11933](http://www.dateline.ucdavis.edu/dl_detail.lasso?id=11933)

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## Ask It!

**Q: The moon's size, as viewed by the naked eye from earth, appears larger at some points on the horizon and smaller at other points. What accounts for this difference in the moon's apparent size?**

**A:** The quick answer is that it's an optical illusion. Further explanations can become quite involved, but honestly no one seems to be totally sure why we observe this effect!

It has been disproved that the moon appears larger near the horizons simply because there are earth-bound objects nearby to which the moon's size can be compared. This is a common, but incorrect, explanation. The effect does appear to be related to how humans judge distances and sizes, but it is also related to how we perceive the sky itself.

Since the surface of the earth is curved, the sky we observe appears curved as well. It seems that humans perceive the sky above us as shaped like a flattened bowl or saucer as opposed to a perfect hemisphere. This perception of the shape of the sky causes us to perceive the moon as stretched out, or bigger, near the horizons.

*Jeffrey M. Silverman is a UC Berkeley Astronomy Graduate Student and the astronomy department's public liaison.*

### Tip of the Month:

#### **Increasing your Supplemental Disability waiting period can reduce your premium**

If you are enrolled in UC's Supplemental Disability plan, you may want to consider extending the waiting period for disability benefits.

Premiums for supplemental disability benefits will rise by 21 percent in 2010, but employees can reduce their monthly cost by choosing a longer waiting period for benefits.

UC's Supplemental Disability plan provides income if you can no longer work because of illness, injury, pregnancy or childbirth. Employees are eligible to sign up for the plan during their initial enrollment period when they are hired or later if they submit to a physical exam and receive approval from the insurance company.

Many new employees choose a shorter waiting period (7 or 30 days) because they have not yet earned enough sick days or vacation leave to ensure they will be paid during an extended absence from work.

Changing your waiting period from 7 to 30 days, or from 30 to 90 days, can substantially cut your monthly cost for this insurance. However, before making a change, there are some important facts to consider:

- The plan requires you to use up to 22 sick days, if you have them, before receiving disability benefits, even if you have chosen the 7-day waiting period.
- Each waiting period is based on calendar days, not work days. That means supplemental disability payments may begin sooner than you realize. For example, you need just 22 sick or vacation days (168 hours) to cover the 30-day waiting period, and 66 to 70 days (528 to 560 hours) to cover the 90-day waiting period.
- UC's disability insurance covers eight weeks for an uncomplicated pregnancy. That means if you have a 90-day waiting period, you will receive no supplemental disability benefits.
- Supplemental disability insurance replaces up to 70% of your eligible earnings. If you are eligible to retire (age 50 or older with five or more years of service credit) and your UC Retirement Plan benefit would be 70% or more of your salary, you may not need supplemental disability.

Consider your choices carefully before increasing your waiting period; changing back to a shorter period later requires a statement of health from a physician and approval of the insurance company.

To calculate your supplemental disability premium, use the Insurance Calculator on the Open Enrollment website ([http://atyourservice.ucop.edu/open\\_enrollment/](http://atyourservice.ucop.edu/open_enrollment/)). You can also read complete information about UC's disability benefits in the Disability Factsheet.

## More HR News

### Employees give UC medical plans high ratings in annual satisfaction survey

[http://atyourservice.ucop.edu/news/health/0910\\_rate\\_of\\_care.html](http://atyourservice.ucop.edu/news/health/0910_rate_of_care.html)

### State tax withholding accelerates beginning November 1

[http://atyourservice.ucop.edu/news/general/0910statetax\\_withholdings.html](http://atyourservice.ucop.edu/news/general/0910statetax_withholdings.html)

### Calendar set for local post-employment benefits forums

<http://atyourservice.ucop.edu/news/general/1009benefitsforce.html>

### Notice regarding direct deposit payroll

[http://atyourservice.ucop.edu/news/general/0909-deposit\\_notice.html](http://atyourservice.ucop.edu/news/general/0909-deposit_notice.html)

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## Send Your Feedback

What would you like to read about in future editions of Our University? Send your comments and story suggestions to [Anne.Wolf@ucop.edu](mailto:Anne.Wolf@ucop.edu). Our University is produced by UC Communications, External Relations, UC Office of the President.

## Resources

Budget updates <http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/budget/>

Be a UC advocate <http://www.ucforcalifornia.org/uc4ca/home/>

UC Alumni Associations <http://www.ucalumni.net/>

Diversity at UC <http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/diversity/>