Leave and Benefits

A. Leave Policies

The Georgia Board of Regents determines standard leave policies for the university system, including leave accrual rates, which are standard throughout the university system. For each leave category, part-time benefits-eligible employees earn leave at a prorated amount based on the employee's full-time equivalence (FTE). Leave accrues while an employee is on paid leave. Nine-month faculty are not eligible to accrue vacation leave. The leave categories are listed below.

1. Sick Leave With Pay

Sick leave accrues at the rate of one working day (eight hours) per calendar month of service for all regular full-time employees of the university. Regular part-time employees working one-half time or more earn sick leave time at a prorated amount according to their full-time equivalence (FTE). Sick leave for all active non-terminating employees is cumulative. Terminating employees do not accumulate sick leave and are not entitled to receive sick pay after the last working day of employment. Upon movement of an employee between institutions of the university system, accumulated sick leave is transferred if there is no actual break in service.

Sick leave may be granted at the discretion of the institution and upon approval by the supervisor for any of the following reasons:

- illness or injury of the employee
- medical and dental treatment or consultation
- quarantine due to a contagious illness in the employee's household
- illness, injury, or death in the employee's immediate family requiring the employee's presence (For the purposes of this leave category, immediate family is defined as spouse, parent, brother, sister, child, stepchild, stepparent, grandparent, grandchild, parent-in-law, son/daughter-in-law, foster parent, or legal guardian. Any exceptions must be submitted in writing and approved by the director of human resources.)
- to take care of a newborn or newly adopted child of the employee
- personal catastrophic experience by an employee.

In some cases, sick leave with pay requires a physician’s statement verifying an employee’s need to miss work.

2. Sick Leave Without Pay

Employees unable to return to work after exhausting all accumulated sick leave and accrued vacation leave may be granted leave without pay for a period not to exceed one year. Group insurance benefits continue during such approved sick leave, with the institution continuing to participate in the premium cost. All other benefits that otherwise would accrue to the employee are prohibited. Requests for sick leave without pay are considered only if a reasonable probability exists that the employee will be able to return to work. Sick leave without pay status requires the approval of the appropriate vice president and must be forwarded to Human Resources for final approval from the president.

3. Family Leave

Family leave is available to employees who have been employed on a half-time basis for at least 12 months. Employees are eligible for up to 12 work weeks of leave during a 12-month period. Family leave is unpaid; however, after obtaining permission from Human Resources, employees eligible to use accumulated sick leave or any accrued annual leave may do so exclusive of the twelve weeks of family leave.

The federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) entitles an employee to up to twelve work weeks of leave for one of the following conditions:

- birth and care of a newborn child of the employee;

- legal placement of a child with the employee for adoption or foster care;
- care of an immediate family member (defined as the employee's spouse, child, or parent) with a serious health condition; or,
- a serious health condition of the employee himself/herself, which renders the employee unable to perform the duties of his/her job.
- Section 585 of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) amends FMLA to permit certain relatives of military personnel to take up to 26 work weeks of leave to care for a member of the Armed Forces in various situations. NDAA also permits an employee to take FMLA leave for a qualifying exigency arising out of the fact that an immediate family member, as defined by the FMLA, is on active duty in support of a contingency operation.

4. Annual Leave

Faculty members employed on an academic year (nine-month) basis do not earn annual leave time. Faculty members employed on a fiscal year (12-month) contract earn annual leave time at a rate of 14 hours per month. Those changing from a fiscal year contract to an academic contract should take accrued leave prior to the end date of fiscal year contract. Such faculty members may request payment of accrued leave (subject to the 45-day maximum); however, that payment amount will not be considered in the retirement system's formula to calculate benefits.

Faculty members on a fiscal year contract may accrue up to a maximum of 45 working days (360 hours). At the beginning of each new calendar year annual leave balances carry over but may not exceed the 45-day (360 hour) maximum. Employees who have accrued more than the maximum will have their balance reduced to 360 hours on January 1. (Note: since balances are reduced only on January 1 each year, leave balances may exceed 360 hours during the year.)

5. Other Types of Leave

Political Leave: Employees may not manage or enter political campaigns while on duty to perform services for the institution or hold elective political office at the state or federal level while employed by the institution.
Military Leave: Military leave is limited to ordered military duty performed by a member of the armed forces in the service of the State of Georgia or the United States. This includes performance of military duty and traveling to and from such duty. Employees are required to submit a copy of their orders to active duty to Human Resources.
Employees may take military leave with pay for no longer than 18 work days in any calendar year or one continuous period. An exception to the 18-day maximum may be made if the Governor of Georgia declares a state of emergency and orders any employee to State active duty as a member of the National Guard. In this case, military leave with pay will not exceed 30 work days in any calendar year or one continuous period. An employee on military leave for longer than 30 work days must take military leave without pay. (For part-time benefits eligible employees, paid leave will be in an equivalent ratio to percentage of time employed.)
Subject to the terms, conditions, and limitations of the plans for which an employee is eligible, health insurance benefits continue for the full term of the military leave absence.
Every reasonable effort must be made to return employees to their previous position or a comparable one. For purposes of determining benefits based on length of service, such as the rate of vacation accrual and job seniority rights, employees will be treated as though they were continuously employed.
Educational Leave: To encourage professional development, the university allows regular full-time employees to request educational leave without pay for up to one year. Approval is at the discretion of the president. Employee benefits continue during educational leave.
A leave with pay will ordinarily be approved only if the applicant has been employed for at least three years and has already completed a master's degree. Faculty members granted leave with pay must sign an agreement that they will return the full amount of leave pay received should they not return to the institution for a least one year of service after the termination of the leave.

The Georgia Board of Regents Educational Leaves Policy stipulates that under certain conditions, and with approval from the chancellor, university presidents may grant leaves of absence for periods greater than one year.

Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA): Employees absent from work for less than one scheduled work day whose accumulated leave is insufficient to cover the partial day of absence will be placed on FLSA leave with pay for the period of absence.

Court Duty: Upon presentation of official orders from the appropriate court, court duty leave with pay may be granted full-time regular employees for the purpose of serving on a jury or as a witness. Employees must take personal litigation time, whether in court or in consultation, as annual leave time. A copy of the notice from the court should be forwarded to the Payroll Office along with the Leave Request Form.

Voting: Employees of Columbus State University are encouraged to execute their constitutional right to vote in all federal, state, and local elections. When employees' normal working hours coincide with voting hours their immediate supervisor will grant them leave with pay for the purpose of voting; however, employees should make every attempt to vote before or after normal working hours.

Personal Leave: At the discretion of the president, personal leave of absence without pay for periods not to exceed one year may be approved. During such approved personal leave employees have the right to elect to continue group insurance benefits.

Emergency Leave: In the event of inclement weather or any emergency which requires leaves of absence of employees, the president of an institution may declare leave with or without pay.

Time Away from Work Amendments

B. Health Benefits

1. Group Insurance – Health

Columbus State University employees who qualify for benefits are eligible for coverage under the self-funded medical plan(s) provided by the University System of Georgia. Upon employment, new employees have 31 days to elect coverage. If not enrolled within the first 31 days of employment, they must wait until the next annual Open Enrollment unless they or an eligible dependent have a total loss of coverage during the year. Other changes may be made during the year if there is a "Change in Family Status." Some examples of a change in family status are:

- a change in marital status;
- the birth or adoption of a child (including step-children and legally placed foster children);
- the death of a covered dependent;
- a change in employment status for employees and their spouses; or
- a covered dependent losing eligibility status.

It is the employee's responsibility to notify Human Resources within 31 days of the loss of coverage or the change in family status.

Employees pay health insurance premiums on a pre-tax basis. Employees may want to refer to the health plan booklet(s) for detailed coverage information.

2. Group Insurance – Dental

Columbus State University employees who qualify for benefits are eligible for coverage under the self-funded dental plan provided by the University System of Georgia. Upon employment, new employees have 31 days to elect coverage. If not enrolled within the first 31 days of employment, they must wait until the next annual Open Enrollment unless they or an eligible dependent have a total loss of coverage during the year. Other changes may be made during the year if there a "Change in Family Status." It is the employee's responsibility to notify Human Resources within 31 days of the loss of coverage or the change in family status.

Employees pay dental insurance premiums on a pre-tax basis. Employees may want to refer to the dental plan booklet(s) for detailed coverage information.

3. COBRA

The Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA) gives workers and their families who lose their health benefits the right to choose to continue group health benefits provided by their group health plan for limited periods of time under certain circumstances such as voluntary or involuntary job loss, reduction in the hours worked, transition between jobs, death, divorce, and other life events. Qualified individuals may be required to pay the entire premium for coverage up to 102 percent of the cost to the plan.

Employees should consult their health or dental plan booklets or contact Human Resources for more information about their COBRA rights.

4. Group Insurance – Life

Columbus State University offers a basic term life insurance policy to benefits-eligible employees at no cost to the employee. Accidental Death and Dismemberment (AD&D) coverage is included with the basic plan. Both plans carry a face value of $25,000.

In addition to basic coverage, employees can choose to buy Supplemental Life Insurance on themselves in amounts equal to one, two, or three times annual (base) pay, rounded to the next $1,000. Employees do not need to prove insurability when signing up for coverage during the new employment period. If employees elect initial or increased coverage during Open Enrollment, they must complete a proof of insurability statement, with coverage subject to acceptance by the insurer.

Dependent term life insurance is available for employees' eligible dependents. This plan carries a face value of $10,000 per dependent, $2,000 for children 14 days of age but less than six months. Proof of insurability is not required if coverage is elected within the first 31 days of employment. Coverage elected after that period requires each dependent to complete a proof of insurability statement and coverage is subject to the acceptance by the insurer.

Employees should refer to the life insurance plan booklet for "Change in Family Status" guidelines and other coverage information.

Premiums for supplemental insurance may be paid on a pre-tax basis. Dependent life insurance premiums are excluded from the pre-tax program.

5. Long-Term Disability Insurance

Long-Term Disability insurance protects the employee against the loss of income during long periods of disability. Benefit payments begin on the 91st day of disability or the expiration of sick leave (if desired), whichever is later. Proof of insurability is not required during the new employment period (the first 31 days of employment), although some pre-existing exclusions may apply. Enrollment after the first 31 days requires a statement of insurability and coverage is subject to acceptance by the insurer.

Long-term Disability premiums are excluded from the pre-tax program. Employees should refer to the long-term disability policy for detailed coverage information.

6. American Family Life Assurance Company (AFLAC)

Employees may have monthly premiums for AFLAC Cancer and Intensive Care insurance group policies deducted from their payroll checks. Some pre-existing exclusions may apply. If coverage is waived during the first 31 days, enrollment is available during the annual Open Enrollment period.

Premiums are paid on a pre-tax basis. Pamphlets describing plan coverage are available in the Human Resources Department.

7. Flexible Spending Accounts

Columbus State University offers a plan that can help employees pay their out-of-pocket expenses using pre-tax dollars. The Medical Flexible Spending Account allows for reimbursement of non-covered medical or dental expenses. Eligible expenses include deductibles, coinsurance, glasses, contacts, and other services recognized by the Internal Revenue

Service. The Dependent Care Flexible Spending Account allows for expenses in connection with work-related dependent day care.

Since this is a reimbursement plan, expenses must first be incurred by the employee or dependents. Expenses reimbursed under the Flexible Spending Accounts cannot be claimed at the end of the tax year.

Employees may enroll within the first 31 days of employment or during the annual Open Enrollment period. "Change in Family Status" guidelines also apply to the Flexible Spending Accounts. Contact the Human Resources Department for additional information.

8. Workers Compensation

The Georgia Workers' Compensation Act covers all employees of Columbus State University. The Act provides protection for employees in the event of injury or death while performing services for CSU. Employees suffering an accident while on the job must report the accident immediately to their supervisor regardless of whether medical treatment is required. Employees must receive treatment from a physician on the Workers Compensation Panel of Physicians. Employees may receive medical care in the nearest emergency room only in the case of a life-threatening injury or an injury occurring after normal office hours.
There is a seven-day waiting period before Workers' Compensation will pay lost-time benefits, and any available sick leave or vacation leave can be used during that time. If sick or vacation leave is not available, the first seven days will be without pay. If the employee is out of work for 21 consecutive days following the injury, Workers Compensation will reimburse at the allowable rate for the first seven days missed. Workers Compensation provides benefits of 66 2/3% of the employee's average earnings up to a maximum benefit. All injuries/accidents reported to supervisors are forwarded to the Workers Compensation representative in Human Resources within 24 hours. The report is forwarded to the Department of Administrative Services for processing.

9. Unemployment Compensation

Columbus State University employees, with the exception of student employees and graduate assistants, are covered under the Georgia Employment Security Law, commonly referred to as Unemployment Compensation. The law was enacted to provide a source of security when employees become unemployed through no fault of their own. The local office of the Georgia Department of Labor (DOL) determines eligibility for benefits upon termination. Employees should obtain a completed Separation Report from the Human Resources Department to notify the DOL of the terms of the separation.

10. Social Security

All employees of CSU, except those specifically excluded under agreement with the Social Security Administration, are covered by the Federal Social Security Act. Payroll deductions are made for the employee's share of the cost of this insurance, with the university paying a matching share.

C. Pay and Payroll Deductions

Pay

Pay for full-time faculty is monthly, by direct deposit only, issued on the last working/banking day of the month.

Pay Deductions

Law requires certain deductions, including taxes and retirement contributions. Employees electing to participate in university-sponsored benefit programs such as health, dental, supplemental life, cancer and intensive care insurance, and long-term disability insurance contribute automatically through payroll deductions. Other voluntary deductions may include credit union, tax sheltered annuities, and flexible spending accounts.

Withholding Pay

The university is authorized to withhold paychecks or to deduct from paychecks amounts owed to the university by its employees for any fine, fee, penalty or other financial obligation(s).

Columbus State University reserves the right, whether in an individual case or more generally, to alter, reduce, or eliminate any pay practice, policy or benefit, in whole or in part, without notice.

D. Retirement Benefits

Retirement Plans

Law requires that all regular employees of Columbus State University, working 20 hours or more per week, participate either in Teachers Retirement System of Georgia (TRS) or the Regents Optional Retirement Plan (ORP). Temporary, seasonal, and part-time employees not eligible for TRS must contribute to the Georgia Defined Contribution Plan (GDBP), unless they:

- currently participate in TRS or the Employees' Retirement System of Georgia (ERS) (Employees transferring directly from another Georgia state agency who are vested with ERS may elect to stay with ERS.)
- are a retirement member of TRS or ERS
- are a full-time student, or
- are employed under J-1 or F-1 visas.

Each year the TRS Board of Trustees votes on the percentage of employers' matching contributions for the TRS plan and the Board of Regents votes on the percentage of employers' matching contributions for the Regents Optional retirement Plan (ORP). Employees contribute to TRS, ERS, and ORP on a pre-tax basis. Handbooks available from Human Resources outline retirement benefits available under TRS, ORP and GDBP.

Only employee contributions and interest are available for withdrawal or rollover (into another qualified plan) at termination.

Retiree Benefits

Employees who retire from Columbus State University, meeting the TRS and the Georgia Board of Regents criteria, are eligible to continue some benefits. These may include health, dental, and life insurance. Contact Human Resources for more information.

Tax-Sheltered Annuities

Columbus State University offers its employees the opportunity to invest a portion of their salaries in a tax-deferred annuity program. Under this savings program, authorized by Section 403(b) and 457(b) of the Internal Revenue Code, all contributions are exempt from federal and state taxes until they are withdrawn, typically at retirement. This plan is totally employee-funded. Human Resources maintains a list of CSU-approved investment companies and their representatives.

E. Additional Benefits Programs

Employee Assistance Program

Columbus State University, through the University System of Georgia, provides an employee assistance program (EAP) through its vendor partner, KEPRO. All benefits-eligible employees, as well members of their household, may access a range of free services including counseling sessions (up to 4 per concern per family member); legal & financial consultations; family caregiving consultation, resources and referrals; and other convenience services. For more information, refer to the USG Benefits website, contact KEPRO at 1-844-243-4440, or access the KEPRO website (company code: USGcares).

Employee ID Cards

CSU issues ID cards to benefits-eligible employees and their eligible dependents during new employee orientation. With a valid ID card, employees have access to many campus services and activities including the outdoor tennis/racquetball courts, library, bookstore discount, free or reduced tickets for art exhibits, theatrical and musical productions, and membership in the Fitness Center. Dependents may use many of the same services with the exception of the Fitness Center. CSU issues temporary ID cards to temporary employees allowing them access to campus services during their time of employment.

Automobile Registration and Parking

For the latest parking information, please visit the Parking Services website here.

Fitness Facilities

Columbus State University employees holding a valid ID card may use the fitness facilities located on campus. These facilities include the outdoor tennis/racquetball courts, Fitness Center (contract and fee required), and indoor track in the Lumpkin Center Gym. Dependents holding a valid dependent ID may use the outdoor courts.

Banking Opportunities

Columbus State University benefits-eligible employees may join the Members Alliance Federal Credit Union. The Credit Union offers a range of services including savings and checking accounts, and loans. Employees can authorize paycheck deductions into their Members Alliance account. Membership applications and authorization forms for paycheck deduction are available at the Credit Union or from Human Resources.

Sick Leave with Pay Requiring a Physician’s Statement

The following policies govern the requirement of a physician’s statement for sick leave with pay:

1. Employees claiming sick leave for a continuous period in excess of five working days must, upon returning to work, supply Human Resources with a physician's statement supporting their need for extended sick leave.
2. A physician’s statement must identify the date the employee-patient was placed under the care of an attending physician, the date the employee-patient was released to return to work, and any work-related restrictions or limitations.
3. Employees requesting sick leave to provide care for an immediate family member must provide Human Resources a physician's statement evidencing the need for the employee's presence and the duration of this need. Employees should submit a copy of the statement to their immediate supervisor.
4. A physician's statement or other statement evidencing the birth or adoption of a child verifies that an employee-patient is under the care of an attending physician.