

Our University

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



MARCH 2010



Contributions to UC Retirement Plan beginning Get the facts

After a holiday of nearly 20 years, UC and employee members of the UC Retirement Plan (UCRP) will begin contributing to the plan in mid-April. Contributions are needed to support faculty and staff pension benefits.

WHY

- UC needs to restore the long-term viability of the UCRP. Both UC and members of UCRP stopped making contributions nearly 20 years ago. Since then, the plan's funded status has steadily declined. Currently, UCRP is 95 percent funded on a smoothed basis, significantly less so on a market-value basis (based on the July, 2009 valuation).

WHEN

- The Regents set mid-April, 2010 for the restart of employer and employee contributions.
- Employee contributions begin in mid-April and apply to May earnings. Depending on how often you get paid, you'll see the UCRP contribution on your pay stub beginning anywhere from May 12 to June 1 (May 7 for Berkeley Lab employees paid biweekly).

HOW MUCH

- Employee contributions will be the amount that you have been putting into the Defined Contribution Plan (DC Plan) -- about 2 percent of pay for most employees. This means that you will see no loss in take-home pay for the initial restart of contributions, since your contribution will simply be redirected from the DC Plan to the UCRP.
- The UC employer contribution will be 4 percent of pay and begins April 15.
- Both employer and employee contributions are expected to increase over time in order to sustain the pension fund. UC's long-term approach to contributions will be similar to

CalPERS' approach. Most CalPERS members currently contribute from 5 to 7 percent of pay.

- Employee contributions are deposited in individual accounts for each employee and currently earn interest at a 6 percent annual rate. Employer contributions are placed in a general account on behalf of all members.

IF YOU LEAVE UC

- If you leave UC employment, you may leave your contributions on deposit with UCRP or take them as a rollover or direct payment. If you are a vested UCRP member -- that is, if you have five or more years of service credit -- you forfeit your pension if you take your contributions out of UCRP.

YOUR DC PLAN CONTRIBUTIONS

- Your mandatory contributions to the Defined Contribution Plan will stop when UCRP contributions begin. Your current balance in the DC Plan belongs to you and you can continue to manage those funds through Fidelity Retirement Services.
- If you are not a member of UCRP (a DC Plan Safe Harbor participant), you will continue to make mandatory contributions to the DC Plan.
- You may continue to make voluntary contributions to the DC Plan After-Tax Account, or pre-tax contributions to the 403(b) Plan or the 457(b) Plan. Contact Fidelity Retirement Services for more information (1-866-682-7787 or netbenefits.com).

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

- The restart of UCRP contributions is subject to collective bargaining for those employees who are represented by a union.

For more information about the restart of UCRP contributions, visit the Future of UC Retirement Benefits website (http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/news/ucrpfuture/ucrp_restart.html)

People who make a difference

San Diego calls students with good news on admission

By Anne Wolf

Imagine: it's a week before the magic date when UC admissions decisions are posted online. An anxious high school senior answers her phone and hears Dr. Tony Haymet say, "Congratulations! You've been admitted to UC San Diego."

Haymet, vice chancellor of marine sciences and director of Scripps Institution of Oceanography, was one of 180 UC San Diego faculty, staff and administrators -- including Chancellor Marye Anne Fox -- who called more than 2,800 students from underrepresented groups this March to let them know they'd been admitted to UCSD.

"It's just a delight to talk to them," Haymet said. "They are so happy to be admitted, and they're just so interesting. They feel about UC the way I do -- proud to be associated with it."

The UC San Diego early calling program, now in its second year, is just one of the many

ways that UC campuses strive to boost enrollment among underrepresented students.

For the faculty and administrators who volunteer to make the calls, the program is also a great way to connect on a personal level with students.

Most students are just thrilled to learn they've been admitted, while others have "a million questions," says Haymet. Given students' busy schedules, Haymet often leaves a message "about good news from UC San Diego" on the student's phone asking them to call back.

One student called back saying, "Hey, Tony, great to get your call!" Another student asked Haymet to call back and leave the same message on the answering machine so his parents could hear it.

All UC campuses have activities such as phone calls and campus overnights to encourage students to accept their admissions offer, but the activities usually occur after students receive a written or an electronic notice they have been admitted.

Only UC San Diego calls underrepresented students to give them the good news before they receive their official admit letter. The goal is to get students to attend Admit Day, where they can talk to current first-year students, "the best recruiters on campus," according to Haymet.

"One of our biggest challenges is to encourage more underrepresented students to accept our offer of admission," said director Mae Brown, who helped develop the program. "Our campus population should truly represent the rich diversity of California."

High-achieving students from underrepresented minority groups are highly sought after by both private and public universities. Students often have competing offers from Stanford, Cal Tech, USC, and Ivy League schools like Harvard.

UC is at a disadvantage because it cannot offer scholarships based on race, which is not the case for many private colleges and universities, Brown says. Getting those students to move from racially diverse areas like Los Angeles or the San Francisco Bay Area to La Jolla also has proved challenging.

The early calling program is one of many efforts to overcome these obstacles by making a personal connection with admitted students.

"We saw very positive results last year," Brown said. Typically about 16.1 percent of underrepresented students choose to attend UC San Diego, yet 24 percent of those who were called last year decided to enroll.

The program has also proved to be very popular with faculty, staff and administrators, many of whom told Brown that they were moved by the experience. This year, as word got out, about 50 more people volunteered to make calls.

In light of recent racially offensive events on campus, reaching out to underrepresented students was particularly important this year, Brown said. More than ever, University officials want to get the word out that UC San Diego welcomes a diverse student body and will do whatever it takes to create a climate that is respectful of all its students, she said.

Yet few students asked about the recent events during their admissions call. When they did, callers spoke with the students about the incidents, shared what UC San Diego is doing in response, and then invited the students to come to help change the campus, Brown said.

On May 1, Brown will know just how many students accepted UC San Diego's offer.

Anne Wolf is systemwide coordinator in Internal Communications at UC Office of the President.

MESA: Boosting the tech workforce

By Carolyn McMillan

Growing up in a working class neighborhood of South Central Los Angeles, Norberta Noguera didn't know many people who had gone to college.

But a window to that world - and its endless possibilities - would open when Noguera's parents dropped her off for a day of activities with the MESA program.

From middle school through high school, Noguera spent her Saturdays visiting colleges, meeting engineers and scientists, and having fun with hands-on math and science projects, like building a container that could keep an egg from smashing when it was dropped.

"It was just a really good time with practical applications," Noguera said. "We got accolades and encouragement, and more than anything, MESA showed me possibilities I had never known.

"It taught me that it was OK to be an African-American woman who was brainy in math."

Today, Noguera holds a B.A. in industrial engineering from UC Berkeley, an MBA from UCLA's Anderson School, and has risen through the ranks at AT&T to become an assistant vice president, supervising a staff of 225 people.

"MESA made it possible," Noguera said. "It was absolutely foundational."

A model for education partnerships

The Mathematics Engineering Science Achievement program, which is administered by UC, has two primary goals: helping educationally disadvantaged students make it to college, and addressing California's shortage of math and science professionals.

"We're working in schools that are among the lowest performing in the state, places where most of the kids qualify for the free lunch program, and where many students are the first in their family to go to college," said Teri Lee, MESA's communications director.

As it celebrates its 40th anniversary this year, MESA stands out as a model for collaborative education partnerships. Programs begin in middle school and extend through community college to four-year-universities. UC, CSU, independent universities and the community college system are all involved with MESA.

"We're trying to serve all the students of California -- which college they go to is not our primary concern -- it's providing the academic preparation that will help them succeed," Lee said.

Technology workforce shortage

2009-10 MESA SNAPSHOT

Students served: **20,249** □ □

Schools served: **316** □ □

The other key partner is private industry, which has taken note of MESA's success rate, and sees the program as an avenue for developing the highly skilled workforce it needs.

In all, industry partners augmented MESA's budget by 30 percent last year, most of which was earmarked for specific activities to augment the program's core services, like conferences and teacher professional development in math and science.

Pacific Gas & Electric, for example, spent about \$60,000 in 2009 on scholarships and leadership training programs for MESA students.

"We need that pipeline for developing technical talent," said Marvin Lopez, a MESA alum who leads PG&E's diversity recruiting program. "California's demographics are changing, and if you don't reach out to historically underrepresented groups, you won't have a workforce."

California is projected to have a shortage of 40,000 engineers by 2014, as a wave of engineers hit retirement age and begin leaving the profession.

"It already takes a while to find good technical people," Lopez said. "And it will be a bigger challenge in the years ahead."

Demographic trends paint the picture. Latinos, African-Americans and American Indians comprised nearly 44 percent of California's population in 2006, a figure that is expected to grow. Yet those same groups received only 13 percent of the bachelor degrees in engineering.

Quite simply, unless California increases the percentage of underrepresented minorities studying math, science and engineering, the workforce shortage will be acute.

"Minority kids are not going into engineering and technology in the numbers that we need," Lopez said. "And it's a two-way street – there aren't a lot of role models for them to follow."

A haven of support

MESA combats the problem using a variety of techniques, including academic assistance, mentoring and peer support.

At the community college and university level, MESA Centers provide a haven where students studying science, technology, engineering and math can find tutoring, academic guidance, and a place to establish ties with peers majoring in the same fields.

"It feels like a club," said Tuan Ha, a computer engineer at Intel who graduated from UC Berkeley in 2005.

As a recent immigrant from Vietnam, he found friendship and a place to practice his English at the Cosumnes River College MESA Center. When it came time to apply to UC Berkeley, the MESA director and his other new friends helped proofread his personal statement.

"As a newcomer to America, it was nice to have friends and be able to help them, and let

MESA budget: **\$6.41 million**

MESA high school graduates who go directly to college: **70 percent** □ □

California high school graduates who go directly to college: **48 percent** □ □

Percentage of MESA high school students who become science, engineering or math majors: **60 percent**

them help me with my English," Ha said. "It was very important and helpful."

That kind of peer-to-peer support is one of the most important factors when it comes to producing success for educationally disadvantaged students, Lee said. As a result, MESA has made it a cornerstone of their college-level programs.

"Collaborative study helps reinforce learning. If you can articulate something to someone else, you understand it on a deeper level," Lee said. "The MESA Centers are deceptively simple - they are a de facto place for sharing information and providing support among students taking on the most difficult college majors.

Diminishing resources

The difficult reality is that, despite MESA's track record of success, diminishing state dollars have forced the program to cut back on the number of students it serves, even as demand for math and science professionals intensifies.

MESA alums like Lopez know first-hand how well the program works, and are doing their part to keep it going strong.

Lopez, who credits the program with helping him succeed as a computer science major at UCLA, now mentors a MESA student there.

The student was class valedictorian at her high school, but coming from a small school in a small town, she now finds herself working hard to keep up with her peers, he said.

"She crystallizes the whole struggle," Lopez said. "She's competing with kids who have had an entirely different set of opportunities. I work with her every week on what she can do to get ahead. We're trying to level the playing field."

Carolyn McMillan is managing editor in Internal Communications at UC Office of the President.

Systemwide News

Task Force to present possible pension and health benefit recommendations at April local forums

The Post-Employment Benefits Task Force will talk about its work and the range of possible recommendations it is considering for pension and retiree health benefits at a series of forums in April.

The Task Force will also share the results of the recent employee preference survey.

The April meetings follow up on [Task Force forums](#) held last fall at which time task force members laid out the issues confronting UC in sustaining the current pension and retiree health benefits.

UC President Mark Yudof appointed the Task Force in March 2009, and charged it with reviewing current retirement benefits and developing options for balancing the long-term costs of pension and retiree health benefits with the need to provide sustainable post-employment benefits to faculty and staff.

The Task Force has been studying the issues and weighing input from the UC community. It will make recommendations to President Yudof later this summer on ways to change the funding and policies for post-employment benefits.

Executive Director Randy Scott and Director Gary Schlimgen from the Office of the President Human Resources department will make the presentation. A panel comprised of representatives from the Task Force will answer questions and listen to your comments and input after the presentation.

For more information on the Post-Employment Benefits Task Force, including a calendar for the local forums, visit the Future of UC Retirement Benefits website: (www.universityofcalifornia.edu/news/ucrpfuture/emp_task.html).

Regents pledge diversity action

By Donna Hemmila

After a candid and passionate discussion of recent racial incidents at University of California campuses, UC Regents, at the March 24 meeting, pledged to take responsibility for stamping out intolerance.

They also voiced support for strategies to increase diversity throughout the UC system, including a drive to raise more scholarship donations for underrepresented minorities and a review of admission processes to expand the use of holistic review of applicants.

UC President Mark Yudof and regents said they were committed to putting recommendations into action over the next few months.

"The question is who is going to be held accountable for progress at the end of the day?" said Regent Monica Lozano. "We are the body that has to be accountable."

During a three-hour meeting, regents heard from the chancellors of the Davis, San Diego and Irvine campuses, Berkeley law school Dean Christopher Edley and students about a series of incidents that occurred on campuses last month. Those incidents included racist symbols and hate speech at San Diego, anti-gay graffiti and swastikas at Davis and disruption by protesters during a talk by the Israeli ambassador at Irvine.

The chancellors each reported on actions they have taken to investigate student conduct and promote campus values of tolerance and civility.

Edley, a national authority on civil rights issues, was appointed special adviser to Yudof and Chancellor Marye Anne Fox to monitor campus climate and progress on addressing the racial incidents at UC San Diego. Edley said he was impressed with both the campus leadership and the students who have been working to resolve racial tensions and craft initiatives to improve campus climate. The issues San Diego faces are present throughout UC and the nation, he said, and rooting out bigotry will depend on a strong commitment to implementing change and monitoring progress.

"This is not rocket science. It is harder than rocket science," Edley said.

Dozens of UC students traveled to the regents meeting at the UC San Francisco Mission Bay campus during their spring break to participate in the diversity discussion. Regent's Chairman Russell Gould extended the public comment time from 20 to 40 minutes to allow a frank discussion on the incidents.

"I deeply regret that any member of the UC community had to endure such disgusting displays of bigotry," Gould said. "Whether they were perpetrated out of ignorance or hateful intolerance, such actions have no place at the University of California. They are a disgrace to the values of this institution and of the individuals sitting before you."

Students told regents that there have been studies on UC diversity issues in the past but

they have seen no progress. Now they want more than recommendations and studies, they said.

"At UC San Diego, this is an issue of safety for students," said David Richardson, a member of the UC San Diego Black Student Union. "The campus climate cultivated this toxic environment."

Student Regent Jesse Bernal said he saw the same kind of outrage over intolerance in 2001 when Muslim students experienced bigotry in the aftermath of 9/11. But then the passion lost its momentum, he said, and he didn't want that to happen now.

Yudof assured students that actions would be taken and progress aggressively tracked: "It's time for the vast majority of us, for those of us who revere diversity and tolerance, civility and respect — the true values of this university — to stand up and say 'enough.'"

Yudof said he wasn't interested in studies that are going to sit on a shelf.

He outlined strategies to build tolerance throughout the system and to increase the number of underrepresented students at UC.

"It's incumbent on every one of us, on every single member of the UC community, to visibly and vigorously challenge expressions of bigotry wherever, whenever and however they occur," Yudof said.

Yudof also called for alumni and friends of UC to come together to raise funds for scholarships for underrepresented minorities. Too often talented students go to private universities that have more dollars to support them, he said.

He also requested a systemwide review of undergraduate admissions procedures.

"I want a system that more effectively considers multiple factors beyond test scores and GPA," Yudof said. "I want one that has a larger pool of applicants that will be considered." Both of these goals should be met, he said, by the new undergraduate eligibility requirements approved by the Board of Regents last year and scheduled to take effect with the incoming class of 2012.

Yudof said he has asked the Academic Senate to consider revisions in the current policy to require that campuses adopt consistent processes of so-called holistic review of applicants and to adopt the best practices in place now. Holistic review allows for more flexibility in considering students' life experiences, as well as their test scores and grades, in the context of the opportunities and challenges each student has faced. This allows campuses to do a better job of assessing the whole student and his or her potential for success.

Yudof said he has confidence that the chancellors were taking steps needed to address the climate on their specific campuses and taking appropriate disciplinary actions when needed. He has asked each campus that experienced incidents of bigotry to give him a full report and to cooperate with authorities in ongoing investigations. He also promised to continue working with students in an effort to develop appropriate campus hate crime legislation.

"We do not shy away from examining our own problems, from acting decisively and with dispatch to address them," Yudof said.

Donna Hemmila is managing editor with the UC Office of the President Integrated Communications.

See also: **UC Berkeley law dean to advise on race matters**

<http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/news/article/22956>

Commission on the Future hears first round of proposals

By Harry Mok

A first round of proposals from the UC Commission on the Future includes ideas for increasing enrollment of nonresident students, a three-year undergraduate degree, multiyear fee schedules and exploring more online instruction as ways to help the university navigate a fiscally challenging environment.

The proposals originate from the five working groups of the commission, which are assessing the size and shape of the University of California, its education and curriculum, access and affordability, and funding and research strategies. A report on the working group's proposals was presented to the full commission for public discussion at its March 23 meeting.

"Some recommendations you may like a lot, some you might think are terrible," said Russell Gould, co-chair of the commission and chair of the UC Board of Regents. "But these are important ideas to put forward."

The UC Commission on the Future's goal is to develop a new vision for the university that affirms its core values of excellence and access while addressing state funding cutbacks. The commission, which held its first meeting in September and is co-chaired by UC President Mark Yudof, is drawing on experts from within and outside UC to help formulate its recommendations.

Many of the issues addressed by the working groups require further research and discussion. The commission will consider feedback from the Academic Senate, staff, students and the public over the next two months before presenting prioritized recommendations to the UC Board of Regents for their consideration in July.

"What you're hearing is a brave first take, a rough draft of recommendations that will eventually emerge," Yudof said. "There's likely to be criticism about what has been proposed and has not been proposed today. Not all the ideas will fly, and some will be refined."

Increasing nonresident students

Among other recommendations, a proposal from the size and shape group would increase the number and proportion of undergraduate non-California resident students. More out-of-state students can improve UC by broadening the geographical diversity of the student body and by generating additional revenue that can support California students, according to the size and shape working group's recommendation.

Some conditions are recommended if UC were to admit more nonresidents:

- The increase in nonresident students should not displace funded resident students.
- Revenues generated by increased enrollment of nonresident students should be spent on enhancing the educational experience of all students.
- Admission standards shall be set such that the academic record of nonresident students qualifies them for admission at or above the median of all undergraduate students admitted to that campus.
- If the plan is implemented, during its first five years, each UC campus — in consultation with the Office of the President — should set its own target for

undergraduate non-resident students. Each campus and the university would evaluate its target every five years.

In 2008-09, 4.7 percent of UC's undergraduates paid nonresident tuition. UC has very low proportions of nonresident students compared with other major research universities, both public and private. In a 2007 comparison, public universities in the elite Association of American Universities, of which six UC campuses are members, had 21.9 percent out-of-state students and AAU private institutions had 65.7 percent nonresidents.

The additional revenue generated by nonresident students can enhance the educational experience of all students without unwanted displacement of residents, according to the recommendation.

"It's a matter of scale," said UC Santa Cruz Chancellor George Blumenthal, co-chair of the size and shape group. Currently, with such a low number of nonresidents, "we can move that number up without displacing residents. Exactly where that number is, we can have an interesting discussion."

Three-year degrees

Streamlining an undergraduate degree to three years would lower costs for obtaining a degree and create space on campuses for additional students.

If 5 to 10 percent of UC students graduated just a quarter or semester earlier, approximately 2,000 to 4,000 undergraduate spots would be freed up, according to the recommendation from the education and curriculum group.

Components of a three-year degree pathway include:

- Required attendance of summer session courses
- Full use of advanced placement and other honors credits
- Offering incentives to entice students to participate, such as priority enrollment and a guarantee of a fixed-fee level for three years.
- Development of streamlined major programs, advising and registration procedures that would help students graduate in three years.

Graduating in three years may not be viable for many students. In 2005, 905 students, or 2.9 percent of UC's undergraduates, graduated in three years. A formal process could entice more students, and for those who are well-prepared, "This could be the way to go," said Keith Williams, co-chair of the education and curriculum group.

Set fee schedules

Many families with UC students have endured hardships from fee increases in recent years. A multiyear fee schedule would set fees at the same level as the freshman year for the four or five years, the typical time to graduation, with a fixed and predictable cost of living increase each year. This strategy would help families better plan their finances.

While low-income students are helped by financial aid, and higher income students generally can absorb fee increases, "it's really the middle-income families where a change in fees is a big challenge," said UC Irvine Chancellor Michael Drake, co-chair of the access and affordability group. "We think this will help in access and affordability.

The proposal noted that locking in fees for continuing students may result in higher fees for newer students, and the complexity of tracking varying fees could pose a challenge

for campuses.

Online courses

Online education has the potential to lower costs and widen access to UC, but taking instruction out of the classroom raises concerns about quality and workload from faculty and others.

Adding more online courses "has a lot of promise and a lot of roadblocks that have to be overcome along the way," said Keith Williams, co-chair of the education and curriculum group.

The education and curriculum work group recommends continued pursuit of a pilot project being coordinated by the UC Office of the President which will develop up to 40 online undergraduate courses to evaluate their quality, learning effectiveness, workload impacts and costs.

"In the long run, (expanded online instruction) will happen at one of the great research universities," Yudof said. "It's just a question of when. I'd like to see UC play a leadership role."

The UC Academic Senate, staff, students and the public will have an opportunity to review and comment on the first round of recommendations over the next two months.

"We are no doubt in a very difficult fiscal time," said Academic Senate Chair Harry Powell, who also is a commission member. "Even in good times this work will be of great value to the institution."

Harry Mok is principal editor in the UC Office of the President's Integrated Communications group.

Undergraduate research

UC undergraduate students have opportunities for hands-on research, working with professors who are tops in their fields, jump-starting careers and doing good in the world. You can listen to students talk about their research and watch their slide shows at <http://undergrads.universityofcalifornia.edu/>

Lawrence H. Pitts named UC provost

<http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/news/article/23098>

President Jimmy Carter to visit Merced campus

http://www.ucmerced.edu/news_articles/03102010_president_jimmy_carter_to.asp

UC Santa Cruz astronomer to lead new Hubble Telescope project

http://press.ucsc.edu/text.asp?pid=3619&Cat=co_secondarystory

Ask It!

Q: With all of the birds in the world, and many likely not having a very long life span, why is it that we don't seem to see at least the occasional dead bird on the ground?

A: It is true that most bird species do not have long lives. Most songbirds, for example, live only a year or two. Actually one does find dead birds occasionally, especially if you spend a lot of time in the outdoors.

But there are some things that reduce the likelihood that dead birds will be found by people.

First, birds that die because of illness will feel sick and weak for a while before they die. These birds will seek safe places like dense bushes or trees that provide shelter from predators. If they die of their illness, they will likely fall onto places, like the base of a dense shrub, where they won't be seen.

Second, birds have lightweight fragile skeletons (to make flight easier), so scavengers (small, like ants - or large, like cats) will rapidly reduce the bodies to very little remaining material.

Lastly, when birds are killed by predators (including other birds, like hawks), their bodies are dismantled so that little remains to be seen other than scattered feathers. For example, I occasionally find the remains of mourning doves in my backyard.

HR Briefs

TIP OF THE MONTH

Use or lose your furlough time by August 31

Furlough time is not like vacation time or comp time that can be banked for later use or is paid out upon separation from the University. Furlough time may not be carried over after the systemwide furlough program ends August 31, 2010, so be sure to use your time before it's too late.

Health care reform changes likely in 2011

How will the new federal health care law affect UC sponsored medical coverage? Many faculty and staff are wondering.

With signing of the new healthcare legislation into law last week and the regulatory process expected to start in the near future, UC Human Resources will continue to closely monitor the implementation of the employer-related provisions.

UC employees will be given notice of any changes, as well as information about how to take necessary actions, once additional details are available. For example, many people are anxious to know how to include adult children under age 26 in their health plan. This provision will be effective at UC, following open enrollment, for the start of the 2011 calendar year. This provision does not apply to adult children who are eligible to enroll in another employer-sponsored plan. UC HR will provide details as soon as it can.

Health, DepCare FSA claims due April 15

If you were enrolled in UC's Flexible Spending Accounts (Health and/or Dependent Care) in 2009, you have until April 15 to submit your reimbursement claim forms, along with all required documentation for eligible expenses incurred during the period of January 1, 2009 through March 15, 2010. This includes any receipts or evidence of benefits statements that might be required to validate purchases made using your CONEXIS benefit card. All claims and paperwork must be sent to CONEXIS for processing and postmarked by April 15, 2010.

It's important to review your previous 2009 claims to confirm that they were approved by CONEXIS and that no additional documentation is needed. Log into your account at CONEXIS and select "view my prior plans" to review your 2009 card activity or call the CONEXIS customer service system: 1-800-482-4120.

Internal Revenue Service rules require you to forfeit any balance remaining after the filing deadline of April 15, 2010.

If you have any questions about your claims, be sure to contact CONEXIS directly at 1-800-482-4120.

Complete health assessment by April 15 to receive gift card

April 15 is the deadline for earning a \$100 gift card when you complete a StayWell health assessment.

An eligible employee receives a \$100 gift card and a spouse or domestic partner receives a \$50 gift card. The cards may be used at dozens of retailers, restaurants, specialty shops, and online stores as well as for donations to several charities.

The health assessment is a tool for learning how your lifestyle habits can affect your health and well-being.

After you complete a confidential online questionnaire - a process that takes roughly 10 minutes - the StayWell program immediately provides you with a personalized health report.

The report can tell you about health risks you didn't know you had; offer information on relevant topics such as weight management and high blood pressure; and give you tools and guidance for making positive health behavior changes, including follow-up wellness coaching, if appropriate.

The University offers the health assessment as part of its commitment to the well being of its employees. Your personal health information and the StayWell assessment remain private. UC never receives any individual health information about StayWell participants. You also control whether to share your health assessment with your medical plan.

To qualify for the \$100 gift card, eligible employees must be enrolled in a UC medical plan (except Kaiser) on January 1, 2010 and complete the health assessments by April 15, 2010. Even if you or your spouse/partner completed a health assessment and received a gift card in 2009, you are encouraged to participate again this year.

Kaiser members are eligible to participate in the Kaiser health assessment program. Represented employees should check to see if their union has agreed to participate in the StayWell program.

For more information, visit the StayWell website:
<https://uclivingwell.online.staywell.com/includes/login/index.aspx>

UC mandates compliance ethics briefing

Can I donate unused supplies from my department to my child's school? Or ask my colleague to hire my son? Or work on an outside consulting project during work hours?

These are just some of the situations discussed in UC's mandatory general compliance briefing recently rolled out by the systemwide Ethics, Compliance and Audit Office.

The 20-minute briefing uses information and scenarios to remind employees of the University's Statement of Ethical Values and Standards of Ethical Conduct," says Sheryl Vacca, UC's chief compliance and audit officer. It also provides information about how to contact the compliance officer, the University's whistleblower hotline and a decision tree about who to contact to report a compliance concern.

"Front line staff are the ones who will help us identify if we have a potential compliance issue," says Vacca.

The general compliance briefing is part of the systemwide ethics and compliance program approved by The Regents in July of 2008. As the program becomes more integrated across the system, these efforts and tools will help UC employees continue to enhance their compliance efforts, Vacca says. It starts with an understanding of the individual's accountability to communicate potential compliance concerns. Systemwide compliance tools are available to employees to assist in identifying and communicating potential compliance concerns. This process is initially discussed at new employee orientation and re-emphasized in periodic training.

"The Regents mandated a compliance program and its educational component because it's the right thing to do," says Vacca. "Leadership—regents, the president and the chancellors—are committed to enhancing our ethical culture by reorienting employees to UC's Standards of Ethical Conduct."

Additionally, says Vacca, as one of the largest recipients of federal and state research contracts and grants UC wants to demonstrate to the federal government that we are making a good-faith effort to educate our work force about our ethical culture and our adherence to our standards of conduct.

"Government-sponsored research funds and Medicare and MediCal funding are focus areas of the government in trying to prevent fraud, waste and abuse and are key priorities of compliance focus at UC," she says.

Faculty and staff can take the briefing online using a special, individualized link sent via email. The link enables the systemwide learning management system to record an individual's completion of the briefing. The briefing must be completed by December 31, 2010.

Supervisors can also present the briefing in person at a staff meeting. Powerpoint versions of the briefing in English and Spanish are available on the Ethics, Compliance and Audit Office website: <http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/compaudit/welcome.html>