

**DECEMBER  
2011**



**MEREDITH COLLEGE**

**HR Update**

## December Payroll Reminder

### Monthly Payroll

Employees will be paid for December 1 - 31, 2011 on December 16, 2011.

### Bi-Weekly Payroll

Payroll Dates	Time Cards Due by 10:00	Pay Date
11/26 to 12/2		
12/17 to 12/23	12/8/11**	12/16/11
12/3 to 12/9		
12/24 to 12/30	12/12/11**	12/16/11
12/10 to 12/16/11		
12/31/11 to 1/6/12	1/9/12	1/13/12

**\*\* Time cards due by 8:30 am**

College offices will be closed from Monday, December 19<sup>th</sup> through Sunday, January 1<sup>st</sup> for the Christmas & New Year Holidays. Please mark these hours as “Other” on your time card.



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## IRS Announces 2012 Plan Contribution Limits

The IRS has announced cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) affecting the dollar limits for pension plans and other retirement-related items for the 2012 tax year. Many of the retirement and pension plan limitations will change next year because the cost-of-living index met the statutory thresholds that trigger the adjustment.

Among the changes, the 402(g) elective deferral **contribution limit for employees who participate in 403(b)/401(k) plans has increased from \$16,500 to \$17,000**. The catch-up contribution limit for those age 50 and over remains unchanged at \$5,500. A complete list of the new limits for 2012 can be found at this website: [http://www.tiaa-cref.org/public/about/news/articles/admin1110\\_112.html?ssSourceSiteId=tpub-admin&ECID=duP6omYWX](http://www.tiaa-cref.org/public/about/news/articles/admin1110_112.html?ssSourceSiteId=tpub-admin&ECID=duP6omYWX)

## 2012 Holiday Schedule

### MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY

Monday, January 16, 2012

### SPRING BREAK

Friday, March 9, 2012  
(Spring break is March 5-11)

### GOOD FRIDAY

Friday, April 6, 2012

### MEMORIAL DAY

Monday, May 28, 2012

### INDEPENDENCE DAY

Wednesday, July 4, 2012

### LABOR DAY

Monday, September 3, 2012

### THANKSGIVING

Thursday & Friday, November 22 & 23, 2012

### CHRISTMAS/NEW YEAR'S

Wednesday, December 19, 2012 –  
Tuesday, January 1, 2013

## VALIC announces changes in investments

Effective October 1, 2011, the Global Equity Fund, which is available to Meredith employees, changed its name and its investment strategy. The fund was renamed the Emerging Economies Fund and is monitored by J.P. Morgan Investment Management, Inc. The countries represented by this new investment strategy are China, Brazil, India and Russia.

Effective November 1, 2011, VALIC offered its first commodities fund – the Invesco Balanced-Risk Commodity Strategy Fund. Four segments of the commodities market are available: agriculture, energy, industrial metals and precious metals.

Everyone with an existing VALIC account will receive more information about these changes in their next quarterly statement.



## Handbook Reminder: Staff Leave Policy

### Annual Leave

Annual leave is provided according to an employee's years of service and employment status.

- All benefit-eligible staff positions are eligible for annual accruals.
- The annual leave accrual for the first year of employment is 96 hours, to be prorated based on the date of hire and the number of hours to be regularly scheduled to work.
- The yearly amount increases by one day every other calendar year.
- The maximum annual amount that can be earned in one year is 160 hours.
- Up to one week of annual leave may be carried forward at the end of the year.
- Unused earned annual leave will be paid out at the time of termination of employment.

### Sick Leave

Sick leave benefits are available for all benefit-eligible staff for periods of temporary absence due to illnesses or injuries.

- The sick leave accrual amount is 96 hours per year, prorated based on the number of hours regularly assigned to be worked (and prorated for the first year of employment based on the date of hire).
- Up to 404 hours may be carried forward at the end of the year for a maximum of 500 hours (prorated for less than full-time assignments).
- Unused earned sick leave is not paid out at the time of termination of employment.

To view the leave policy in its entirety, please click on the Staff Handbook link on the following page: <http://www.meredith.edu/humres/policies.htm>.

## W-2's Available On-line!

Wouldn't it be wonderful if you could print a copy of your W-2 whenever you needed it? You wouldn't have to look for misplaced W-2's or make a request to HR for a duplicate! And wouldn't it be nice to have your W-2 a few days earlier than our traditional January 25<sup>th</sup> release date? You could get a jump on filing those tax returns!

Well, we are pleased to announce that W-2's will now be available on-line, allowing you to take advantage of both of these features!

How can you sign up for this great option? Simply log in to WebAdvisor [-https://advisor.meredith.edu](https://advisor.meredith.edu), click the employee tab, and sign the electronic consent (required by the IRS) by **December 15<sup>th</sup>**. When you elect to receive your W-2 in the on-line electronic format, you will have access to view and print your W-2's whenever you want (2010 and after). All information remains confidential and secure. Plus, you have the ability to return to this option and change your consent at any time. Sign up today!

## Excess Wages Due to Life Insurance

Meredith College provides a life insurance benefit for all full-time employees equivalent to 1 1/2 the employee's annual salary. You may notice a slight difference in your December paycheck each year because employees are required to pay taxes on the value of their life insurance in excess of \$50,000. Because it is a tax-deferred item, you must pay Medicare and Social Security taxes on that amount but not federal or state taxes. The taxable amount will be added to your wages for one pay period and you will also see it as a deduction on the same check. If you have further questions, please contact Kay Miller, our Payroll Administrator.

## Understanding Your Preventive Care Benefits

Regular preventive care can help you stay in better overall health. Make sure you understand how your preventive care benefits work and be sure to take advantage of them.

Preventive care services are generally covered at 100% of the allowed amount when they meet the following conditions:

- The service is delivered by an in-network provider.
- The service is performed in an in-network, office-based setting or stand-alone clinic and filed as an office visit.\*\*
- The service is received only once per benefit period.
- The service does not include any additional procedures.

\*\* Save on out-of-pocket costs. Ask your health care provider to send your routine lab work to a contracted BCBSNC reference lab.



### Preventive care includes:

- Routine physical examinations
- Well-baby and well-child care
- Immunizations\*\*\*
- Gynecological exam and cervical cancer screening
- Ovarian cancer screening
- Screening mammograms
- Colorectal screening
- Prostate screening
- Bone mass measurement services
- Obesity evaluation and management

### \*\*\* Immunization exclusions:

- Immunizations required for occupational hazard
- Immunizations required for international travel

**(Information provided by BCBSNC)**

## Interested in Being Tobacco Free?

If you are having a hard time stopping smoking or chewing tobacco, there are programs and treatments that can help you. Talk to your doctor or health care provider about treatment options that can help you quit. People quit using tobacco every day, and you can, too! Here are some tips to help you quit:

- **Be clear on why you want to quit**

Some common reasons include not wanting to be a slave to addiction, the way cigarettes make your hair and clothes smell, and the prospect of saving money. Some people recognize the health benefits of being tobacco-free. In addition to increasing your risk of heart disease, stroke and lung cancer, smoking can harm nearly every organ in your body, reducing your health in general. Quitting tobacco has immediate and long-term health benefits.

- **Keep track of when and why you use tobacco**

Discovering your triggers can help you to prepare for them and/or avoid them. Common triggers are driving in your car, finishing a meal, feeling stressed or being with others who use tobacco. Be prepared for your triggers so you can stay away from situations that tempt you.

- **Pick an official Quit Day**

Get out a calendar and pick a day in the next few weeks to be your official Quit Day. Do not pick a day when you know you will be highly stressed and do not pick a holiday.

- **Come up with a plan**

Decide how you want to quit. Do you want to go cold turkey or do you want to use nicotine replacement therapy? Are you interested in joining a support group in your community or would you prefer to participate in an on-line quit program?

- **Get motivated**

Tell people you are going to quit and ask them for their help and support. Give yourself something to look forward to and set up a series of rewards for your milestones, such as your first day tobacco-free, your first week, and your first month free of tobacco.

- **Plan ahead**

Get yourself ready for situations that may trigger you to use tobacco and make a plan. Stay away from those situations and be ready for the effects of nicotine withdrawal. Get through your cravings by doing other things, like taking a walk, going places that are smoke-free, talking to a supportive friend or using stress management techniques.

- **Do not quit quitting**

If you do slip and use tobacco again, do not give up. Pick up where you left off. You quit once, you can do it again.

If you need help, call **1-800-QUIT NOW (1-800-784-8669)** anytime between 8 a.m. and midnight, seven days a week, to talk to a tobacco-cessation specialist. You can also visit their website at **quit-linenc.com**.

Source: <http://www.ahrq.gov/path/tobacco.htm>

## Is it Really an Emergency?

What do you do when your doctor is not available and you need immediate medical care for a health issue like a sprained ankle or a child's fever? Did you know you have alternatives to the high costs and long waits of an emergency room visit?

The fact is, many people use the emergency room for routine or non-emergency care. This results in higher costs and longer waits for everyone, including those who truly need emergency care.

So, how do you know if you have a true emergency? If you (or someone in your care) are suffering severe symptoms or your life or health is at serious risk, then it's an emergency. You should go to the nearest emergency room as quickly as possible.

But, if you have an issue that is not life-threatening, like a sprain or a fever, and you need immediate care, chances are you'll get the care you need faster and at a much lower cost at an urgent care or convenience care center.

What if you're not sure about where to go to get the right care? Or if you have questions and want to talk with a medical professional immediately? If you're a Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina® member, then you can call Health Line Blue<sup>SM,1</sup> at 1-877-477-2424 anytime day or night, 24/7. At no additional cost, you can speak with a specially trained nurse who can help you get the care that's right for you.

A chart is available to help you get to the right care quickly. It may be downloaded from the following website: <http://www.meredith.edu/humres/health.htm> and then clicking on the link called **Getting to the Right Care Quickly**.

## Tax Relief Act Ends January 1

For each dollar that an employee earns, 6.2% is withheld for Social Security. The College also contributes 6.2% of the wage amount on the employee's behalf. On January 1, 2011, the Tax Relief Act was enacted to decrease the amount the employee must pay to 4.2% to keep more money in the employee's pocket. That decrease is set to end on 12/31/11, returning to the contribution amount to the previous 6.2% rate on January 1, 2012.

## Wrap Up the Year With Health

If gift exchanges are part of your traditions, consider gifts that encourage wellness, such as inexpensive fitness equipment (i.e. a jump rope, hand weights, or a water bottle) or nutritious treats. Exchange healthy recipes with family and friends. And, by all means, reward yourself of your good health habits as you get set for another year of wellness in 2012!



## November Welcome & Farewells

### We welcome the following staff:

- **Sonya Grimsley** — Housekeeper, Facilities Services

### We bid farewell to the following staff:

- **Harry Cadman** — Assistant Director of Facilities Services

### OFFICE OF HUMAN RESOURCES

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**Marlpat Plocki — Benefits  
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**Kay Miller — Payroll Administrator**  
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**Mandy Boyers — Administrative  
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[http://  
www.meredith.  
edu/humres/](http://www.meredith.edu/humres/)

## HSA Reminder

Your HSA contributions will not be deposited into your account until after the first of the month following payroll. It is your responsibility to ensure there are sufficient funds in your account prior to making payments to providers. There will be no reimbursement from the College for any insufficient fund charges related to your Health Savings Account.

Should you need to adjust your HSA deductions, the HSA Contribution Change Form is available on the Human Resources website at:  
<http://www.meredith.edu/humres/forms.htm>

## New Directories

The new directories were delivered to all departments in November. If we accidentally missed you, please contact us or stop by to pick one up. The old directories may be recycled. We ask that you please shred the student information section. If you do not have access to a shredder, you may drop your old directory off at Human Resources for disposal.

