For Your Benefit

Opportunities and Information for University Faculty and Staff

Hotline For Help with Many of Life’s Challenges

Are challenges in your personal life affecting your peace of mind or your work? Are you finding it harder to balance work and home? The University’s Work/Life Program can help.

Available to all University staffers—and their relatives, no matter where they live—the program provides a free, 24-hour, seven-day-a-week hotline to counselors, social workers and other professionals whose mission is to provide research and guidance regarding a wide range of problems.

You can contact the Work/Life Assistance Program by calling 800-833-8707. The service is contracted by CUNY to the private company Corporate Counseling Associates (CCA). The counselors—at a minimum—all hold master’s degrees.

“The University launched this program in November 2008 because we knew that it was something that our employees needed and wanted,” says Vice Chancellor for Human Resources Management Gloriana Waters. “To date, every single CUNY college and the Marsh Catastrophic Major Medical plans, as well as a tax-deferred annuity, and the New York State 457 Deferred Compensation Plan. More information is available at the PSC-CUNY Welfare Fund website.

Here are some links for information about these three benefits:

Teachers’ Retirement System

http://www.trsa.ny.gov/Teams/Teachers_Retirement_System/Teachers_Retirement_System.html

PSC-CUNY Retirement Fund

http://www.psc-cuny.org/retirement/

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Policy Corner:

CUNY has updated its workplace violence prevention policy, emphasizing that it will respond promptly to threats and acts of violence.

Do you know what constitutes workplace violence? Here are some answers:

1. A threat or threat, whether verbal or physical, to inflict physical injury upon an employee.
2. Any intentional display of force that would give an employee reason to fear or expect bodily harm.
3. Intentional and wrongful physical contact with an employee without his or her consent that entails some injury.
4. Stalking an employee in a manner that may cause the employee to fear for his or her physical safety and health. This refers to an action that occurs during the course of employment or has arisen as a result of employment. For the details of the University’s policy on workplace violence prevention, please see:

http://www.cuny.edu/violenceprevention

More Ways to Save Money

CUNY employees can save money by using the CUNY Work/Life Program’s Savings Center, a discount shopping program provided through the Corporate Perks Web site. The Savings Center offers discounts of up to 25% on name brand, practical and luxury items.

First-time users need to register using the organization code "advantage" to access the Savings Center. If you are already a registered user, you can access and login to the Savings Center from the link below:


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answered hotline queries from CUNY employees and their relatives. She emphasizes that employees “achieve more balance when they use our service to proactively manage their needs.” She says that in 2010 more than half of the employees who called needed help with psychological or emotional issues.

For example, one CUNY employee needed help in dealing with a family member’s suicide. “Through short-term grief counseling, the Work/Life Program provided the employee with a safe place to express feelings and to receive support and education about coping strategies,” Alabi says.

Others employees asked about work life challenges and sought help with personal and job-related situations.

For more info, go to www.cuny.edu/worklife and click on the “saving center” box on the right. The site also offers free webinars with assistance on a wide diversity of life-balancing subjects—even including one on the use of feng shui, the ancient Chinese system of architectural choices, to turn subjects—even including one on the use of feng shui, the other employment, a spouse or a government entitlement.

Our part-timer would also be eligible to enroll in the Teachers’ Retirement System of the City of New York. This is a defined benefit plan in which members contribute 3 percent of their gross salaries for the first ten years. Five years of service credit is required to be vested.

If our part-timer commutes by public transportation to CUNY then the pre-tax transportation fringe benefit plan offered by WageWorks makes sense.

Our part-timer may not be covered by another health plan offered through the PSC-CUNY Welfare Fund. To be eligible a part-timer may not be covered by another health plan offered through other employment, a spouse or a government entitlement.

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Commuter Program Available to All

News flash: The University’s senior college and central office employees have officially transitioned to the new Commuter Benefits Program administered by WageWorks.

Community college employees transitioned late last year.

Employees who were previously enrolled with the commuter program administered by JPMorgan Chase have had their old cards deactivated and received new cards from WageWorks. And here’s some more good news: Balances on the old JPMorgan Chase cards were transferred to new WageWorks accounts.

As reported in the last issue of For Your Benefit, the new WageWorks program gives CUNY employees who use public transportation to commute to work and better ways to save. It covers virtually any transit system in the Tri-State area.

The program provides a stored value card loaded with pre-tax and post-tax payroll deductions. It works just like a credit card. Other options include a transit pass plan, a plan for Access-A-Ride and a Park-n-Ride plan for those who park at or near public transit on their way to work.

Do you have a new WageWorks Commuter card? If so, make sure to activate the card so you can begin to use it. And here’s some additional and important information about the new Commuter Benefits Program administered by WageWorks.

• The Commuter Card is a MasterCard stored-value card that works just like a credit card at transit agency ticket vending machines and ticket windows.

• When using this Commuter Card be sure to select “credit.” Not “debit.”

• If you enrolled in the Transit Pass Plan, make sure to log in to the WageWorks website to choose the particular transit pass you would like to have mailed to your home.

• Unused balances will remain in your account, and/or on your card as long as you work at CUNY.

• If you leave, you will have 90 days from your separation date to spend the balance of your account.

For more information visit www.getwageworks.com/nyc.

Smoothing The Way For Veterans’ Benefits

Epifanio Rebollo, a Brooklyn College Peace Officer, has also served in war — in Basra, Iraq. Assigned to National Guard Company 442 in Jamaica, he was deployed in June 2009 for fourteen months.

A married father of three, Rebollo, 43, received certain military benefits from CUNY which, like those provided by the city and state, have been extended each year since 9/11 by the University’s board.

In 2000, CUNY had 71 reservist employees. Rebollo says Human Resources personnel at Brooklyn College helped him to get financial and medical benefits. “I was not aware of the specifics,” he said. “But they were great and they put in for it.” Also, his family was able to use his CUNY medical benefits during his time in Iraq.

CUNY covers the first year of health benefits for families of individuals who are deployed. “The key area we are concerned about is the family,” says Leslie E. Williams, University Executive Director of Shared Services.

Rebollo was assigned to assist Iraqi civilians — and transport troops, envoys and journalists, “often through the city, outside the [military] wire,” or the zone of relative safety and protection. He describes seeing thousands of Iraqis travel miles to his base for medical care and the heartbreak of having to turn most away due to a lack of facilities and doctors.

Before ’9/11, CUNY-employed reservists called up for active military duty were eligible to receive one month of full University pay, once a year. This benefit is still in place. The extension provides an additional “once in a lifetime” one month’s pay for reservists deployed to fight the war on terror.

Since 2001, these reservists also receive financial benefits to ensure that together with their military compensation there is no reduction from what would have been their CUNY pay while they are deployed. As long as the CUNY board renews the policy, this “reduced military leave pay” is available for the full time of deployment during a calendar year.

CUNY’s Office of Human Resources Management is putting together a deployment package to help explain these benefits. That might some day help Tanesha Orridge, 21, a City College Peace Officer, who has been in the National Guard since 2003.

She served in Iraq but has not been deployed since she began working at CUNY in 2008. “It’s not a matter of wanting to go. I have to go,” she says. “I am single. I’d rather go than have someone who is married and has children go.”