July 15, 2011

TO: HR Reps

As many of you may already know, it was announced yesterday at UW System’s Wisline Web meeting that the new WRS eligibility rules are effective July 1, 2011.  Therefore, new employees hired after July 1, 2011 must be expected to work at least one year and at least 2/3 time to be eligible for WRS coverage and the resulting benefits package.  For unclassified hires that translates to an appointment level of 42% (annual A basis) or 56% (academic C basis).

**HOWEVER**, please remember that there is a long-standing ETF rule that says new hires will immediately participate in the WRS (even if the position would not meet the duration or % eligibility rules) if the person left a WRS covered appointment at the same employer in the previous 12 months.  ALSO, apparently the new rules are being interpreted to mean that new hires after July 1, 2011 who have ever worked for a WRS employer in the past (UW, state, school district, county, etc) only have to meet the old eligibility rules for WRS participation.  And this prior work includes employment in non-WRS covered appointments such as LTE, grad assistants, or student hourly.  This would be very difficult to administer so ETF may reconsider this interpretation in the future.

Therefore, it is critical that you consult with campus OHR Benefits before you decide that a new hire with an appointment less than 42% (annual A basis) or 56% (academic C basis) will not be eligible for WRS participation.  They can be reached at benefits@ohr.wisc.edu.

UW System has already updated the 2011 Benefits Summary for Faculty, Academic Staff and Limited Employees with the new rules.  The link remains the same as before, but here it is for your reference:

<http://www.wisconsin.edu/hr/benefits/uben.pdf>.

Our unclassified sample Appointment letters and the Letter of Offer Attachment do not mention WRS or benefits eligibility.  Instead the documents link directly to the Benefits Summary for that information.  As a result you likely will not need to adjust future appointment letters.  However, you are welcome to contact me if you would like me to help you with that assessment.

See UPPP Ch. 5 Appendices for the samples: <http://www.ohr.wisc.edu/polproced/UPPP/UpppTableofContents.htm>

Thanks for your patience with this complicated matter.  Let me know if you have any questions or comments, or need a copy of the original UWG notes from 7/8/11.  Feel free to forward to your staff as needed.  Stay cool this weekend!

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