

September 2023

USM NAMED A BEST PLACE TO WORK- AGAIN!



Once again, USM has been named to the prestigious Forbes Best in State Employers list. We ranked #6 in the state of Mississippi and were ranked #2 in the education industry in Mississippi.

Krystyna Varnado, Sr AVP for Human Resources, stated, “This remarkable achievement is a testament to the incredible dedication, collaboration, and spirit of our university community. It’s not just a recognition- it’s a reflection of the positive and inspiring environment we collectively create. Your passion, innovation, and commitment make our institution truly exceptional. I think I can confidently say this achievement also highlights the incredible support and excitement for our new President, Dr. Joe Paul.”

USM is proud of this recognition and will be shouting it from the rooftops for everyone to see. You can too! Logos are now available to all USM employees to add to our web pages, email signatures, and other places as permitted by our licensing agreement. Please visit our new page on the HR website to view the permitted uses and to access the logos, which is listed under Forms as [“Best in State Logos.”](#) If you have questions about the use of this recognition, contact Miranda Brumfield, HR Partner, at 6-5814 or Miranda.newman@usm.edu.

A recognition like this is important to job seekers. People will apply at USM simply because we made this list. Use it in your recruitment, and share the [SMEA](#) (we all should know what that is by now- the Southern Miss Employee Advantage) to showcase all of the reasons why we are a best place to work. USM has bragging rights!

For more information about how the rankings were established and to see the full list, click [here](#).

SAVE THE DATE!



UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESOURCES
PRESENTS

Benefits Fair

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2023 | 10:00 A.M. – 2:00 P.M.
THAD COCHRAN CENTER BALLROOM | HATTIESBURG CAMPUS

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 2023 | 10:00 A.M. – 2:00 P.M.
HARDY HALL BALLROOM | GULF PARK CAMPUS

What you can find at the Benefits Fair:

- Benefit Administrators
- Retirement Planners
- Health Resources
- Mental Health Resources
- Yoga & Meditation
- Campus Activities Groups
- Perks & Discounts
- Flu Shots

For benefit-eligible employees of Southern Miss



BENEFITS OPEN ENROLLMENT COMING SOON!

Open Enrollment is quickly approaching. Remember this is the once-a-year opportunity for benefit-eligible employees to make changes to your pre-tax insurance plans. Also remember, you must reenroll annually for Medical and Dependent Care Reimbursement which does not carry over from year to year. No action is needed if you do not wish to change any other benefits. All changes will be effective January 1, 2024. More detailed information will come in October. Be sure to visit our Benefits Fair this month (see previous page).

GA HEALTH WAIVER DEADLINE

The last day to waive the GA health insurance will be on September 8th. **Any GA that does not waive the policy will be automatically enrolled** after September 8th. The monthly cost of the health insurance is \$118 and will be deducted from stipends received September through May. Please visit <https://studentcenter.uhcsr.com/usm> to waive or opt in the policy and for additional policy information. No refunds will be processed for those who do not complete the waiver process by the deadline. **Your help in reminding GAs to do this is greatly appreciated because if they do not complete the waiver they are locked in to paying for insurance they don't need.**

FREE WEIGHT LOSS PROGRAM

As a participant of Mississippi's State and School Employees' Health Insurance Plan, you can learn how to lose weight and improve your health while eating your favorite food by participating in the Wondr program - all at **NO COST** to you.

What is Wondr?

Wondr is an online program that teaches clinically proven, healthy habits that lead to less stress, better sleep, weight loss, and more-no restrictive diets, calorie-counting, or specialty foods required. With this program, you'll learn to change when and how you eat, not what you eat, so you can improve your physical and mental health while eating the foods you love.

Here's what you need to know:

- *Wondr is a program that teaches you the skills you need to achieve lasting weight loss and health improvement while eating your favorite foods.* There's no counting points or calories, eating boring meals, or spending money on specialty diet food. In the program, you'll also learn how to sleep better and stay on track during special occasions like parties, holidays, and vacations.
- *Wondr is being offered to Plan participants 18 years of age and older, provided Mississippi's State and School Employees' Health Insurance Plan is your primary insurance coverage. This includes employees, covered spouses and covered adult dependents.* When applying for the program, covered spouses and adult covered dependents will need to fill out a separate application.
- *The program is video-based and all online.* That means you can complete it using any internet-connected device, like your smartphone, tablet, or computer.

Space is limited! Apply today! Visit www.wondrhealth.com/mississippi to fill out the short application. Applications are open from **8/21/2023 - 9/5/2023.**

The Wondr program starts **September 18th, 2023**, and is offered at NO COST to Plan participants 18 years of age and older, provided Mississippi's State and School Employees' Health Insurance Plan is your primary insurance coverage. This includes employees, covered spouses and covered adult dependents.

NEW HIRE APPOINTMENTS

New employees should schedule their Hiring Paperwork appointments [HERE](#) for both our Hattiesburg and Gulf Park HR offices. Please remind new employees (including student workers) to bring original versions of identification documents to complete the form I-9 as well as direct deposit information. This information is also provided on our website where appointments are made. Failure to bring these documents prevents us from completing the process, requires a new appointment, and may delay the start date, so your help is appreciated.

Student employees also need to bring their signed PAF with them to their appointment. As a general reminder, student hire and rehire effective dates are on Monday each week. When a student hire presents a PAF with a date prior to their appointment, the HR office will update the new date on the PAF and the clear to begin work card.

Remember, no new employee may start working until the new hire process is complete and you receive a clearance from HR (either the email or the white card).

GRADUATE ASSISTANT HOURS

Graduate Assistants are first and foremost students pursuing an education. Assistantships provide much-needed experience for graduate students as well as financial support while pursuing their education. During the fall and spring semesters, all GAs must be enrolled full-time for 9 or more credit hours to be defined as a GA and receive a stipend and tuition waiver. GAs can work no more than 20 hours per week year-round, which includes breaks and summer semesters.

Q. Do GAs have to make up time missed from work during holidays due to University closures?

A. No. GAs paid monthly are not required to make up time when the University is closed for holidays, or any emergency closure declared by the President. GAs should observe holidays the same as Faculty and Staff.

STUDENT WORKER HOURS

Students cannot work more than 20 hours per week year-round, which includes breaks and summer. If the student is working more than one job, collectively their hours cannot exceed 20. During the fall and spring semesters, all student employees must be enrolled full-time for 12 or more credit hours in order to be employed on campus.

STUDENT WORKER TIME SHEETS

Please keep in mind that all work-study student workers need to keep a timesheet containing daily time of arrival to work and time of departure that is separate from entering hours in SOARHR for payroll purposes. Departments should retain these timesheets for audit purposes. If you have questions, please contact David Williamson in Financial Aid at david.williamson@usm.edu.

PAF@USM.EDU

Please only use PAF@usm.edu for the submission of PAFs and PDS. This email is for submitting paperwork for processing only, and it is not monitored for questions that you have. Please email HR@usm.edu or call 6-4050 for questions regarding paperwork.

WORKING A SECOND POSITION

Employees who teach classes, conduct research, or work camps for USM during their normal working hours and who receive additional compensation above their normal salary will charge this time to their personal leave. It is the responsibility of the department head to ensure the employee complies with these policies. If the employee does not have sufficient accrued personal leave to cover this time, the employee will be required to report the time taken as leave without pay. For any secondary position, the employee must obtain approval from their supervisor in advance.

GULF PARK VISITS

Starting this month, our Employee Relations department will establish regular office hours at the Gulf Park campus. Quentisha Jones, EEO/Employee Relations Director, will be present on the first Wednesday of each month, and Miranda Brumfield, HR Partner, will be present on the second Thursday of each month. They are also open to travel to other coastal locations as needed. You can reach out to them via email to schedule an appointment.

UPCOMING HR TRAINING SESSIONS

Top 10 Supervisor Mistakes

Thursday, September 14 @ 10:00a (1 hr)

Audience: Supervisors/Managers

Summary: A review of the common mistakes that leaders make in the supervision of people.

Please RSVP to Miranda.newman@usm.edu to receive the link to the Teams training.

In addition to the above, HR has posted our [full training library](#) on our website with a complete list of all of the available that can be requested through your HR Partner on-demand.

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (EAP)

A reminder that all benefit-eligible employees have access to our Employee Assistance Program (EAP). To register online, go to [GuidanceResources.com](https://www.guidanceresources.com) or the app GuidanceNow, and use the Organization Web ID COM589. When it asks for your company name, enter UNIVE (a box should pop up with USM for you to select). In addition to web resources, membership also comes with telephonic access to talk to a counselor, financial advisor, or legal advisor: 800-272-7255.

Click [here](#) to view a short video about the EAP.

This month's features include:

[How your EAP can help: Preventing Burnout](#)

[How your EAP can help: Easing Anxiety](#)

[What to Expect When Reaching Out Video](#)

[Back to School Toolkit](#)

[Back to School: Off to a Good Start](#)

[Handling Bullies](#)

[Creating a Self-Care Plan](#)

[Benefits of Meditation](#)

[Mindful Eating](#)

[Resilience in Stressful Times Video](#)

BACK TO SCHOOL

As school gets back in session, HR remembers our old school days

				
Deborah Sekulich HR Specialist 10 th Grade	Ruth Brooks HR Receptionist 11 th Grade	Kourtney Stookey HR Generalist 1 st Grade	Quentisha Jones EEO/Emp Rel Director Pre-School	Rachelle Irvin Ast Benefits Manager Pre-School
				
Krystyna Varnado Sr AVP 5 th Grade	Emily Dykes HR Specialist 2 nd Grade	Christian Cameron HR Generalist Pre-School	Amy Hester Benefits Manager Senior	Sandra Anderson HR Coordinator Senior
				
Sharon Hughes Records Supervisor Senior	Kelly James Penot HR Manager 3 rd Grade	Miranda Brumfield HR Partner Kindergarten		

***If you have questions about any of the information contained in this HR Update,
please contact our main line at 6-4050 or your HR Partner for more information.
SMTTT!***