

JANUARY 2022

HAPPY
New Year



Happy holidays from our team to yours! Hope you had a terrific break!

HR SURVEYS

University Human Resources recently conducted surveys on our service to the University community, and we would like to extend our appreciation for all who participated in providing feedback. We love positive feedback, but we also appreciate constructive feedback so that we can continue to grow and meet your needs. Participants will receive a more in-depth response, but below is a summary of the overall results.

HR Operations- This is the group that manages HR records, which includes new hire processing and PAFs. We have seen a steady improvement in our overall ratings since we implemented surveys in 2017.

<u>2017</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2021</u>
2.06	3.07	3.50	4.00

(total weighted average, scale of 1 to 5)

HR Partners- This is the group that provides “one-stop shop” assistance to all USM departments to help navigate the policies at USM. This is only the second time that we have surveyed this group, but we saw great improvement there as well.

<u>2019</u>	<u>2021</u>
4.04	4.36

(total weighted average of all Partners, scale of 1 to 5)

We are reviewing the feedback now and will have more specific actions to report back out to you in a few weeks. Thank you again for your willingness to participate!

EAP REMINDER

USM has an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) that is available to all benefit-eligible employees and members of their household. 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 and pause and a box should pop up with The University of Southern Mississippi for you to select. Remember, membership also comes with telephonic access to talk to a counselor, financial advisor, or legal advisor: 800-272-7255. The EAP offers someone to talk to and resources to consult for mental health, legal or financial reasons.

Need support with New Year's resolutions? The EAP has you covered. Visit their website to access the [New Year's Resolution Resource Guide](#) which includes information on:

- Making and keeping resolutions
- Eating better
- Exercising more
- Getting your finances in order
- Stop smoking
- Stop drinking
- Working on your relationships
- Getting your house in order
- Focusing on work issues
- Learning or doing something new
- More!

COVID-19 VACCINATION UPDATE

As we communicated in December, a federal district court issued a nationwide injunction to halt enforcement of the vaccine requirement for federal contractors that was included in [Executive Order 14042](#). As a result, USM is no longer requiring proof of vaccination or requests for an exemption. With that said, we want to thank all faculty, staff and student employees who have been vaccinated and for how quickly everyone responded to get into compliance. At the time the hold was put in place, we were at approximately 90% compliance for faculty and staff. What an amazing achievement! For now, the requests for exemptions have been put on hold and we are no longer requesting vaccination records, but we have left the [portal](#) open for anyone who wishes to provide their vaccination record voluntarily. We will continue to monitor any additional developments as the court decisions are made and will let you know as things change.

University HR's COVID FAQs are posted on our [webpage](#) and all employees are highly encouraged to familiarize yourself with them, especially if you have COVID-related questions or needs. We have also made available a supervisor checklist, which is a step-by-step process for supervisors to follow when an employee reports that they (or a family member) have or suspect they have COVID or have had a COVID exposure.

Lastly, a reminder that departments need to report to their [HR Partner](#) whenever an employee tests positive for COVID or has to be absent or is approved to work remotely due to a COVID-related reason.

EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK UPDATES

Minor changes have been made to several policies in the employee handbook, which you may access on the [HR website](#).

Changes effective January 1, 2022:

<u>Policy</u>	<u>Description</u>
2.4.1 Employment Statuses	Updated to include definitions for Temporary and Seasonal employees.
2.4.2 Temporary Employees	Updated for clarification
2.9 Background Checks	Updated for clarification
4.1.1 (Tuition Waiver) Eligibility	Updated for clarification
5.9 Education Enhancement	Updated for clarification
6.3 Major Medical Leave	Updated for clarification
6.10 Jury Duty	Updated for clarification

NEW AND UPDATED INSTITUTIONAL POLICIES

All USM institutional policies are posted on usm.policystat.com (PolicyStat). Employees are responsible for familiarizing and abiding by institutional policies. Click the link below to view recently created/updated policies:

[Compliance and Ethics | The University of Southern Mississippi \(usm.edu\)](#)

REMINDER- MEDICAL DEDUCTIBLE INCREASE FOR SELECT COVERAGE

Reminder, effective January 1, 2022, the in-network deductible will increase for Select Coverage from \$1,300 to \$1,500 for individuals and from \$2,600 to \$3,000 for family coverage. Please note that the deductibles for the Base Coverage will remain the same in 2022.

WHAT IS FORM 1095c AND WHAT DO I DO WITH IT?

Q: What is form 1095c?

A: This is a form that employers are required to send employees in accordance with the Affordable Care Act. It is used by the IRS to confirm the offer and election of health coverage.

Q: When will employees receive the 1095c?

A: You should receive this form no later than January 31, 2022. All forms will be mailed to your department box number. If you do not receive your form 1095C please email hr@usm.edu.

Q: What do I do with the 1095c form?

A: When you file your income taxes this year, present the 1095c to your tax preparer who will offer guidance on the necessity of the 1095c.

Q: I did not elect benefits through the University in 2021. Why am I receiving a 1095c?

A: You are receiving the 1095c because you were eligible for health benefits in 2021 and were offered coverage by the University. Whether you selected health benefits or not, the University is required to provide you the 1095c if you were deemed benefits eligible.

TRANSITIONING FROM 12-MO to 9-MO REMINDER

Administrators transitioning from a 12-month to 9-month position should be prepared to enter a “without pay” status during the transition time of July and August. Additionally, any personal leave accrued will be frozen and not available for use at any time unless resuming a 12-month position. For those enrolled in PERS the unused leave will be credited to PERS when employment with USM ends. For those enrolled in ORP unused personal leave has no value. If you would like more information about the transition and how your time may be impacted, please contact Kameron Dale, HR Director.

JOB EVALUATION REQUEST FORM

A [Job Evaluation Request form](#) must be submitted when requesting a compensation evaluation of a new position or the reevaluation of an existing position. It is the responsibility of the department head to complete and submit this form back to their [HR Partner](#) to start the evaluation process of a new or revised position at the University. Please work closely with your HR Partner to accurately complete this form and for guidance if you have any questions or concerns.

Reminder: ALL job descriptions must be completed on the updated job description template. Please use the Job Description Writing Guide for assistance and contact your [HR Partner](#) if you have any questions. All forms and guides are listed on the [HR website under Forms](#).

UPCOMING HUMAN RESOURCES TRAINING

Cornerstone Q&A

Wednesday, January 6 @ 10a (1 hour)

Audience: Anyone who accesses Cornerstone as part of the hiring process

Please review the resources and training on the [HR website](#) prior.

Hiring Best Practices

Tuesday, January 11 @ 1:30p (1 hour)

Audience: Anyone involved in the hiring process

Summary: A review of best practices for reviewing applications, conducting interviews, and making hiring decisions utilizing our hiring toolkits.

Civility

Wednesday, January 26 @ 10a (30 min)

Audience: All employees

Summary: Understanding the role civility plays in the workplace and how each individual contributes.

Please RSVP to Karen.figueroa@usm.edu to receive the link to the training.

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

FREE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

All faculty and staff are now enrolled with a membership to Academic Impressions giving us access to trainings, webcasts, resources, and conference discounts! **Free to you!** You will login using your **w#@usm.edu** credentials. Each month we will highlight great learning opportunities for staff and leaders- there are many, many more! Go explore- to access this resource, click [here](#).

Leading with a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Mindset: A Bootcamp for Department Chairs

ONLINE BOOTCAMP: January 14- April 1, 2022

Join us online to discuss ways that you can foster a mindset of DEI in yourself and across your department. Alongside a small cohort of other department chairs, you'll develop a shared language around DEI from an anti-racism lens— a lens that you can then apply to traditionally excluded populations. You will also learn how to analyze policies and practices within your department that are most impacted by equity and inclusion (or the lack thereof), and you'll brainstorm ways to mitigate barriers that prevent you from creating an equitable and inclusive culture.

The Ins and Outs of Publishing Your Scholarly Work: A Training for Faculty Researchers

LIVE TRAINING: January 21, 2022 | 1:00 – 2:30 p.m. Eastern

The reasons to publish your scholarly work range from practical to noble. Whether it be to advance your career, position yourself to receive extramural funding, advance your field, or achieve status and recognition, publishing makes you an important player in your discipline and is a prerequisite to achieving tenure. This training will provide an overview on publishing including why you should publish, where to publish, how to develop a strategy that is in line with your overall career aspirations, and how to accept that initial manuscript rejection is part of the process and use it to your advantage.

5 Principles of Effective Leadership: A Bootcamp for Leaders at All Levels

ONLINE BOOTCAMP: January 27- February 24, 2022

Join us online for a five-week leadership bootcamp that draws on "The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership." This model is proposed by Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner in their book *The Leadership Challenge*, which posits that leaders display some core behaviors at their peak no matter their culture, gender, age, or other identities. It is a simple but powerful model for elevating and expressing your leadership, regardless of your role at your institution.

Navigating Your Career Growth: A Bootcamp for Women Leaders in Higher Education

LIVE TRAINING: January 24- March 7, 2022

This six-week online bootcamp for women leaders is designed to help you learn the pathways and politics of managing your career growth in higher education. This course, facilitated by women leaders at the highest levels, helps you manage conditions for career growth and gain invaluable feedback on presenting and advocating for yourself on paper and in person. This is a unique opportunity to learn from some of the best leaders in the industry in a supportive environment alongside other women.

2021 Brags-

What were the major HR achievements last year?

Just when it felt safe to go back into the water, **COVID** reared its head once again with the federal executive order requiring vaccinations:

- HR had to very quickly develop a process for the collection of data
- Launched a new SoarHR module (shout out to our Business Analysts who rocked it!)
- Website, forms, and FAQs developed
- Created exception process and managed approval process
- Reviewed and processed thousands of vaccine submissions
 - *Note: vaccine submissions ended up being more than double what we originally anticipated because each employee averaged more than 2 submissions each. For instance, they might have submitted, had to be declined, and then resubmitted.*
- Promptly placed our program on hold as soon as the injunction was issued and undid everything that was done. Ready to redo it again if the courts reinstate the mandate.

Despite COVID interruptions, **daily operations** still had to go on:

- Processed over 13,000 data transactions in SoarHR
- Posted 627 openings in Cornerstone
- Ran 1,608 background checks
- Responded to 1,106 requests for employment verifications
- Presented over 70 training sessions on HR topics
- Implemented or updated 22 policies in the Employee Handbook

Our biggest project for the year was the implementation of the **new compensation program**:

- Every staff position at the University was assigned to a grade
- New compensation guidelines were implemented July 1
- Website, information sessions, and FAQs were developed
- Ongoing management of the program

Throughout the year we always look for opportunities for **process improvement** and continued streamlining processes, for example:

- Creation of a job description writing guide
- Changed the payroll process so that GAs can now be paid in August
- Implemented electronic onboarding between Cornerstone and SoarHR, which allows information to flow from one system to the other avoiding duplicate entry

Though we are busy, we also take time for our own **professional development**, notably:

- Active participation in the local SHRM chapters and the CUPA-HR LA/MS chapter
- Two team members completed the HR certification prep course
- 3 team members are pursuing a Master's degree

And have we mentioned lately about how Forbes named us a **Best Places to Work**? #6 in Mississippi, #1 in Education! We like mentioning that. 😊



2022 HR Plans- What's on deck for this year?

Performance Management (for Staff)

In 2021, we piloted a new performance management program with a group of approximately 10 departments. This new program was a result of extensive research and focus groups with staff and leadership. The pilot has been successful, and our goal is to roll out the new program University-wide in the spring. Information sessions and training will be held and a toolkit will be provided for leaders. The important thing to know is that we are doing away with the traditional performance evaluation- which is backward looking judging- to a more contemporary performance discussion- which is forward looking planning. We are hopeful that we have been successful at removing the dread of these discussions and making them a positive and productive effort instead.

Search Committee Training (for Staff)

We will soon be rolling out new search committee training. Due to the overwhelming volume of searches, the training will be recorded (note that training will be available for faculty search committees as well). HR will expand our support for searches by aiding hiring managers with the planning of the process and serving as a liaison to search committees. We have a staff hiring toolkit in place already, so the focus this year will be on educating everyone on the processes and ensuring they are followed. This will also include desk audits of recent searches to review opportunities for improvement. Hiring (along with turnover and vacancies), especially now in this current job market, is expensive, time consuming and has critical implications to our work environment, so making good decisions and getting it right is a priority.

Electronic PAF

You asked for it and we're working on it. Our business analysts have this as a top priority this year to help us implement an electronic PAF, which will include electronic approvals. Hopefully this will make the process faster and more efficient, but like with everything it will require testing, education, and a learning curve. And sometimes you have to be careful what you wish for because with every pro there can be a con, so we will keep you updated on the progress. We're hopeful!

Online Benefits Orientation

HR will be rolling out a new online benefits orientation that new hires will be able to watch at their convenience, which will mimic live sessions that were held historically. The best part is that these sessions are available to anyone to access so any current employee who wants to educate themselves on a benefit will be able to access the training as well as spouses or others who assist the employee with such choices. Remember, we have already converted new leader orientation to an online format- all new leaders are asked to view the training, but it too is available to all employees so anyone with interest can access it [here](#).

More to come on all of these exciting ventures and more!

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.

To the Top- Together