

## SUMMARY AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF EMPLOYEE BENEFITS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

**Benefit Eligibility.** Eligibility for the accrual of vacation, sick leave, holiday pay, the participation in group insurance plans, the state's contribution toward insurance premiums, retirement plans, etc., depends upon an employee's qualification as a regular employee.

**Regular Employees.** A regular employee is defined as one who is budgeted by name for 50 percent or more time for at least 4½ months in a fiscal year. Regular employees budgeted for at least 20 hours per week, but less than 30 hours, receive some benefits described in this summary on a pro-rated basis.

**Wage Employees and Student Employees.** Irregular employees (wage employees and student employees) do not receive holiday pay or accrue vacation and sick leave; they are also not eligible for insurance coverages or retirement programs.

**Graduate Assistants.** Graduate students on assistantships who work 20 hours per week or more for at least 4½ months in a fiscal year or longer are eligible for insurance options. Graduate assistants do not receive holiday pay nor do they accrue vacation or sick leave.

**Paydays.** Paychecks for employees paid by the hour are distributed every 2 weeks, usually every other Friday. All hourly paid employees must complete a time sheet reflecting the hours worked, in TimeTraq, in order to receive a paycheck. Those employees paid monthly, including graduate assistants, usually receive their paychecks on the first working day of the month, unless a state holiday falls on that day.

**Direct Deposit.** Texas A&M AgriLife employees are strongly encouraged to have their payroll amounts deposited directly in any financial institution that is a member of the Automated Clearing House Network. Direct Deposit is the primary method of salary distribution for the Texas A&M AgriLife. Employees may enroll at <http://sso.tamu.edu>.

**Basic Insurance Coverage.** Regular employees and graduate assistants have the opportunity to enroll in health care and optional insurance coverages on their date of hire. The state contribution toward health coverage begins on the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month following the 60<sup>th</sup> day of employment. Enrollment in a health insurance plan includes \$7,500 Basic Life insurance and \$5000 Accidental Death & Dismemberment. Employees and graduate assistants who do not elect a health insurance plan during their first 60 days of employment will be

automatically enrolled in the A&M Care health plan on their state contribution eligibility date.

If employees do not enroll in A&M System health coverage, but certify they have other health coverage, they may use one-half of the employee-only state contribution to pay for Alternate Basic Life, Accidental Death & Dismemberment, Dental, Vision and/or Long-Term Disability Insurance.

**60 Days to Elect Optional Group Insurance Coverages.** Regular employees and graduate assistants may elect Optional Life, Dependent Life, Accidental Death & Dismemberment, Long-Term Disability, Dental coverage and Vision coverage within 60 days of the date of employment. Dependents may be enrolled in dependent coverages during the first 60 days of employment. After the initial enrollment period, changes to an employee's group insurance may be made within 60 days of a Change in Status or during an Annual Enrollment period.

**Pretaxing Health/Dental Premiums.** Regular employees and graduate assistants may elect to pay group health care, dental, and AD&D premiums through payroll deduction with pre-tax dollars.

**Group Health, Dental, and Vision Coverage Continuation Option (COBRA).** Employees have 60 days from the date of termination to elect to continue group coverage with The Texas A&M University System by submitting a properly completed enrollment form and paying the premium in a timely manner.

**Sick Leave.** Regular employees begin to earn sick leave on the first day of employment. Full-time employees earn 8 hours per month and sick leave accumulates without a maximum. There is no waiting period before sick leave becomes available for use. Sick leave may only be used for actual illness, injury or doctor's appointment as described in System Regulation 31.03.02 Sick Leave.

An employee who is the parent of a child who is a student attending a grade from prekindergarten through 12th grade may use up to eight hours of sick leave each fiscal year to attend educational activities of his or her children. A parent in this section means a person standing in parental relation. Educational activity means a school-sponsored activity, including a parent-teacher conference, tutoring, a volunteer program, a field trip, a classroom program, a school committee meeting, an academic competition, and an athletic, music or theater program.

The employee must provide reasonable advance notice of need for this leave.

An employee who transfers directly from another state agency to the Texas A&M University System (TAMUS) is given credit for unused vacation and sick leave, provided there is no break in service. An employee who separated from Texas state employment within the past 12 months may request that their unused sick leave balance be restored. Independent school districts, junior colleges, or community colleges are not considered state employers for leave or longevity purposes. The employee is responsible for providing state service verification from each prior state employer to AgriLife Human Resources/Payroll.

An employee who is reemployed by the same TAMUS component with a break in service of at least 30 days but less than 12 months will have their unused sick leave balance restored.

**Vacation.** Regular employees begin to earn vacation on the first day of employment. An employee must have 6 full, continuous months of state employment before they become eligible to use vacation leave. This requirement must only be met once. An employee with 6 continuous months of prior state employment becomes eligible to use accrued vacation once authorized verification of the state service is received in AgriLife Human Resources/Payroll.

Vacation accrual and carry forward rates are based on length of state service. Full-time employees accrue and carry forward vacation according to the schedule below. You will be paid for unused vacation in a lump sum when your employment ends unless you transfer without a break in service to another Texas state agency. *(If you are an employee of Texas AgriLife Extension Service, County Programs, your lump sum vacation payout is based only on the salary paid by the State. County paid funds cannot be taken into consideration when determining the amount of the lump sum.)* With your employer's approval, you may request to remain on the payroll to exhaust accrued vacation.

<b>Employees With Total Years State Employment of:</b>	<b>Hours Accrued Per Month</b>	<b>Maximum Hours Carried Forward From One Fiscal Year to the Next</b>
Less than 2	8	180
At least 2 but less than 5	9	244
At least 5 but less than 10	10	268
At least 10 but less than 15	11	292
At least 15 but less than 20	13	340
At least 20 but less than 25	15	388
At least 25 but less than 30	17	436
At least 30 but less than 35	19	484
35 or more	21	532

**Holidays.** The number of legal holidays is established by the State Legislature each biennium. The Texas A&M University System then designates the time for System holidays. AgriLife holiday schedules vary according to location. Current holiday schedules for many AgriLife units can be found at:

<http://agrilifeas.tamu.edu/hr/benefits-retirement/holiday-schedules/>

County-based employees follow the holiday schedule for the county where their office is located. Ask your supervisor which holiday schedule you should follow.

**Family and Medical Leave/Parental Leave.** Regular employees with 12 months of state service (does not need to be continuous) and 1,250 hours worked within the past 12 months are eligible for Family and Medical Leave (FMLA) coverage for leave due to certain life events. FMLA provides up to 12 weeks of job protection and continuation of benefits coverages. An employee, including a student or wage employee, who is not eligible for FMLA leave is entitled to a parental leave of absence, not to exceed 12 weeks, for the birth of a natural child or the adoption or foster care placement of a child younger than three years. Parental leave provides up to 12 weeks of job protection only. Contact the AgriLife Human Resources office for more information.

**Sick Leave Pool.** The AgriLife Sick Leave Pool is a benefit available due to the generosity of AgriLife employees who have donated their own earned leave. Sick Leave Pool hours are available for a catastrophic illness or injury which causes the employee: (1) to exhaust all available paid leave and (2) to miss more than 80 hours of work due to the catastrophic condition. For part-time employees, the requirement of 80 hours is proportional to their percent effort (50% effort = 40 hours missed work). Employees are encouraged to maintain earned sick and vacation leave balances totaling at least 80 hours as a cushion in case a catastrophic condition occurs.

**Longevity Pay.** Regular, full-time employees, except those paid for teaching academic courses or from line-item faculty salaries, are eligible to receive longevity pay after completing 2 years of state service. Longevity pay is \$20 per month for each 2 years of state service completed, up to 42 years of service. Most working retirees are ineligible for longevity pay.

**Current Address.** Employees may update their home and/or mailing address and phone number via HRConnect, <http://sso.tamus.edu>

**Notification of Illness.** When an employee must be absent from work because of an unforeseen personal illness or that of an immediate family member, the supervisor should be notified as soon as practical. Upon return to duty, employees must enter missed time in LeaveTraQ at <http://sso.tamus.edu>. Employees must also notify their supervisors in a timely manner if they are going to be unduly late for work or absent for reasons other than illness.

**Policies, Regulations and Rules.** Board policies, System regulations and Agency rules and procedures are available at:

<http://agrillifeas.tamu.edu/rules-procedures/index.php>

**Social Security.** The state currently matches the employee Social Security contributions at a rate of 6.2% on the first \$113,700 in earnings (OASI portion) and 1.45% on all earnings (OAHI portion). These rates are subject to change each calendar year.

**Unemployment Compensation Insurance (UCI).** The state pays UCI on behalf of the employee at the rate of .10% of the total salary.

**Workers' Compensation Insurance.**

Notice is hereby given to all persons employed in the service of and on the payroll of the institutions and agencies under the direction and governance of the Board of Regents of The Texas A&M University System that Workers' Compensation Insurance coverage is provided in accordance with Chapter 502 of the Texas Labor Code.

I hereby acknowledge receipt of this notice that Workers' Compensation Insurance has been provided as above stated.

**Retirement.** All regular budgeted employees are required to participate in either the Teacher Retirement System (TRS) or Optional Retirement System (ORP). (Graduate assistants and wage employees do not participate in the retirement system.) The employee's contribution to either

plan is tax-deferred and is required as a condition of state employment.

**TRS:** Regular employees are required to participate in the TRS on their 1<sup>st</sup> day of employment unless they are eligible for ORP and enroll. Each member of TRS is required to deposit 7.2 percent of gross pay. The A&M System makes a 6.8 percent contribution to the member's account. TRS provides three basic benefits to participants--survivor and death benefits, disability benefits, and retirement benefits.

**ORP:** Full-time employees eligible for ORP have 90 days from their hire date to elect to participate in this program. Employees not exercising the one-time option to enroll in ORP during this 90-day period are required to remain in TRS thereafter. Each member of ORP is required to deposit 6.65 percent of gross pay. The A&M System makes a 6.6% percent contribution to the member's account. If eligible for ORP, employees are provided ORP information. If there are questions concerning eligibility, contact the Human Resources office at (979) 845-2423.

**Supplemental Retirement.** I acknowledge that I have received or have electronic access to the "Overview of the TDA Program and Texa\$aver DCP" brochure and additional information on the Texa\$aver Deferred Compensation Plan at:

<http://tamus.edu/offices/benefits/retirement>

Any employee who wishes to place part of their pay in a supplemental retirement program may also obtain information regarding the Tax Deferred Account (TDA) and Texa\$aver Deferred Compensation Program (DCP) from the Payroll Office at (979) 845-2423.

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