The President said in his recent email regarding budget cuts that these are "unprecedentedly difficult times." I couldn’t have said that better myself. In my six years here at MSU, I have not had to work through layoffs and positions eliminations in the way that we are right now. The impact of these budget reductions is significant – primarily for those who will find themselves without employment.

We are fortunate during times such as these to have great relationships with all of our bargaining units so that we can work collaboratively through these challenges. Through both our office here in Human Resources and the various union stewards, people are getting good support in terms of options and planning.

What is troubling me, however, is the amount of gossip and rumor-spreading around what may or may not happen to folks. While there are lots of uncertainties and I recognize that people need to process through these difficult issues, I would simply remind people to do so respectfully. It is incredibly hurtful to folks who may end up without jobs to hear others speculate about these issues.

This is a time for all of us to come together as a campus to support those who may be leaving, and to work together to insure that we can continue to provide the best services possible to our students.

Lori Lamb

Deans and supervisors, please review the “Separating from MSU” information in the Supervisor’s Toolkit on the Human Resources website for procedures and a checklist to review with departing faculty and staff, www.mnsu.edu/humanres/supertool/

Employees leaving the university, please schedule a meeting with Therese Mullins to get payroll and benefits termination information. Contact Therese at 389-6942 or therese.mullins@mnsu.edu.

A federal subsidy for COBRA premiums is now available for people whose insurance ends due to involuntary termination from employment. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, signed into law in February, allows individuals to continue insurance coverage (COBRA) at a reduced rate of 35 percent of the COBRA premium.

This subsidy applies to employees whose employment is involuntarily terminated between September 1, 2008, and December 31, 2009. Their covered spouse and dependents also have the option to continue coverage at the reduced rate. Certain limitations and restrictions apply.

Information about eligibility and administration of the federal COBRA subsidy is posted on the Human Resources website, http://www.mnsu.edu/humanres/. Minnesota Management & Budget’s State Employee Group Insurance Program (MMB-SEGIP) will be administering the subsidy program for state employees. Please direct questions to SEGIP at (651) 355-0100.
TUITION WAIVER

One of the benefits of being an employee of the Minnesota State Colleges & University (MnSCU) system is that you may be eligible for tuition waiver benefits. The number of credits you may be able to waive depends on your employment status and applicable collective bargaining agreement or personnel plan. As part of the benefit, please note that due to current tax laws, your tuition waiver benefits may be subject to taxation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person Using Waiver</th>
<th>Undergraduate Credits</th>
<th>Graduate Credits (including the applied doctoral program)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employee</td>
<td>Not Taxable</td>
<td>Not Taxable up to $5,250 limit (Taxable if exceeds $5,250)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse</td>
<td>Not Taxable</td>
<td>Taxable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependent(s) Under 24 years of age*</td>
<td>Not Taxable</td>
<td>Taxable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependent(s) 24 years of age and older*</td>
<td>Taxable</td>
<td>Taxable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependent(s) who are totally &amp; permanently disabled**</td>
<td>Not Taxable</td>
<td>Not Taxable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The current effective tax rates are 25.00% federal, 6.25% state and 7.65% social security. Each semester, Human Resources will provide notification of your taxable benefit and the option of having such taxes taken out of one or multiple paychecks.

For a more detailed overview of Tuition Waiver benefits, please go to: [http://www.mnsu.edu/humanres/tuitionwaiver.html](http://www.mnsu.edu/humanres/tuitionwaiver.html).

If you have any other questions regarding tuition waivers and/or the taxation of tuition waivers, please contact JoAnn Scholtz in Human Resources at 507-389-2464.

* A dependent is considered 24 years or older if their 24th birthday occurs any time during the calendar year in which the tuition waiver is being used.

** The Internal Revenue Service defines "permanently & totally disabled" in IRS Code Section 22(e)(3): An individual is permanently and totally disabled if he is unable to engage in any substantial gainful activity by reason of any medically determinable physical or mental impairment which can be expected to result in death or which has lasted or can be expected to last for a continuous period of not less than 12 months.

STUDENT INSURANCE ELIGIBILITY

With graduation season rolling around, this is a good time to remind everyone about insurance eligibility for students. A child is an eligible dependent if that child is:

1. Unmarried, and
2. Under age 19 or a full-time student under age 25; or
3. Unable to work or attend school full time due to medical or disability reasons

There is a very good article in the April 2009 SEGIP Report that explains more about student eligibility and situations that can affect their eligibility status. The SEGIP Report is available on the HR website, the MMB Insurance & Wellness website, and the Announcements section of the Employee Self-Service website.

If your child is no longer an eligible dependent, you must drop the child from your insurance. Forms are available from Human Resources. The child will have the option to continue coverage under COBRA within 60 days of loss of eligibility. Call Therese at 389-6942 or Wendy at 389-2015 for assistance.

NEW INSURANCE ENROLLMENT EVENTS

Two new special insurance enrollment periods have been added to the State Employee Group Insurance Program (SEGIP). As of April 1, 2009, employees and their insurance eligible dependents have a 60 day special enrollment period upon:

1. Termination of coverage under Medicaid or a CHIP* due to loss of eligibility (termination of coverage event does not include failure to pay premiums); or
2. Becoming eligible for premium assistance subsidy from a state** under Medicaid or a CHIP.

An employee wishing to change their insurance coverage because of either of these two special events must notify SEGIP within 60 days of the event. The phone number for SEGIP is (651) 355-0100.

* CHIP or CHIPRA is the Children’s Health Insurance Program Reauthorization. Previously it was called SCHIP (State Children’s Health Insurance Program).

** SEGIP does not currently know of any available premium assistance program or subsidy of this type. They will provide information as it becomes available.

NEW I-9 EFFECTIVE APRIL 3, 2009

Effective April 3, 2009 employers are required to use the revised Form I-9 created by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). This form must be used for all new hires and to reverify any employee with expiring employment authorization. The new form is posted on the HR website at [www.mnsu.edu/humanres/forms/i-9.pdf](http://www.mnsu.edu/humanres/forms/i-9.pdf)
BENEFITS SPOTLIGHT

Employees will frequently comment that they have never heard about a particular benefit, or they had heard of it but didn’t understand it, or they weren’t sure if it was a benefit they could have. We have so many benefit plans that it can be hard to understand and keep track of everything. To make it even more confusing, it turns into alphabet soup when programs are referred to by their initials – HRA, MDEA, AD&D, LTC, TRA, MSRS, TIAA-CREF, TSA…and the list goes on!

To shed a little light on the subject, each issue of the Human Resources Newsletter will have a “Benefits Spotlight” featuring one of our employee benefits. The “Spotlight” will include:

- what it is - a brief description of the benefit program
- who is eligible
- when and how to enroll or apply
- where to find more information

The featured benefit in this issue is the Travel Assistance program. With summer – and possibly vacations or other travel – just around the corner, it seems like a timely topic. If there is an employee benefit program you would like spotlighted, please let me know. Therese Mullins, 389-6942, therese.mullins@mnsu.edu

Where can you find more information?
A brochure explains more about the Travel Assistance program and includes a cut-out wallet card for easy reference. You can get the brochure and other information or assistance at:

- web1.lifebenefits.com/grppd/MN006077/StateMinn1.do, click on Travel Assistance
- www.lifebenefits.com/travelassistance, the MN Life/Europ Assistance website
- 1-877-708-6992 in US and Canada

BENEFITS SPOTLIGHT

Travel Assistance

What is it?
The Travel Assistance program became available in the fall, 2008. It provides help with emergencies and problems when you or your eligible dependents are traveling more than 100 miles from home. Students who are living more than 100 miles from home are covered at school. Services are provided by Europ Assistance USA (EA). Key services include:

- Locating and accessing medical and dental care and facilities (you should contact your health or dental insurance plan regarding out-of-network coverage & costs)
- Arranging for medication and eyeglass replacement
- Arranging and paying for medical evacuation or returning mortal remains
- Locating lost or stolen items
- Providing interpreters or relaying messages to family and friends

Who is eligible?
- Any employee who is actively employed at least 50% time in an insurance-eligible position and is enrolled in Basic and/or Optional Life insurance (you are automatically enrolled in Basic Life if you are 50% time or more and eligible for insurance)
- The employee’s spouse
- Children who are the employee’s eligible dependents (unmarried, under age 19 or a full-time student under age 25, or disabled dependents and dependent grandchildren as defined by the group life insurance plan)

When and how do you enroll or apply?
You do not need to enroll. Services may be accessed at any time either online or via a toll-free number. There is no cost to access EA’s services. You are responsible for the cost of medical and dental care, eyeglasses, prescriptions, translation services, fund transfer fees, attorney’s fees and so on. You should contact your health, dental, or prescription carrier to determine whether and how claims will be covered under your insurance plans.