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University of California to consolidate shared services at UC Riverside

All campuses to transition to new center by October 2014

Written by EINAT GILBOA

Staff Writer

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The University of California (UC) has announced that it will be consolidating shared services, including routine payroll, benefits, leave management and workforce administration, at UC Riverside as part of its Working Smarter Initiative. Each campus currently operates these functions independently.

This new center called UCPATH (Payroll, Academic, Personnel, Timekeeping and HR), will begin by serving five locations in July 2013: UCLA, UCLA Medical Center, UC Santa Cruz, UC Merced and UC Office of the President (UCOP). All campuses will make the switch by October 2014 — stated the press release from UCOP.

With the new center will come a new payroll and human resources information system to replace the previous one, now 30 years old.

“Right now about 6,000 people in the system have some part of the payroll and benefits function as part of their job and they are operating with about 11 different technology systems,” said Kris Lovekin, Director of Media Relations at UC Riverside, in e-mail. “Instead we will have one center of about 600 employees and one technology system.”

The new system is supposed to increase efficiency and allow UC to more effectively conduct and plan for its workforce needs — stated the website of the UC Working Smarter Initiative.

Merging the system will mean the transfer of individuals who currently work in some aspect of human resources on the campus level. UC Riverside accessibility to the majority of the other UC campuses made it the best choice for the merge — according to the press release.

“The main reason is its proximity to a number of other UC campuses, giving it the ability to attract a wide pool of UC talent, providing job opportunities for UC employees,” said Brooke Converse, media specialist for UCOP, in an e-mail.

Other reasons Converse mentioned were labor costs, availability and condition of shared service center space, local housing, cost of living, public transportation and other quality-of-life considerations, as well as local buy-in and support.

Six other campuses submitted proposals to host the new center, including UC Davis. Workers of shared services at UC Davis now face a somewhat uncertain future.

“At the moment, the details behind the work associated with payroll and HR transactional activities in the UC Path project do not have enough specificity to fully understand what work will remain on campus in local shared services, departments or central units,” said Karen Hull, Associate Vice Chancellor of Human Resources at UC Davis. “This clarity will be forthcoming over the next several months.”

The impact of UCPATH on UC Davis workers and shared services will remain unclear until Davis migrates to UCPATH. It has yet to be decided if UC Davis will migrate during Phase II or III of implementation, set to take place in 2013 and 2014, respectively.

That being said, the UC press release stated UC would be doing its best to keep layoffs to a minimum.

“Our goal is to minimize involuntary layoffs through attrition, re-training and re-aligning of

responsibilities,” said UC Executive Vice President Nathan Bostrom in the press release.

Lovekin said the future of shared services workers could take multiple paths though not all necessarily that of UCPath.

“Some people will retire, some will be retrained and take on other duties on their own campuses,” Lovekin said in the e-mail. “Some will decide to relocate to the Riverside area.”

Whatever happens, one thing is for sure: UC staff and faculty who utilize shared services will be receiving less face time.

“For staff and faculty who use the services there will be more phone and web contact for certain things and less face-to-face contact,” Lovekin said in the e-mail.

But for students, Lovekin added, the impact will probably be minimal.

“I’m not sure that students will notice much difference,” Lovekin added in the e-mail. “But it’s always good news if the administration can do something that saves money that can be ploughed back into the classroom.”

EINAT GILBOA can be reached city@theaggie.org.



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