The HR Liaison Network Summer Meeting concluded the year-long theme ‘Interconnectivity – Connecting with Staff, Management and the Profession’ on June 15, 2011. The network meetings, held three times each academic year, are an opportunity for HR Liaison Coordinators and HR Liaisons to meet, be recognized, and receive the latest information on human resources issues affecting the work liaisons do in the departments.

The June meeting was well attended with more than 70 liaisons in the morning session and nearly 100 in the afternoon. A few years ago, HR began offering the meetings at two separate times as a convenience to liaisons who have very full schedules already. The meeting’s program included speakers from the A&M System, other university offices, and within Human Resources.

### SUMMARY

**Working with Individuals with Disabilities**

Dr. Kristie Orr presented on the services available to individuals who need accommodations for a disability. She also discussed federal requirements for employees with disabilities and stressed the importance of treating all employees the same so not to discriminate against those with disabilities should they ask for accommodations.

**Professional Development with EOD**

Continuing our emphasis on adult learning and professional development, Ms. Anne Mayer, discussed the value of EOD workshops and encouraged liaisons to take advantage of several programs specifically geared towards professionalism in the workplace, technology skills, and other personal improvement courses. She also promoted the monthly Coffee Conversations series hosted by EOD, with June’s program being “Don’t be caught wearing orange! Fraud, Theft & other Misconduct in the Texas A&M University System” and the monthly TAMU NEW (New Employee Welcome) orientation program. Ms. Mayer encouraged liaisons to participate in one of the new employee orientation half-day sessions so they can then promote its use to supervisors within their departments.

**System Benefits Administration & Annual Enrollment Update**

With the annual enrollment period fast approaching, and changes that will be in place on the plan offerings effective September 1, much of the meeting focused on insurance benefits for A&M employees. First, Ms. Gerescher outlined the work her office manages each year to bid and contract with providers for benefits programs available to all 11 universities, seven agencies and a health science center in the A&M System. Ms. Tobola, followed up with details about next year’s medical plans, premiums and out of pockets costs, as well as the dental, vision and life insurance plans to be rolled out. Both Ms. Gerescher and Ms. Tobola indicated that in light of the continuing increases in medical and prescription costs and the increasing number of plan participants to be covered, the A&M System plans were designed to minimize the negative impact on covered individuals as much as possible. Changes to deductibles or maximums are slowly shifting to be more in-line with private industry, however the A&M plans continue to be a great value and significantly better than most. Ms. Tobola stressed the value of liaisons being there on-site in their departments to assist employees with general...
questions about annual enrollment or using the iBenefits system, while recognizing liaisons are not expected to be experts about insurance coverage which is a very complex topic. Liaisons should feel comfortable with directing employees with specific questions to their Benefits Services rep. Ms. Tobola indicated several annual enrollment meetings, open to all employees and retirees, are scheduled during July to provide information on the enrollment process and plans, with the schedule and location available online here.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>System Employee Benefits Advisory Committee Representative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Jane Schneider, who was recently voted as the university's System Employee Benefits Advisory Committee (SEBAC) representative, was introduced and spoke to the liaisons about her role and desire to hear from employees so she can be an even more effective representative on their behalf. She asked liaisons to spread the word, offered her email and indicated a web blog is under development to help her gather feedback from employees and retirees.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A new year of valuable information for liaisons from Human Resources staff, and other subject matter experts across campus, is in development and will kick off October 5 at next Fall HR Liaison Network meeting. Watch for announcements in future editions of the weekly HR Liaison Network News or online at employees.tamu.edu.