Employees may pay more for retirement

Arizona could deduct 3 percent more of workers’ salaries to finance state retirement program

BY STEPHANIE SCHWARTZ
Staff Writer

More than 6,000 state staff members may be losing up to 3 percent more of their paychecks to retirement contributions starting July 1, if projections from the state agency in charge of setting retirement withholdings for those on state-based plans materialize.

The deductions for retirement are increasing for 184,000 state employees across Arizona due to losses in the stock market, the Arizona State Retirement System stated in mid-September.

The larger deductions will also go toward covering last year’s increase of retirement benefits for those who were employed at UA for at least 10 years and who have been retired for five years.

State employees, including all classified staff at the UA and appointed staff, choosing to use the state’s program currently pay 2.49 percent of their salaries for retirement. The question — which they have yet to answer — is just exactly how much.

The “best guess estimates,” are available now, but the official number is expected in November, according to the ASRS.

About 45 percent of UA employees are classified staff, said Gordan Groat, vice president of the human resources department.

Aside from the 6,000 classified staff at the UA, any appointed staffers who choose to use the state’s retirement program will also have more money deducted from their paychecks starting July 1.

Of the 10,000 UA employees who are eligible for the state’s retirement program, 4,000 are appointed staff and have the option of choosing between the state’s program and an optional retirement plan with four different providers, said Marissa Chatals, director of human resources and benefits.

The human resources department has not received any phone calls or concerns about the proposed increase, said Travis Vincent, an administrative assistant in human resources.

“They’re interested in Americans, and I’m interested in them.”

Hannah McLean graduated from UA last semester, and while she isn’t using her grant to work on a dissertation, she thought it would be a good way to spend her time between college and graduate school.

McLean has been in the Netherlands since mid-August and will spend the next seven months digging through legal archives for records on euthanasia to study physician-assisted suicide.

Warder said that other Fulbright recipients are working on projects that involve sitting through Belgian archives for medieval church records and utilizing satellite imagery to help African farmers decide when to plant their crops.

Lack of funds delays $2.5M Alumni Plaza construction

BY JAMES KELLEY
Staff Writer

Construction of the Alumni Plaza has been pushed back a year due to shortages of donations for construction and the time it took to redesign the area south of the Administration building to include the as- discussed cactus garden.

Construction on the $2.5 million plaza is now set to start in December 2003, rather than this December, said Mark Novak, landscape architect for campus and facilities planning.

Novak, whose department is managing the project for the UA and the Alumni Association, said the August decision to delay the plaza was intended to give the association more time to raise funds to build the plaza.

The delay is simply to give us time to work through the design process,” said Kay Brown, who is on the association’s board of directors.

“The design wasn’t what we wanted and we needed more time after incorporating the cactus garden,” said Jay Rechlin, associate director of the association. “Any University of Arizona project must have 85 percent of the funding in the bank and we didn’t have that yet.”

There was an outcry from members of the UA community when the association made its original proposal to move the Joseph Wood Krutch cactus garden to its original location near Old Main last year to make room for the plaza.

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