FAQs Regarding Changes for Faculty in the College of Agriculture & Life Sciences – Effective September 1, 2019

Key Points:

- Faculty in the College of Agriculture & Life Sciences will not accrue vacation.
- Faculty may cover their salary from extramural funds for up to 11.5 months of salary annually.
- Faculty who have a 12-month appointment will have their salary and term compressed to 11 months. This does not apply to faculty whose appointment is less than 12 months and had additional months of funding to total 12.
- Faculty who have an appointment of less than 12 months, including those who had additional months of funding to total 12 months, will maintain their base appointment as stated in the annual appointment letter.

What will happen to the faculty member’s vacation leave balance?
The faculty member will be paid for the value of the leave based on the balance as of August 31, 2019. Payouts will be calculated using the salary rate that was in effect on the last day a faculty member accrued vacation. The payment will be made in January 2020 and will be less any applicable taxes. System Regulation 31.03.01 Vacation, http://policies.tamus.edu/31-03-01.pdf, Section 7 describes computation of the lump sum payment.

Are there ways to mitigate the tax impacts of lump sum payments for vacation balances?
Faculty may defer the lump sum payment by requesting a portion or all to be put in a Tax Deferred Account (TDA) or Texa$aver Deferred Compensation Plan (DCP). Please ensure you have an account open with one or both plans before requesting the deferral. Information is available at: http://www.tamus.edu/business/benefits-administration/retirement-programs/tda-and-dcp-voluntary-programs/ Requests must be submitted to AgriLife Payroll no later than November 30, 2019.

Can a faculty member be employed for more than their term of appointment?
Yes, a faculty member can add an additional job to their 9/10/11 month appointment such that the total is 11.5 months or less. The summer appointment, funded by extramural sources, will be entered as an additional job in Workday.

Will faculty in less than 12-month appointments who do not accrue vacation have any personal leave time?
Please see the information on the Dean of Faculties website: https://dof.tamu.edu/dof/media/PITO-DOF/Documents/Faculty-Members-Personal-Time-Off-DEC-17.pdf. This document is currently being revised by the DOF and will be updated in this FAQ as soon as the information is available.
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Do faculty members with less than 12-month appointments continue to earn Sick Leave?
Yes, a faculty member who is budgeted by name for 50 percent or more time for at least 4 ½ months is eligible to accrue and use sick leave during the period of appointment. However, they cannot access sick leave during periods of non-appointment, i.e. June – August for 9-month appointments.

Can a faculty member spread his/her salary over 12 months?
Employees who are on less than 12-month appointments typically receive paychecks consistent with their appointment (i.e. a 9-month employee receives 9 paychecks). There already is a provision for spreading payments for a less than 12-month appointment over 12 months. It should be noted that electing to receive a 9-month salary over 12 months would not make faculty eligible for vacation leave nor change the way insurances and retirement are handled. The annual amount of insurance premiums for less than 12-month appointments will still be deducted over 9 months (September – May). During periods when an employee is not on the payroll, retirement contributions are not made to TRS or ORP.

Can faculty access the department’s facilities during the period of non-appointment?
Yes

Can faculty travel on business during periods of non-appointment?
Yes, as long as there is an expectation that the faculty member will return to the payroll the month following their period of non-appointment. Such travel should be processed in the same manner as travel during months of appointment.

Will faculty be covered by Workers Compensation Insurance during periods of non-appointment?
Faculty members are covered for workers compensation insurance when they are in the course and scope of employment furthering the affairs of their employer. There are times when a 9-month faculty member may have activities to attend to during the 3 months they are not employed. If an injury occurs during that period, the TAMUS workers compensation group will evaluate and make a determination regarding whether the work was in the course and scope of employment and consider that as a factor when determining eligibility for WCI benefits.

How does working less than 12 months affect retirement?
TRS and ORP service credit is calculated using TRS criteria. To earn one year of TRS or ORP service credit, an employee must work at least 50% effort and at least 90 days or a full semester during a fiscal year. A faculty member with a 9, 10 or 11-month appointment will earn a year of service credit when they work a full semester in a fiscal year, just as they did when working 12 months. During periods when an employee is not on the payroll, contributions are not made to TRS or ORP.
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Are faculty eligible for insurance benefits during the summer months?
Typically, benefit eligibility only continues through the last day of the month an employee actively worked. However, System Regulation 31.02.02 does have a provision for employees who are scheduled to work less than 12 months to allow benefit eligibility during the time they don't work (summer period) provided certain conditions are met. These conditions include:

- You are a regular, benefits-eligible employee scheduled to work less than 12 months who satisfied that appointment, AND
- You are expected to continue employment in a benefit-eligible position the following fiscal year (Fall term)

If you meet the above two conditions, then you are eligible to participate in the insurance plans and will maintain the employer contribution towards benefit premiums. Your eligibility would change at the point in which the expectation to return in the Fall is no longer applicable.

The annual amount of insurance premiums will be deducted over 9 months (September – May) and faculty will receive the state contribution toward their insurance for all 12 months.