



## Reduction in Workforce Manager Script & FAQs

Office of Human Resources, Employee and Labor Relations Department – 2020

## Communicating a Reduction in Workforce (RIF) – What to Say

Employee notification meetings should be conducted by the employee's immediate supervisor or the unit supervisor. Just as you need to prepare for a hiring interview, you need to get ready for a RIF meeting. Know what you want to say before you meet. Contact HR by phone at ext. 6195, ext. 5146, or by email at [LaborRelations@uakron.edu](mailto:LaborRelations@uakron.edu) prior to the meeting, should you have any questions and/or concerns. Below is a guideline for your use during your RIF meeting.

1. **Scheduling the meeting:** It is best to schedule the meeting as close to the time you will be meeting with the employee as possible, but not more than 48 hours in advance. You may begin holding meetings Wednesday, July 15, 2020, at 3:00 p.m. and should conclude all meetings by 4:30 p.m. on Friday, July 17, 2020. A suggested title for the meeting invite is "Individual Meeting" with the context of "Fiscal year 2021 budget related matters."

As the University is phasing in the physical return to campus, the meeting format should align with the current working arrangement for your unit. (i.e. in-person vs. video conference) In either meeting format, it's essential to be prepared to give the employee your undivided attention during the meeting.

Employees who are part of a collective bargaining unit may request to have a union representative attend as an observer and/or advisor. If a bargaining unit employee requests representation at the meeting, please contact Human Resources (see above) to schedule an additional University representative to attend the meeting.

2. **Conducting the meeting:** After the usual courtesies, get quickly to the point. Begin by notifying the employee that recording of the meeting is prohibited. Then, place the decision within the context of what is going on at the University and make a clear statement about the decision that has been made.

### Example:

***"As you know, (name), the University is facing severe revenue shortfalls due to COVID-19, and every department has been asked to permanently reduce their budgets, including personnel. As a result, your position has been eliminated. Your last day with the University will be (date)."***

The week of July 13, 2020, each supervisor will receive a letter that is to be distributed to each employee who will be involuntarily separated. The letter will contain specific information for each employee, such as separation date, applicable appeal and displacement (bumping) rights.

3. Since you cannot expect the employee to absorb everything at once, it is necessary and courteous to provide some written materials. You will provide a notification letter and the [Resources and FAQs When Leaving the University](#) document to each impacted employee either during or immediately following the meeting. For in-person meetings, the material should be provided at the meeting; for virtual meetings the materials should be emailed to the employee either immediately before or after the meeting. In addition, Human Resources will mail copies of these materials to each employee's home.

### Example:

***I have information to share with you regarding your insurance benefits, unemployment insurance, employee assistance and outplacement services. I know this is difficult news. Before I go any further, I want to see how you are doing. Are you OK?***

If the employee becomes overly emotional, suggest a break, pause and then reconvene when emotions have calmed. If the employee escalates to a level that is threatening in any way, contact UAPD immediately.

Every effort should be made to complete the meeting in one sitting. However, if the employee does not seem able to continue with the meeting, reiterate available resources for EAP and offer to reconvene the meeting at a later time.

**Example:**

***You may take the rest of the day off and we can continue (date) if you like. Please take this time to review the information I have provided. If you need to speak to someone, Impact Solutions, the Employee Assistance Program, offers 24/7 telephonic support. What time would you like to reconvene on (date)?***

4. The Reduction in Workforce meeting may or may not be the best time to discuss a transition plan. It's important to be clear about what is expected of the employee during their notice period. Depending on the circumstance, you may want to discuss these arrangements at a follow-up meeting.

**Examples:**

***"During the transition period I expect (expected duties and responsibilities)."***

-or-

***"We need to discuss the expectations I have for the work you are to perform during the transition period." I will follow up with you on (date) to discuss and/or provide further instructions."***

5. A process for returning University property under remote working conditions has been established and is available [here under the Clearance Form Process tab](#). If your department has not returned to campus by the employee separation date, you will need to assist employees with deciding when to come on campus and retrieve their personal belongings as well as return University property.

**Example:**

***We need to make arrangements for returning University property and collecting your personal belongings. Are you able to meet with me in the office on (date) to take care of this?***

6. Allow the employee to ask questions.

**Examples:**

***"I know this is a lot to take in, is there anything I can do to provide more clarity?"***

***"Please feel free to contact me or HR if you have any questions that arise after our meeting."***

7. Your involvement should not end with the termination meeting. Be sensitive also to employees who are not involuntarily separated. Once you have conducted all of your involuntary separation meetings, efforts should be made to inform your remaining employees that the involuntary separation notices are complete. Communicate to these co-workers the job abolishment decisions and provide a process and time for them to discuss their feelings. The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is available to provide services to the teammates of the affected employee(s) as well. You may want to refer them to the EAP or consider having an EAP counselor in to facilitate a conversation with your team.

#### **Additional Considerations:**

- Stay within your script and remain calm. Do not allow the conversation to deviate away from the primary topic.
- Do not engage in arguments with the employee or seek to provide unnecessary justification for this action.
- Don't blame or criticize others for the decision. This is not a time to place blame on anyone.
- Be sensitive to the employee's feelings and emotions but be direct and firm. Make sure the employee understands this decision is final.
- Listen to the employee's response. Hearing the employee does not mean you agree with them.
- Show empathy but avoid saying things such as, "I know how you feel." Even if you had been terminated, each person feels things differently and has a right to do so.
- If at any time during this process, you have any concerns about an employee's emotional state, please notify Human Resources or, when applicable, UAPD.

#### **Frequently Asked Questions**

##### **General**

##### **1. Why is my position being eliminated?**

College and department level supervisors, in consultation with University leadership, made position elimination decisions based on business and academic need.

##### **2. Can I appeal the decision?**

Classified employees whose positions are eliminated have the right to appeal the action to the [State Personnel Board of Review](#). Your appeal must be filed or postmarked within ten (10) calendar days after receipt of the notice of elimination letter.

##### **3. Is there a chance I could be brought back to my position if the outlook at UA improves?**

Some bargaining unit positions have a recall period of twelve (12) months. Non-bargaining positions have no recall provision; however, you are not prohibited from applying to future job postings at the University.

##### **4. Can I keep my University email address?**

If you retire from the University, you can keep an email address.

## Benefits Information

### 1. Can an employee file an unemployment claim?

Unemployment benefits are determined by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services. Separated employees may file an unemployment claim by calling the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) Toll Free number 1-877-644-6562 or by registering for unemployment benefits online at <https://unemploymenthelp.ohio.gov/>. Hearing impaired individuals may use the TTY Service Dial Toll Free number: 1-888-642-8203.

For expedited processing of unemployment claims, a mass layoff number will be provided to affected employees as soon as possible. Typically, in cases such as a reduction in workforce, unemployment claims won't be contested.

### 2. What happens to an employee's vacation and sick time?

Hourly non-exempt employees shall be paid for accrued, but unused, vacation hours up to a maximum of that earned in three (3) years upon separation. [University Rule 3359-26-04](#)

Salaried exempt employees shall be paid for accrued but unused vacation hours upon separation, subject to the maximum of one hundred seventy-six hours (176) for twelve (12)-month employees, one hundred sixty-one hours (161) for eleven (11)-month employees, and one hundred forty-six hours (146) for ten (10)-month employees. [University Rule 3359-11-03](#)

Sick leave is only paid out at retirement subject to service requirements and maximums specified in University rules. [University Rule 3359-11-01](#)

### 3. What if an employee has questions regarding the continuation of health benefits?

Both Ohio and federal law provide for insurance continuation after separation. Individuals may continue medical, dental and vision insurance up to eighteen (18) months by enrolling in COBRA continuation of coverage. They will be required to pay monthly premiums to continue this coverage. Enrollment information will be mailed to the home address on file with UA from the University's Cobra vendor. The election must be completed within sixty (60) days from the date of separation from the University. If employees have additional questions, they can contact Benefits Administration at ext. 7090 or [Benefits@uakron.edu](mailto:Benefits@uakron.edu).

### 4. What if an employee wants to withdraw unused funds from his/her Flexible Spending Account (FSA)?

Funds in an FSA may only be used to reimburse eligible expenses (which are those expenses received/incurred through his/her last day of employment). Reimbursement requests for eligible expenses must be made within ninety (90) days of separation. Any funds remaining in the account after the plan deadline must be forfeited, as required by IRS guidelines. If the individual continues his/her coverage with a COBRA election, he/she may be eligible to continue participating in the FSA program.

**5. What if an employee has questions regarding their retirement plan?**

Employees should contact their applicable retirement program.

**State Teachers Retirement System** P: 888-227-7877 | [www.strsoh.org](http://www.strsoh.org)

**School Employees Retirement System** P: 800-878-5853 | [www.ohsers.org](http://www.ohsers.org)

**Ohio Public Employees Retirement System** P: 800-222-7377 | [www.opers.org](http://www.opers.org)

**Alternative Retirement Plan** Provider information can be found in the Retirement Options Booklet posted at [www.uakron.edu/hr/benefits/2020/](http://www.uakron.edu/hr/benefits/2020/)

## Additional Resources

Area of Responsibility	UA Resource	Vendor Contact
<b>COBRA</b> (Medical, Dental, Vision, FSA)	<b>Benefits Administration</b> P: 330-972-7090 E: <a href="mailto:Benefits@uakron.edu">Benefits@uakron.edu</a> <a href="http://www.uakron.edu/hr/benefits/cobra/">www.uakron.edu/hr/benefits/cobra/</a>	<b>Chard Snyder</b> P: 888-993-4646 E: <a href="mailto:Cobra@chard-snyder.com">Cobra@chard-snyder.com</a> <a href="http://www.chard-snyder.com">www.chard-snyder.com</a>
<b>Flexible Spending Accounts</b> (Health/Dependent Care)	<b>Benefits Administration</b> P: 330-972-7090 E: <a href="mailto:Benefits@uakron.edu">Benefits@uakron.edu</a> <a href="http://www.uakron.edu/hr/benefits/2020/">www.uakron.edu/hr/benefits/2020/</a>	<b>Chard Snyder</b> P: 800-982-7715 E: <a href="mailto:askpenny@chard-snyder.com">askpenny@chard-snyder.com</a> <a href="http://www.chard-snyder.com">www.chard-snyder.com</a>
<b>Life Insurance</b> (Portable/Convertible)	<b>Benefits Administration</b> P: 330-972-7090 E: <a href="mailto:Benefits@uakron.edu">Benefits@uakron.edu</a> <a href="http://www.uakron.edu/hr/benefits/2020/">www.uakron.edu/hr/benefits/2020/</a>	<b>Unum</b> P: 866-220-8460 <a href="http://www.unum.com">www.unum.com</a>
<b>Payroll</b> (Paycheck/W-2)	<b>Payroll Office</b> P: 330-972-7205 E: <a href="mailto:payroll@uakron.edu">payroll@uakron.edu</a> <a href="http://www.uakron.edu/controller/payroll">www.uakron.edu/controller/payroll</a>	
<b>Retirement Plans</b> (STRS/SERS/OPERS/ARP)	<b>Benefits Administration</b> P: 330-972-7090 E: <a href="mailto:Benefits@uakron.edu">Benefits@uakron.edu</a> <a href="http://www.uakron.edu/hr/benefits/2020/">www.uakron.edu/hr/benefits/2020/</a>  <b>Payroll Office</b> P: 330-972-7205 E: <a href="mailto:payroll@uakron.edu">payroll@uakron.edu</a> <a href="http://www.uakron.edu/controler/payroll">www.uakron.edu/controler/payroll</a>	<b>STRS</b> P: 888-227-7877   <a href="http://www.strsoh.org">www.strsoh.org</a>  <b>SERS</b> P: 800-878-5853   <a href="http://www.ohsers.org">www.ohsers.org</a>  <b>OPERS</b> P: 800-222-7377   <a href="http://www.opers.org">www.opers.org</a>  <b>ARP</b> Provider information can be found in the Retirement Options Booklet posted at <a href="http://www.uakron.edu/hr/benefits/2020/">www.uakron.edu/hr/benefits/2020/</a>
<b>Unemployment Compensation</b>		<b>Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS)</b> P: 877-644-6562 TTY: 1-614-387-8408 <a href="https://unemploymenthelp.ohio.gov/">https://unemploymenthelp.ohio.gov/</a>