Building Services Returns All Employees to Regular Schedule Due to State Budget Cuts

Effective July 1, Building Services, a division of the University’s Facilities Services Department, will return to a standard work schedule of five eight-hour days because of state budget cuts.

About 70 employees among the then 181-member staff selected an option to work four 10-hour days beginning in 2008. Building Services provided that option in June 2008 – before the global economic crisis hit – when gas prices exceeded $4 a gallon as part of a University-wide initiative to offer employees flexible work hours to reduce transportation costs.

Building Services has operated with a dual work schedule since then. But when the budget crisis started affecting University operations, Building Services took its cuts just like other campus units. Building Services eliminated 18 positions and took reductions in materials and service contracts.

In January 2011, the University announced cuts in programs, operations and staffing equal to a campus-wide 5 percent permanent state budget reduction (about $26 million) to be effective July 1. Chancellor Holden Thorp has said the University would not make expected additional permanent cuts until the General Assembly resolves the state budget for fiscal 2011-2012 this summer.

In response, Building Services eliminated 13 positions that were being held open to meet the 5 percent permanent cut, bringing the total number of position eliminated to 31. At that level of reductions, the dual work schedules result in inefficiencies, such as too few employees with the range of skills required to meet ongoing maintenance requirements being at work every day.

Returning to the normal five-day, eight-hour work schedule will permit Building Services to retain current staff and improve efficiency as well as to maintain current service levels to campus – an important consideration in avoiding, as much as possible, any additions to the University’s $645 million deferred maintenance backlog.

Two years ago, Building Services started a second shift as a way to cut down on callback and overtime pay during the evenings and to handle preventive maintenance work that could not be performed when offices and other spaces were occupied. That move, coupled with the ongoing staffing changes required by budget cuts, has since reduced the need for daytime staff to work extended hours.

Returning to the standard shifts was also considered in each of the two previous budget cut cycles. That option was not selected because of the impact to employees.
If the University absorbs additional state budget cuts, as expected, Building Services still will be required to reduce service levels and eliminate additional positions.

Building Services staff were notified about this work schedule change in January 2011. Management held a meeting on March 23, 2011, to answer questions from employees about the shift to standard work schedules.

Building Services is part of Facilities Services, which has absorbed a total $7.5 million cut – 25 percent of its previous total budget since the downturn began.

Note: The employees in Building Services who support the Department of Housing work a variety of schedules designed to provide coverage at hours convenient for resident students and the work schedules for these employees are not changing.