

An Annual Enrollment Overhaul at University of Missouri

By Kelley Stuck

The University of Missouri System (UM) is in the midst of a total rewards transformation. From retiree benefits to staff time-off plans to medical insurance and wellness programs, UM is making changes and exploring new avenues to try to improve the personal and financial health of its employees and drive down individual and institutional costs. One of the most challenging, yet also most successful, initiatives of the university's new total rewards strategy has been an overhaul of this year's medical plan annual enrollment process.

Change, Change and More Change

To attempt to reduce the continually rising trend in medical plan costs, UM made three significant changes related to annual enrollment for 2015.

- 1) The university introduced a new Custom Network plan.** In addition to its standing PPO and Healthy Savings high-deductible plans, UM introduced a third medical insurance option. This network of UM-affiliated healthcare providers has allowed the university to lower premium costs for employees and set targets for lower medical costs through an integrated delivery approach.
- 2) Employees were required to actively enroll.** Every benefits-eligible faculty and staff member was required to actively select a medical plan or waive coverage. Active enrollment has not been required by UM in nearly 30 years, and in any given year about 30 percent of employees were making changes to their benefits. The decision to require enrollment had four primary goals — to ensure employees were aware of the significant changes to the medical plans for 2015; to increase employee understanding of the relationship between healthcare choice and cost; to educate employees and support them in selecting a plan that best fits their and their family's needs; and to increase awareness of the quality of the benefits programs offered.

- 3) UM enhanced and expanded its wellness incentive program to increase awareness of and participation in healthy behavior.** Using behavioral economic techniques, part of the wellness incentive was tied to medical plan enrollment. Faculty and staff were asked to pre-commit to the incentive program by opting in to a "wellness pledge" during the enrollment process. The wellness incentive has two tiers, and upon completion of each, employees earn a payout. Tier 1 — "Educate Yourself" — consists of taking the wellness pledge, completing a personal health assessment and getting a biometric health screening (payout for this is \$150). Tier 2 — "Invest in Yourself" — consists of ongoing efforts to take steps toward healthier living. The university provides several tools, resources and programs to help employees engage in healthy behaviors and activities, and the payout upon completion of Tier 2 is \$300.

These changes were widely and repeatedly communicated to the UM community in the months leading up to and during annual enrollment. After the enrollment period, a survey was conducted to gather qualitative feedback, but it was the quantitative results of enrollment that quickly illustrated the success of these changes and efforts.

Goals and Outcomes

UM set four specific goals related to this year's annual enrollment. All were met, exceeded or are on track to be met.

Goal 1 – 50 percent of benefits-eligible employees will participate in a town hall, department or one-on-one educational session leading up to enrollment.

Outcome – 76 percent of employees participated in one of these events.

Goal 2 – 100 percent of benefits-eligible faculty and staff will actively choose a plan or waive coverage.

Outcome – 99.9 percent of faculty and staff actively

chose a plan or waived coverage. Out of nearly 19,000 employees, only 57 defaulted.

Goal 3 – 30 percent of eligible employees will participate in the new Custom Network plan.

Outcome – 47 percent of eligible employees chose this plan, and the resulting cost savings to both employees and the university are expected to be significant.

Goal 4 – 60 percent of eligible faculty and staff will participate in Tier 1 of the wellness incentive.

Outcome – More than 14,000 faculty and staff (75 percent) took the wellness pledge and agreed to participate in the incentive program. That's 2.7 times more employees than completed last year's incentive program.

Success by the Numbers

The 2015 annual enrollment overhaul required a major communication and change management undertaking to a degree that UM had never before attempted. The numbers paint a picture of success:

- Faculty and staff experienced nearly 600,000 communication contacts through the communication campaign.
- More than 12,000 faculty and staff attended the approximately 1,700 meetings offered over a three-month period.
- The website had more than 300,000 unique page views in three and a half months.
- About 6,500 individuals used the medical plan decision making tool.
- More than 6,300 individuals viewed at least one of the two online educational videos.
- The university sent more than 57,000 direct mailings.

- There were more than 4,800 social media views with 11 blog articles, 11 Facebook posts and 18 tweets.
- The university made more than 66,000 contacts to the nearly 19,000 benefits-eligible employees through six automated phone calls.
- The HR Service Center fielded roughly 3,200 calls and e-mails during the two-week annual enrollment period.

Systemwide Buy-In

While these statistics demonstrate concrete success, the organizational engagement and enthusiasm was the real

“win.” Leaders and influencers across the UM System's six institutions helped ensure success by initiating homegrown, organic outreach activities. For example, one department made

The 2015 annual enrollment overhaul required a major communication and change management undertaking to a degree that UM had never before attempted.

T-shirts that said “Be calm and log on” to encourage enrollment among employees. During the two-week enrollment period, the supervisors of a group of service workers requested weekly reports of who had not yet enrolled to be sure that no one in that area was defaulted. The HR information system staff shared daily statistics that indicated enrollment percentage by campus to inspire friendly competition to reach 100 percent enrollment first.

Employee feedback was mostly positive and engaged, expressing appreciation for the university's efforts to be transparent about this year's changes, to provide numerous communication and educational options, and to support the employee's own choice-making. 

Kelley Stuck is associate vice president for human resources at the University of Missouri System. She can be reached at stuckk@umsystem.edu.