Collaboration and Commitment to Safety Lead to Reduced Injuries and Workers’ Compensation Rates

Innovative programs, dedicated leadership and a systemwide commitment to safety have enabled a significant drop in employee injuries.

University statistics indicate a 34% decrease in workplace injuries since 2004, which translates to almost 4,000 fewer employee injuries. The most dramatic decrease occurred between 2004 and 2007, when the University implemented the Be Smart About Safety (BSAS) program. BSAS directs funds to the campuses and medical centers to invest in injury prevention efforts.

In addition, workplace injuries have a direct impact on the University’s Worker’s Compensation rates. The decrease in workplace injuries is reflected in the University’s rates being 42% less than those of the Workers’ Compensation Insurance Rating Bureau (WCIRB). One of the functions of the WCIRB is to annually propose rates which will be utilized by most insurance companies as a basis for setting their rates in California. The University’s actuaries estimate the difference in rates can be translated into savings of more than $250 million over the last five years or more than $50 million annually.

Take a Bow

The results are clear, UC employees are taking safety and health seriously. Across the UC system’s widely differing environments, managers, supervisors, safety coordinators and individual employees are playing a part in reaching this milestone. Our investments in loss prevention will yield favorable returns; the University’s actuaries have determined that the BSAS program has produced an average return on investment of two to one.

We can be proud of the progress we’ve made, especially in these challenging financial times. Even in the face of budget cuts and furloughs, everyone in the UC community has demonstrated their concern for the well being of people and the environment by improving our safety performance.

Employee injury data from 2004 through 2010 tell a meaningful story. Fewer employees—and their families—suffered the painful effects of injury. Departments experienced fewer disruptions because experienced workers stayed on the job, and the University conserved vital funding needed to fulfill its mission of education, research, public service and patient care.

Improving Daily Life

“An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure” has never been truer. Loss prevention through BSAS also improves the daily life of employees. One illustration of this is the waste caddy (shown below), a self-propelled battery operated pushing and tugging device used to move heavy trash bins. This is in contrast to having to push trash bins manually and in many cases up steady inclines which led to pushing and pulling employee injuries. It is expected that this device will not only reduce the number of workers necessary to move trash bins, but also reduce the number of pushing and pulling injuries to employees. Not only maximizing efficiency, but increasing safety and improving the work process for the employee... Working Smarter.

The many collaborative efforts and synergistic relationships at UC are illustrated in this issue’s articles:

- The WorkStrong program was developed with the expertise and partnering support of UC staff in wellness programs, occupational health and recreational sports with the goal of reducing the occurrence of on-the-job injuries, to “Get Healthy and Work Strong.”
- No one has to go it alone. The Environment, Health & Safety Directors Leadership Council leverages capabilities and resources collectively to provide direction on common interests.
- Risk Services works with the Council of Emergency Managers, making strides to improve our campus emergency management programs and strive for a disaster-resistant and disaster-resilient institution.
Get Healthy and Work Strong: We Believe in It!

For individual people and organizations alike, health is not a specific goal to be reached; rather, it is an ongoing process that builds strength and empowers success. In return for a modest investment of consistent attention and effort, the process rewards us with the ability to participate, contribute, profit and enjoy.

Recognizing the value of a systematic, customizable approach to overall health, the University introduced the UC WorkStrong program, an occupational wellness initiative designed to promote recovery and prevent future workplace injuries. The program was developed with the expertise and collaborative support of UC staff in wellness programs, occupational health and recreational sports.

This system-wide program has shown that health improvement can reduce the occurrence of on-the-job injuries.

A similar program was piloted at UC San Francisco where employees were offered a post-rehabilitation fitness program overseen by the campus’ trained fitness staff. Seventy-three employees participated in the program and after following them for four years after they completed the program, only one employee was injured again during that time.

WorkStrong programs will be designed to fit the specific needs of an individual with the goal to improve overall health and wellness. The specific program may include some or all of the following:

- Fitness and Post Rehabilitation training with certified trainers and professionals designed to promote recovery from injury or promote better fitness, as well as coaching on injury prevention strategies, exercises and fitness improvement
- Nutrition and weight management training and consultation with a registered dietician to assess current diet and eating habits and offer suggestions and strategies for a healthy, balanced diet.
- Life balance and stress reduction strategies, modalities and activities to increase awareness about stress levels and managing stress
- Workplace safety assessment and consultation to ensure a comfortable and safe work environment
- Ergonomic assessments to ensure proper workplace setup
- Behavior modification strategies and tools to integrate what you learn into your daily life

The WorkStrong program provides a range of benefits that can touch lives in positive ways at work and at home:

- Provides employees the extra care they may need for full recovery from a workplace injury
- Enables a quicker recovery from an injury or illness because the employee has access to a broader range of resources
- Explores improved lifestyle choices that may contribute to the employee’s better overall health
- Ensures the employee is being proactive about his or her overall health
- Helps prevent injuries from happening again and protects our employees
- Mitigates Workers’ Compensation costs, which helps the University lower the impact of risk and save vital funding for education, research, public service and patient care

As of October 2011, the UC WorkStrong program has been implemented systemwide. We believe better personal health results in fewer injuries. And if you are in better health and sustain an injury, you are more likely to recover quickly with less long-term pain and disability. We believe in “Get Healthy and Work Strong” so you can live your life to the fullest while on the job and at home.
No one has to go it alone in the effort to protect people, the environment and vital resources. The Environment, Health & Safety (EH&S) Directors Leadership Council is comprised of EH&S Directors from throughout UC to promote a safe, healthful environment in a proactive and cost effective manner that helps the University community minimize their risks.

Established in the 1990s, the EH&S Directors Leadership Council is dedicated to helping reach the health and safety goals of the University. While respecting the essential independence of each UC location, the Council seeks opportunities to utilize capabilities and resources collectively to address common EH&S challenges.

In March 2010, the Council created a five-year strategic plan to provide guidance and support for health, safety and risk reduction efforts at all UC locations. The overarching goal is to strategically align EH&S resources so as to reduce to the greatest extent practicable the safety and environmental risks associated with the teaching, research and public service mission of the University. Some programs are showing positive results after only two years of implementation.

“Though these early successes are measured in numbers, what they truly reflect is fewer injuries and a healthier infrastructure,” says Erike Young, UCOP Director of Environment, Health & Safety. “We are interested in programs that are cost effective to implement, that integrate safety and health principles into day-to-day operations, and leverages the unique subject matter expertise of our campus staff. This will help ensure the long-term benefit.”

A major early success was the creation of UC Centers of Excellence that enable all UC locations to benefit from focused expertise in individual campuses or medical centers and share the benefits of programs shown to reduce UC’s overall cost of risk. We can save money and maximize efficiency by sharing many best practice programs and promoting innovation in the development of new programs and processes.

The Council introduced Shoes for Crews, a non-slip shoes program, to address one of the top five causes of injury. A large majority of slip and fall injuries involve food service environments with wet and/or greasy floors, the program had been in place at UC Irvine with dining services staff for several years and was implemented systemwide in July 2011. Under the program, food service employees receive two pairs of Shoes for Crews non-slip shoes per year. To date, on an investment of $350,000 the program has reduced slip and fall injuries in excess of 40% with an estimated claims avoidance of $900,000. Due to the success of the program, it has been expanded to include custodial/housekeeping staff, grounds keepers, and animal care staff.

Another visionary project was developed by the Ergonomics work group, one of the twelve functional work groups sponsored by EH&S Directors Leadership Council (see sidebar). The workgroup conducted a study and in June 2011 introduced best practices and recommendations for reducing injuries in custodial operations. Test programs include hands-free cleaning systems and the development of dumpster lid lifters that enable staff to safely move refuse into containers. The work group focused on a similar study for dining services operations and recommendations are in the process of being developed.

In January 2012, a joint work group was initiated with representation from Capital Projects, Facilities, EH&S and Fire Marshals to develop process and protocols to ensure safety and ergonomic consideration in facilities design planning. By building safety and emergency response technologies into the construction or remodeling process, the University can save money while improving both safety and efficiency.

Due to UC’s unique education and research environment, it is common for minor students, as young as fourteen, to be admitted to UC laboratories to work in various research environments. This poses unique risks and safety considerations. The Council has drafted a Minors Working in Laboratories policy that is making its way through the policy approval process.

To build safety and risk management awareness among all employees, the EH&S Directors Leadership Council publishes UC Safety Spotlight, an online, monthly publication series. Safety Spotlight provides information critical to the success of the University’s safety programs systemwide. It provides links to posting, training presentations, videos and other resources to assist in developing robust safety programs.

Each month, the publication focuses on a specific workplace safety topic, drawing for content on the expertise of Occupational Health Services, Environment, Health & Safety, Emergency/Business Continuity Management, and Police and Fire Department staff. You can check out current and past issues of Safety Spotlight at: http://ucanr.org/sites/ucehs/Safety_Spotlight/
Emergency Management: Making Strides in Mitigating Disaster

Living in California means living with the potential for disaster, whether natural or human-caused. With their geographically and functionally diverse characters, UC facilities require consistent and conscientious emergency preparedness. Risk Services continues to work tirelessly with the Council of Emergency Managers to achieve the University's ultimate goal of creating a disaster-resistant and disaster-resilient institution with effective crisis and consequence management capabilities.

The Emergency Management annual status report on systemwide emergency preparedness is benchmarked against the National Fire Protection Association’s (NFPA) National Standard on Disaster/Emergency Management and Business Continuity Programs. The University was one of the first major higher education institutions in the nation to voluntarily adopt this stringent standard, especially on a systemwide basis. The annual report can be found at http://www.ucop.edu/riskmgt/emergprep/documents/em_annual_rpt.pdf

We continue to improve our campus emergency management programs. The most significant systemwide improvements over the last year were made in the following areas:

- Planning process and plan management
- Incident prevention and hazard mitigation
- Continuity and recovery
- Campus training and education

A major milestone was achieved when medical center emergency managers established the first systemwide medical center emergency response mutual aid agreement enabling the loan of medical personnel, pharmaceuticals, supplies and equipment, or assistance with emergency medical center evacuation, including accepting inter-facility patient transfers.

All campuses continue to implement the UC Ready program, a progressive and proactive, systemwide approach to prevent, mitigate, prepare for, respond to and recover from any adverse event or disruption through the development of departmental-level continuity plans. Over 1,000 departmental plans had been completed across the system, with nearly 700 more plans in progress.

Risk Services continues to be concerned about the threat of workplace-related violence. Triggered by the continuing acts of violence on university and college campuses, we are supporting campus efforts to manage behavioral threats. Advanced state-of-the-art training on evaluating the potential for violent behavior was provided to all campus Behavioral Intervention Teams and UC Police Departments.

Risk Services completed a Hazard Mitigation Progress Report which summarizes the wide range of systemwide programs and projects. These efforts reflect the University’s ongoing commitment to reducing, preventing or eliminating potential risks and impacts of natural and human-caused disasters in order to keep our campus communities as safe and resilient as possible. By working to reduce the University’s vulnerability to the multiple physical hazards, our locations are able to recover more quickly and less expensively from disasters, and the economic, academic, operational and environmental impacts from these disasters will be minimized. This report can be found at http://www.ucop.edu/riskmgt/emergprep/documents/hazard_mitigation_rpt.pdf

The University has made significant long-term progress and remains committed to mitigating seismic and other catastrophic risks. Even during difficult budget times, we realize that investing in hazard mitigation is a proven and prudent cost-effective strategy to reduce, prevent, and eliminate potential risks and impacts of both natural and human-caused disasters. More information on Emergency Management and UC Ready is available at http://www.ucop.edu/riskmgt/emergprep/

Good advanced planning protects people, the environment, vital research and other UC resources during and after a crisis. Planning begins at the core department or unit level, with supervisors and employees working together to assess vulnerabilities and develop mitigation measures. Department leaders are encouraged to contact their UC Emergency/ Continuity Management staff for consultation on plan models, communication and evacuation planning and more.

When a crisis occurs, the local UC Emergency Operations Center (EOC) is activated, integrating all aspects of emergency response and coordinating closely with both UC system offices and public agencies for a comprehensive response. To keep the campus community informed in real time, Mass Warning/Notification System services are now available to all locations via ‘a la carte’ systemwide contracts. Services include campus-wide alerting, warning and emergency notification systems and platforms.

The greatest physical threat facing the University of California is a catastrophic earthquake. The University continues to invest in seismic safety projects to mitigate risk in the event of an earthquake. The Be Smart About Safety program alone has funded fifty hazard mitigation projects and has invested in the implementation of UC Ready, a systemwide program that helps UC campuses and medical centers prepare for resuming critical business operations after a disaster.
WOMEN to WATCH

Grace Crickette, UC Chief Risk Officer, received the Business Insurance 2011 “Women to Watch” award for her exceptional work in risk management.

Grace Crickette, Chief Risk Officer, (right) was chosen as one of Business Insurance’s top 25 Women to Watch in 2011. This award honors women doing outstanding work in insurance, risk and benefits management, and related fields. There were over 1,000 nominees which was a record number. The honorees were selected by a panel of Business Insurance senior editors who consider various criteria, including recent professional achievements, influence on the marketplace, and contributions to the advancement of women in business.

Grace’s advice to anyone entering the field of Risk Management is “Don’t spend too much time at your desk. There’s not a lot of risk at your desk; and if you want to be of value to the organization and really progress in the organization, you really need to get out and really understand the business in a holistic way. You need to learn the language or the taxonomy of the other people you’re working with. I think in risk management, you can tend to become insular and just focus from an educational or professional standpoint on being with other risk managers and studying just risk management.”

When asked about the most interesting thing she’s learned from her career at UC, she said “I have learned a lot about science and research, and am able to experience things from a scientific standpoint that the majority of the world doesn’t get to see or get to learn about. Going back to that not spending a lot of time at my desk, just being out in the operations and meeting people and learning what they’re doing, that’s the most interesting.”

More information about this prestigious award is available at http://www.ucop.edu/riskmgt/awards.html

Stay the Course

There is still progress to be made as we continue to promote a culture of safety throughout UC and increase participation in the BSAS program. The goal is to make environments safer for faculty, staff, students, guests and patients by proactively investing in prevention programs tailored to address each campus or medical center’s specific challenges and targeted to reduce frequency and/or severity of potential loss.

We will continue to track results and share them with actuaries and insurance underwriters to enable the University to reduce the cost of risk through decreased insurance premiums and claim payments.

Expertise and resources available throughout UC can be shared and it is through collaboration and synergistic relationships that we can continue to promote a safe and healthful environment in a proactive and cost effective manner that helps the University community minimize risks.

Learn about more BSAS initiatives and their impact at: http://workingsmarter.universityofcalifornia.edu/projects/be-smart-about-safety/overview/

UC Risk Summit
Save the Date!

Annual UC Risk Summit • June 6-8, 2012 • Oakland, California

The annual UC Risk Summit is being held this year at the Marriott Oakland City Center, June 6-8, 2012. Sponsored by the Office of Risk Services, this conference provides opportunities to share perspectives, best practices, challenges and solutions that you can use to improve efficiency in your workplace and better manage risk. Risk Summit provides a forum to build synergistic connections with your UC colleagues and others.

“During the Risk Summit, representatives from UC campuses, medical centers and other facilities share information and ideas” says Grace Crickette, Chief Risk Officer. “It is an opportunity to exchange ideas and issues, and to build a knowledge base that incorporates staff expertise throughout the system.”

UC Risk Summit 2012

Working Together • Working Smarter • Creating a Stronger UC

For more information or to register, visit http://www.ucop.edu/riskmgt/summit.html
The UC Student Health Insurance Plan (UC SHIP) provides medical, dental, and vision coverage for graduate and undergraduate students at all UC locations. While the dental and vision benefits are provided through fully-insured contracts, the medical benefits which represent the majority of the UC SHIP costs are self-funded by the University. Our UC SHIP staff (see sidebar), who joined Risk Services in February 2012, are principally responsible for the successful inaugural year of UC SHIP for graduate students on six UC campuses in 2010 resulting in the collaboration of all UC campuses to join UC SHIP and cover graduate and undergraduate students for the 2011-2012 academic year.

It is anticipated that UC SHIP will save students $8.4 million in premium in the 2011-2012 year and with the expanded coverage the students will receive about $5.4 million in new benefits. Over 135,000 students now participate in UC SHIP, one of the largest student health insurance programs in the nation.

The UC SHIP is a Working Smarter initiative that has met its goal of implementing a centralized systemwide health insurance plan for all UC students. Historically, each UC campus negotiated and managed its own student health plan. “Under this plan, everyone is protected and we have better pricing and stronger benefits than before. Students also will experience less inflationary pressure on premiums over the next few years because UC has negotiated multi-year price guarantees on services provided by insurance companies” says Heather Pineda, Plan Director. Operational efficiency and savings across the system have been achieved by consolidating administration at UC’s Office of the President. In addition, the medical plan is self-funded, resulting in additional cost savings by removing carrier retention and broker fees from the premiums.

UC SHIP is an important component of UC’s broader effort to enhance student support, improve student-recruiting competitiveness, and increase retention/degree-completion rates of our talented student body. UC SHIP has helped to remove cost barriers to care and that means more timely intervention and better outcomes to keep UC students healthy and on track with their academic goals.

Student health services directors from each UC campus worked to develop the plan, as did staff from UC’s Office of the President. The work group was led by co-chairs Joseph Castro of UC San Francisco and Fred Wood of UC Davis, both vice chancellors of student affairs for their respective campuses. In addition, a mix of graduate and undergraduate students participated, with representation from every campus.

Two of those students — Jason Tien, a Ph.D. candidate in neuroscience at UCSF and Alberto Ortega Hinojosa, a Ph.D. candidate in public health at UC Berkeley — received the President’s Award for Outstanding Student Leadership for their work. The students had contributed “great energy and ingenuity” to the effort and spent more than two years on the project. The student health insurance plan “has reduced cost and broadened insurance benefits for our students, including making it possible to offer long-sought dependent coverage,” said UC President Mark Yudof. “Their success demonstrates the vital importance of student involvement and leadership in university initiatives.”

“Since the plan exists for the benefit of students, their input is crucial. Students will continue to have an important role in the plan” says Heather Pineda. The University has a UC SHIP advisory board that includes students from every campus. More information about the UC SHIP Working Smarter initiative is available at http://workingsmarter.universityofcalifornia.edu/projects/student-health-insurance-plan/overview/