Georgia Tech Voluntary Separation Incentive Program
Frequently Asked Questions

General

1. **Is this Voluntary Separation plan the same as “early retirement?”**
   No, this program is only open to employees who are currently eligible to retire.

2. **How do I know if I am eligible to retire?**
   In order to be eligible for this program, the employee must meet one of the retirement eligibility requirements under BOR Policy 8.2.8.2 on the retirement date they declare. According to this BOR policy, here are the requirements:
   a. An employee must have been employed by the University System of Georgia (USG) for the last 10 years in a regular, benefited position and have attained age 60; or
   b. An employee must have at least 25 total years of benefited service established with a State of Georgia sponsored retirement plan, of which the last five years of employment must have been continuous and with the USG. An early pension benefit penalty will apply to an individual who elects to participate in Teachers Retirement System (TRS) or Employees Retirement System (ERS) if he or she decides to retire with between 25 and 30 years of benefited service, prior to attaining age 60; or
   c. An employee must have at least 30 total years of benefited service established with a State of Georgia sponsored retirement plan, of which the last five years must have been continuous and with the USG; or,
   d. An employee must be deemed to be totally and permanently disabled, as documented through the receipt of disability benefits from Social Security or from TRS following 10 years of continuous service to the USG in a regular, benefited position.

3. **How do I apply?**
   The application form for participation in the program is found [here](#).

4. **Who must I get approval from in order to participate?**
   You are encouraged to discuss your intent with your manager. However, approval will come from the VSIP committee.

5. **Who should I contact for more information?**
   GTHR will gladly assist. You may make an individual appointment with one of
our Retirement counselors by visiting hr.gatech.edu/contact-us. We strongly encourage you to attend one of our online webinars providing information regarding retirement and the VSIP. Dates to be determined.

6. **How do I decide my separation or retirement date?**
   You are encouraged to work with your departmental manager to determine an appropriate transition date. Provide a minimum of three weeks for your transition. You must make your election to participate in the VSIP plan no later than August 15, 2020. Your last day of work may be no later than 12/31. Please note that TRS participants should elect the first day of a month as their effective date of retirement. ORP participants do not need to elect the first day of a month. Since everyone’s situation is different you are encouraged to discuss your intent with your accountant or financial planner.

7. **May I change my mind after I submit the required forms?**
   You have seven days to change your mind after submitting your application. After seven days of submitting this application, the election becomes irreversible.

8. **What happens after I submit my application to participate in VSIP?**
   Your application will be reviewed to determine eligibility and you will receive formal notification regarding your participation in the program.

9. **What is the last day I can work under and still be included in this program?**
   December 31, 2020 -- provided that you have submitted your application by the cut-off date of August 15, 2020.

10. **Can I participate if I am on leave?**
    You should discuss your case with one of our Leave Specialists to determine the steps necessary to retire. [Click here](#) to make an appointment.

11. **Who decides if my separation date and enrollment are approved?**
    A VSIP committee has been formed and they will provide you with formal notification of your participation in the program.

12. **If approved for VSIP, can I come back as an RBW (retired-but-working) employee?**
    If you meet the requirements to return and retired under the VSIP you will not be eligible to begin a RBW assignment before July 1, 2021. For your reference, here is USG’s [BOR Policy 8.2.8.3 Employment Beyond Retirement](#).
13. I provided notice of my intent to retire in 2020 before the Institute announced this program. Am I still permitted to participate in this program? VSIP is open to employees who have provided written notice of intent to retire after May 15, 2020, as long as the employee has not yet separated from the Institute at the time of their application for participation. Employees who have retired or resigned on or before July 1, 2020 are ineligible to participate.

14. If an employee has not been granted approval for the VSIP can they withdraw or change their retirement date? Yes, in this instance, the employee can withdraw or change the retirement date.

15. Are employees funded by sponsored or grant funds eligible? Employees with base salaries funded 50% or more by sponsored or grant funds would not be eligible.

16. If a person chooses not to accept the VSIP and are eligible to retire, does this put the employee at risk for layoffs, as well as the potential to lose the percentage Georgia Tech would normally disperse to the employee's TRS pension? Yes, it is possible. As operations plans its expense reduction targets there could be temporary or permanent lay-offs.

17. How can it be confirmed that VSIP application has been received? All applicants will receive a communication confirming receipt of their application.

18. If one meets VSIP eligibility, what other factors determine approval/disapproval? Applicants will be reviewed for eligibility as well as good-standing with the Institute. When an employee's activities represent a conflict with the Institute's interests and ethical code of conduct is in question, it may affect eligibility.

19. How soon would we expect notice of approval/disapproval? Budgeting, student instruction, and continuity of business are the primary consideration for participation in VSIP. Applicants will be advised of the decision no later than August 31.

20. If I can retire from Georgia Tech, does that prevent me from accepting a paid position with a non-USG entity? It does not prevent you from accepting a paid position with a non-USG entity unless you retire under TRS. TRS retirees can’t return to full-time employment with another TRS employer. You could return part-time no earlier than July 1, 2021.
21. **What are the steps for ORP enrollees?**
Whether enrolled in ORP or TRS, the steps are the same. The only difference is that ORP participants are not required to elect the first of a month as their retirement date.

22. **If you accept VSIP and have TRS, when will the TRS payments start? in September 2020 or January 2021? Is retirement date Jan 2, 2021 or Dec. 31, 2020.**
**Does TRS start on January 1?**
The TRS monthly benefit will start the month of your retirement. All TRS retirements are effective the first day of a month. Last month worked September means an October 1 retirement date. Last month worked December means a January 1 retirement date.

23. **Why the restriction of May 15, 2020?**
May 15 is the date Georgia Tech became aware that the Institute could introduce VSIP as part of its expense plan for FY21.

24. **If I choose to participate in VSIP, what date do I put on the form if I want to work through 12/31/2020? What is the deadline to actually retire by for VSIP?**
The last day to work under the VSIP is December 31 – which translates to a January 1 retirement date.

25. **Can you come back as a temp employee through an outside Georgia Tech-approved vendor? If so, how soon can you come back to work?**
You may only return to the Institute under the RBW (retired-but-working) program. USG retirees under VSIP can return to work no earlier than July 1, 2021. Retirees are limited in the amount of time they can work to no more than 49%. This applies whether through an agency or not. Retirees cannot be Tech Temps.

26. **I am not turning 60 until October, will I still be available to participate in the VSIP plan? Is someone who turns 60 after the August 15 deadline but prior to Dec 31 eligible for VSIP?**
An employee must meet one of the retirement eligibility requirements under BOR Policy 8.2.8.2 on the retirement date they declare.

27. **How does the funding apply to my eligibility at GTRI?**
The Voluntary Separation Incentive Program (VSIP), established at Georgia Tech as a one-time, limited separation incentive for retirement-eligible employees, does not generally apply to GTRI employees. It is only available to employees who are covered >50% by state funded programs. Within GTRI, nearly all units are more than 50% covered by funds derived from sponsored programs (both direct and indirect).
Benefits

28. **When will my Georgia Tech employee benefits end?**
   For details about retiree benefits, click here for the USG retirement healthcare transition guide.

   Pre-65 Retirees, and their covered dependents, that qualify as a USG retiree, will continue their current USG medical, dental, vision and life insurance in retirement. Post-65 retirees and their Medicare eligible covered dependents will continue their regular dental, vision and life coverage through USG, paying premiums through OneUSG Connect. Medical coverage will end for the post-65 retirees and Medicare eligible dependents on the last day of the month preceding retirement. Medicare will become primary medical coverage for these retirees and dependents and enrollment in Medicare parts A&B and should be effective the date of retirement to prevent a gap in coverage. If the elected retirement date prevents the Medicare enrollment to be completed by the retirement date, USG will extend the retiree and/or covered dependent medical coverage for one month. If both the retiree and covered dependent are not Medicare eligible, the non-Medicare eligible person will remain on the regular USG coverage until attaining age 65. In this situation Medical coverage will be provided differently for each person.

   USG provides healthcare coverage to Medicare-eligible retirees through the Aon Retiree Health Exchange.

29. **What happens if I am not enrolled in Health & Welfare benefits?**
   In accordance with USG policy, employees must be enrolled in a USG employee health insurance plan at the time that they retire in order to be eligible for USG health insurance benefits during retirement. For those who are 65 years old or over, they must be enrolled in Medicare Part B to be eligible for healthcare benefits in retirement.

30. **How do I know what my TRS Benefit will be?**
   Contact TRS for a preliminary benefit calculation.

31. **How do I get information regarding Social Security?**
   To learn more about Social Security, click here.
32. **If I am 65 or older, how do I apply for Medicare Part B?**
   For Medicare signup information, click here. The GTHR retirement team can provide the Medicare form verifying you were covered by USG group medical coverage so you will not be charged a penalty for late enrollment. For details, visit medicare.gov. Click here to make an appointment with the GTHR retirement specialist.

33. **How do I find more information regarding planning to retire?**
   Click here to review the USG Retiree Planning Guide. For USG Pre-65 retirees and active USG employees who are age 65 and over and planning for retirement watch this webinar recording for additional guidance.

34. **Will I qualify for unemployment if I retire?**
   Generally, you are not be able to draw benefits if your reason for leaving was a personal election. You may visit the Department of Labor Unemployment site for specific information related to your eligibility.

35. **Is there a minimum amount of time you have to be enrolled in core benefits to have them in retirement? For example, if my first year of enrollment is also my retirement year, will I still be eligible for core benefits?**
   Yes, you are still eligible for core benefits as there is no minimum time required provided you are enrolled and retirement-eligible.

**Incentive Payment**

36. **How is the incentive calculated?**
   The incentive payment will be the equivalent of four (4) months of the employee’s salary (not including payments such as overload, overtime, weekend/shift/night differential, standby pay, summer salary, or a temporary pay for additional duties) in effect on the last day of employment.

37. **I am on an interim assignment. How will my incentive payment be calculated?**
   The incentive payment will be the equivalent of four (4) months of your interim assignment if you are still in the assignment at the time of your last day of work.

38. **I am on an administrative academic assignment. How will my incentive payment be calculated?**
   The incentive payment will be the equivalent of four (4) months of your agreed upon administrative assignment if you are still in your assignment as of the last day of work.
39. I am a nine-month faculty member being paid over 10 months. How is my incentive calculated?
Your contracted 9-month salary will be divided by 9 months and then multiplied by 4 to calculate your incentive.

40. I am currently receiving temporary pay for temporary duties. Will it be included in my VSIP incentive?
No, your base salary will be used to calculate your retirement incentive.

41. Will my shift, overtime, on-call, or any other variant pay be included in the calculation of my VSIP incentive?
No, your base salary will be used to calculate your retirement incentive. Variant pay such as shift, emergency call-back, call-in, will not be included in calculating your incentive payment.

42. I am eligible to retire but I am currently working part-time. How will my VSIP incentive be calculated?
Your VSIP incentive of four months will be prorated based on your FTE. Example: If you work the equivalent of 30 hours per week, your prorated VSIP incentive will be 75%.

43. What happens to my leave accruals when I retire?
Your earned but unused vacation will be paid out to you after 30 days on the next regularly scheduled on-cycle payroll run. All unused, accrued vacation/annual leave, not to exceed 45 days (360 hours), will be paid to an employee upon their termination from employment.

For ORP participants, your sick time accrual cannot be paid out to you. If you retire under the TRS plan your sick leave balance will be submitted to TRS to determine if you are eligible for additional service credit under their retirement formula. Typically, for every 20 days of unused sick leave you accumulate while working in a TRS covered position, TRS awards one month of service credit. Nine months of unused sick leave is equal to one year of service credit, regardless of the number of months worked per year. You must accumulate at least 60 days of unused sick leave to qualify.

44. If I elect January 1, 2021 as my retirement date, will I receive Holiday Pay for the day?
No, you must be in an active pay status the day proceeding and the day following a holiday to be eligible to receive pay for the holiday.
45. **How will my incentive payment be taxed?**
Your incentive payment will be subject to applicable federal, state, and FICA withholding at the supplemental flat rate where applicable.