HRM:38:533:614:01
Sel Problems – Benefits
Spring 2025 – Wednesdays (4:30 pm to 7:10pm)
JLB 103
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SMLR Learning Objectives: This course is designed to help students attain the following SMLR learning objectives

I) Written & Oral Communication – Communicate effectively at a level and in modes appropriate to an entry level professional.

- Communicate complex ideas effectively, in standard written English
- Analyze and synthesize information and ideas from multiple sources to generate new insights
- Produce quality research papers with proper convention of attribution/citation
- Produce high quality executive summaries
- Make an argument using contemporary and/or historical evidence
- Present ideas and arguments in a logical and effective way

II) Quantitative, Qualitative and Analytical Skills – Apply appropriate quantitative and qualitative methods for research workplace issues.

- Formulate, evaluate, and communicate conclusions and inferences from quantitative information
- Apply quantitative methods to analyze data for HR decision making including cost-benefit analyses, ROI, etc. (HRM)
- Apply qualitative methods appropriately, alone and in combination with quantitative methods

Course-Specific Learning Goals: Upon completion of this course students should understand:

1. The role of benefits from the employee and employer perspective.
2. How benefits actually work and are utilized within an organization.
3. How organizations use benefit programs to further their business strategies.
4. The impact of government, societal needs, tax, law and regulation on benefit practices.
5. The different types of benefit programs and how employers utilize to reach their HR objectives.
6. The underlying costs and value of benefit programs.
7. The ways organizations select, deliver, administer and communicate benefits to employees.
8. The interaction of public government funded programs with employer provided private programs.
9. How organizations operate regarding funding and governance of benefit programs.
10. The role of employee benefits in a total rewards program.

Texts: There is no text book for this class. The course material is composed of Lectures, questions and answers exercises and class discusions. Other readings may be assigned from time to time. Students will be accountable for such materials on exams.

Course Description:

Employee benefits have become an increasingly large portion of labor costs for employers. Benefits are viewed by employees as entitlements, and employer efforts to control or reduce costs to remain competitive in global markets have met with resistance by employees, unions, impacted industries (e.g., insurance, health care), and the government. Given that setting, it is critical that human resource professionals understand how individual benefits programs work, what strategies and options are available to organizations, and how benefits programs can be integrated into reward systems, human resource programs and, most importantly, the business strategy.

The perspective taken in this course is that of the employer (and HR professional), and the goal is an understanding of how an employer can design, implement and administer a benefits program that serves employer, employee and societal needs. While much detailed information will be covered, the course goals do not include memorization of statistics or specific legislation. Rather knowledge of program characteristics, the impact of work force strategy and understanding what programs might be useful for a specific organization as well as potential problems (e.g., legal, regulatory, tax) that would require research before implementation are studied.

Additionally, an understanding of the ways organizations integrate mandated programs (e.g., Social Security, Medicare, Worker's Compensation and Unemployment Insurance) with their own benefit programs is important. Similarly, an understanding of options in administration of programs is necessary, as is the nature of employee communication programs useful in enabling employees to help make sure their benefits choices and benefits-related behaviors (e.g., medical plan choices, savings elections) to meet their needs. Recent trends in benefits management, including cost controls, cost shifting programs, and other strategies will be covered.

Because of the wide variety of benefits available, a fairly standard classification of programs will be used to organize the course:

1. Retirement and capital accumulation programs
2. Income protection benefits
3. Health care programs
4. Paid time off
5. Legally required plans
6. Work/Life benefits

Course Delivery Format:

The course delivery is "in classroom". We will be utilizing Canvas to access learning materials, post lectures, make announcements, communicate, and deliver materials such as the Project and the Case Study (see below). Be sure to check this site frequently as there will be announcements and instructions.

Attendance:

Formal attendance will not be taken for this course. But to attain the maximum amount of learning as well as participate in discussions on relevant HR matters, it is anticipated that students will be in class. Should issues prevent attendance (illness, personal, etc.), please be sure to contact me.

Project:

The purpose of the Project is to make sure that you cover a benefits topic in depth. The Project will require research and the deliverable will be a written report and a Power Point presentation. The report should be written as if you were the Benefits Lead in an organization and you have been asked to do a "white paper" and "proposal" on the selected benefit topic. It should be written as though you are introducing and seeking approval to proceed with implementing the selected benefit topic. The "Managing Employee Benefits Project" document (available during class) will provide more detail.

Case Study:

The purpose of the Case Study is test your ability to tie together many of the benefits topics we discussed in class. It is a real-world exercise in HR's role in corporate initiatives. The assignment deals with the potential acquisition of one company by another one. You are part of the HR/Benefits due diligence acquisition team charged with determining if the transaction should move forward. As part of the team, you have been asked to pull together a 4-to-5-page report plus a short PowerPoint presentation on the strategies, challenges and opportunities for such an acquisition. "The Miller Manufacturing" document (available during class) will provide more detail.

Grading Components:

Project	33%
Case Study	33%
Participation	33%

Grading Scale

A = 90 -100
B+ = 88 -89
B = 80- 87
C+ = 78-79
C = 70-77
F = 60-69

Please note, the syllabus is preliminary and subject to change based on circumstances that might present themselves during the course of the semester.

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Anticipated Schedule and Subject to Change

Class	Date	Topics	Important Milestones
1	**1/22**	Introduction, benefits history, rationale, rewards, strategies, framework and programs	
2	**1/29**	The environment for benefits programs, workforce demographics, costs, social and legislative interests	
3	**2/5**	Retirement history, Personal Savings, Social Security, Defined Benefit Pension Programs and Pension Funding and Accounting	**Project Selection**
4	**2/12**	Defined Contribution Retirement Programs and Investment Concepts	
5	**2/19**	Profit Sharing and ESOP's and 401(k) plans	
6	**2/26**	401(k) and Comparison DB vs. DC	
7	**3/5**	Income Protection Programs, insurance terminology, Workers Compensation, Unemployment Insurance, Disability Benefits and Life Insurance	
8	**3/12**	Healthcare history, why offered by employers, unique challenges, terminology, costs and cost containment initiatives	
	3/19	Spring Break	**No Class**
9	**3/26**	Flexible Benefits, Indemnity, Managed Care, HMOs, PPOs and HDHP. Drug, Dental, Vision and Long Term Care	
10	**4/2**	Paid Time Off	
11	**4/9**	Work Life Benefits: Dependent Care, Adoption Assistance, Family Leaves, EAP's, Tuition Reimbursement, Flextime and other benefits	
12	**4/16**	Outsourcing, Vendor Management, Communications and Program Effectiveness	
13	**4/23**	What to Expect at the Next Level	
14	**4/30**	Last Class and Semester Wrap Up	**Project Due** **Case Study Due**