

# PEERS

## Benefit Check

PUBLIC EDUCATION EMPLOYEE RETIREMENT SYSTEM OF MISSOURI

January 1, 2019 COLA set at 2%;  
2019-2020 School Year  
Contribution Rates  
Unchanged

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RETIREMENT SYSTEM OF MISSOURI

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**A**t the October 29, 2018 meeting of the Public School and Education Employee Retirement Systems of Missouri (PSRS/PEERS) Board of Trustees, the Board took action on several important items, including cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) and contribution rates.



**“We are quite pleased that we are able to grant our benefit recipients a cost-of-living increase while at the same time holding contribution rates steady.”**

Aaron Zalis, Board Chairman



## January 1, 2019 COLA set at 2%; 2019-2020 School Year Contribution Rates Unchanged

### January 2019 COLA Set at 2%

The Board voted to grant eligible PEERS benefit recipients a 2% cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) effective January 1, 2019. PEERS retirees are eligible to receive a COLA the 4<sup>th</sup> January following their retirement date.

The COLA decision is based in part on the Consumer Price Index for Urban Consumers (CPI-U) as determined by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics for the previous fiscal year. The increase in the CPI-U for PSRS/PEERS’ fiscal year 2018 is 2.87%.

The COLA was set according to the COLA policy adopted by the Board in 2017.

PSRS/PEERS COLA Policy	
CPI-U	COLA
Less than 0%	0%
0% to 2%	0% if cumulative CPI-U is below 2%
0% to 2%	2% if cumulative CPI-U is 2% or more
2% to 5%	2%
5% or more	5%

### Contribution Rates Unchanged for Upcoming School Year

The Board voted to maintain the current active member and employer contribution rates for the 2019-2020 school year.

Based on the recommendation of the Systems’ actuary, PricewaterhouseCoopers, contributions will remain as follows:

2019-2020 PEERS Contribution Rates		
Member Rate	Employer Rate	Combined Rate
6.86%	6.86%	13.72%

### Assumed Rate of Investment Return Reduced to 7.5%

The Board also voted to reduce the assumed rate of return on investments from 7.6% to 7.5% due to lower expected investment returns in the future. The assumed rate of return on investments of 7.5% is effective with the June 30, 2018 actuarial valuations and fiscal year 2019 investment performance.

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## PSRS/PEERS Achieves Fiscal Year 2018 Investment Return of 8.9%

An improving U.S. economy, coupled with significant corporate tax reform, led to strong returns for U.S. stocks and private equity in fiscal year 2018 (July 1, 2017 through June 30, 2018). PSRS/PEERS benefited from this investment environment, as the Systems' assets increased through investment earnings by over \$3.5 billion from the previous year with a total fund performance of 8.9% (or 8.7% net of all fees and expenses). The total plan return exceeded both the policy benchmark<sup>1</sup> of 7.4% and the long-term investment objective (actuarial assumption)<sup>2</sup> of 7.6%. Over long periods of time, the Systems continue to produce investment returns that meet or exceed the Systems' objective. The annualized investment return for PSRS and PEERS is 8.5% over the last 30 years.

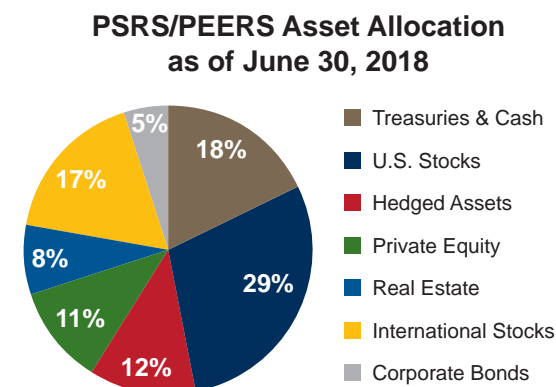
"Our long-term goal is to provide consistent and meaningful investment returns to support the retirement benefits of our members," says Steve Yoakum, PSRS/PEERS executive director. "It is nice to meet our investment objective in any one year, but more importantly, we are pleased to achieve our return objectives over longer time horizons. Our internal investment staff is committed to managing the Systems' assets in a prudent manner and has consistently over the last five years produced investment returns that rank in the top 35% of similar plans in the United States with assets in excess of \$1 billion, while maintaining a risk level that is much lower than the national average."

The total plan return of 8.8% over the last five years exceeded both the historical long-term investment objective (actuarial assumption)<sup>2</sup> and the total plan policy benchmark<sup>1</sup> return of 7.7%.

Five-Year Investment Results Period Ending 6/30/18	
PSRS/PEERS Investment Return	8.8%
PSRS/PEERS Actuarial Assumption <sup>2</sup>	7.6%
Benchmark Return <sup>1</sup>	7.7%

As we begin fiscal year 2019, we are mindful of the fact that it will become increasingly more difficult to achieve the actuarial assumed investment objective<sup>2</sup> in the near term, due in part to rising interest rates, a potential trade war and because we are in the very late stages of an economic cycle (the second longest period of expansion in history). However, as a large institutional investor, we believe that we are particularly well suited to navigate upcoming markets, given our ability to invest over a 30-year time horizon.

The following chart shows the PSRS/PEERS asset allocation, which is highly diversified among a number of different investment classes.



<sup>1</sup> The plan policy benchmark is a standard to measure investment performance and indicates the return of the PSRS/PEERS asset allocation if passive market rates of return were achieved.

<sup>2</sup> The Board of Trustees revised the long-term investment return objective (actuarial assumption) from 8.0% to 7.75% effective July 1, 2016. The objective was reduced from 7.75% to 7.6% effective July 1, 2017. The objective was further reduced from 7.6% to 7.5% effective July 1, 2018.

The asset allocation is balanced with a significant distribution to return-seeking assets such as stocks and private equity, but also a healthy allocation to more defensive investments such as Treasury securities, cash and hedged assets.

After reaching new highs in early October 2018, the broad stock market declined as much as 10% in the latter stages of the month. We believe it is prudent to maintain a structured portfolio that has an opportunity to participate if the markets were to move higher, but also has substantial downside protection in the event of a continued market correction. In each year or market cycle, every specific asset class within the PSRS/PEERS investment portfolio performs a valuable function.

The following chart indicates the investment return for each major asset class in the PSRS/PEERS portfolio over the last five years, for the period ended June 30, 2018.

Five-Year PSRS/PEERS Investment Returns (by Asset Class)	
Treasuries and Cash	1.2%
U.S. Stocks	13.0%
Hedged Assets	6.6%
Private Equity	16.4%
Real Estate	11.3%
International Stocks	8.3%
Corporate Bonds	2.8%

The combined market value of invested assets for PSRS and PEERS was approximately \$44.3 billion on September 30, 2018, making the joint entity larger than all other public retirement plans in Missouri combined, and the 44<sup>th</sup> largest defined benefit plan in the United States. For the most recent PSRS/PEERS investment news, visit us on the web at [www.psrs-peers.org](http://www.psrs-peers.org).

## PSRS/PEERS Professional Investment Staff

The PSRS/PEERS investment staff consists of 17 individuals who work with multiple external money managers to prudently and effectively invest the total plan assets of \$43.8 billion for our members. Since 2015, three of those investment professionals have received national recognition by being named to Chief Investment officer magazine's 40 under 40 list of next generation investment professionals. Travis Allen received the recognition in 2015, Chhayhea Sam in 2016, and most recently, Chad Myhre in 2018. In 2011, the PSRS/PEERS investment department was named Large Public Plan of the Year by Institutional Investor's Money Management Letter and Plan Sponsor of the Year by PLANSPONSOR magazine; and was nominated for Institutional Investor magazine's Hedge Fund Investor of the Year Award in the Large public plan category.

## How Informational Statistics Provide Consistency and Measurement

For many of us, the nature of our jobs means we tend to think about the start of a new school year as a fresh start; a time to start annual processes anew. At PSRS/PEERS we begin working to help a new vintage year of members and retirees get set up and ready to earn service or collect benefits. It is a time to look forward.

But another important task that takes place at PSRS/PEERS this time of year requires a look back at everything accomplished during the past school (fiscal) year.

Each year our Accounting department works in conjunction with Employer Services, Internal Audit, Investments, Member Services, IT and the Systems' actuarial firm to compile and verify the accuracy of an enormous amount of statistical data.

### Why It's Important

The sum total of this data basically paints a picture of the work done by every employee of PSRS/PEERS over the last fiscal year. It is used to illustrate to our members, legislators and the public the scope and types of work we do, who our members are, and how they participate in the Retirement Systems. It also serves as a baseline to help us understand trends in our membership, benefits and investments that helps us analyze and perform our work more effectively going forward.

The OASIS pension administration software system has brought many advantages for us when using and storing our members' information. Membership information in OASIS is real-time and constantly updated, so it is as accurate as possible on any given day. However, this also makes it more difficult for those looking for a statistic to get one that is "official." For example, we can use OASIS to determine the number of benefit recipients we have. But the very next day, the same search can come up with a different result.

Because of this, we use the end of each fiscal year (June 30) as a constant date to provide benchmark statistics. All the membership statistics, investment numbers and actuarial information found in the *Comprehensive Annual Financial Report*, or CAFR, are reported as of June 30.

### The CAFR

The CAFR becomes a historical record that shows where we were as of June 30 each year. It can be used to look at how the Systems have grown and changed over time.

The CAFR is prepared each year as required by Missouri law and in compliance with the requirements of the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) and the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA). But those are simply the foundation of what PSRS/PEERS includes in the report.

"We have always had the mindset that we want to go above and beyond what is required of us when it comes to the information we provide in our annual report," said Chief Financial Officer, Anita Brand. "Part of our ongoing effort to provide the highest level of service to our members is to also be completely transparent to them, and the public, about what we do, how we invest. The CAFR is really an annual summation of everything we do here every day."

### Timeline of a Months-Long Process

The fiscal year ends on June 30, but that is when the work really begins when it comes to compiling our annual statistics.

#### August

Employers, who report to us the contributions and salary/payroll information on our members, must have all information for the school year entered by August 15.

Once received, the Employer Services department completes a review of all reported data to ensure that it is accurate and complete.

The Investment Operations team also continues to receive updated private asset valuations.

#### Early September

During the first two weeks in September, Accounting takes the information and prepares it for our Actuarial firm to use when doing the Systems' annual actuarial valuations. The valuations are used to help management and the Board see how we are doing relative to our investment goals and actuarial assumptions. The valuations include the calculations of the Systems' pre-funded status. It helps us determine how we will set contribution rates, the desired rate of return on investments, interest rates and even cost-of-living adjustments.

Investment Operations finalizes asset valuations for the fiscal year and Accounting prepares the annual financial statements.

#### Late September/Early October

Accounting works with the actuary to reconcile data for every member of the Systems, more than 260,000 of them! Changes from the previous year are analyzed.

In early October the actuaries finalize their reports and this information is utilized in the preparation of the annual audit and the CAFR.

### Making it Official

We prepare "audited" or fully verified numbers June 30 of every year, which are available around November 1. We also prepare "unaudited" numbers as of June 30 and December 31 each year. Often, we require numbers at the end of the school year, before the annual audit, and at the end of the calendar year for publications or member information purposes. We can determine the figures as of any given date, but they are not "official" as they have not gone through the extensive review, audit and Board approval processes.

When you see a visual or see a figure in a member publication or on our website that is footnoted as being "unaudited" or "preliminary," this is why.



## Watch for Important End-of-Year Documents: Your Annual **Benefit Statement** and IRS 1099-R Tax Form

### Annual PEERS **Benefit Statement**

In January, you will receive your annual PEERS **Benefit Statement**. The **Benefit Statement** is a comprehensive summary of your PEERS membership and your monthly benefit as of January 31, 2019.

This important document is a record of your:

- Benefit amount
- Tax information and withholding amounts
- Benefit plan and benefit history
- Cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs)
- Beneficiary designation

Please review your statement to see if you need to make updates to your contact information or beneficiary designation with PEERS.

You can update your mailing address, phone or email address by logging in to Web Member Services at [www.psr-peers.org](http://www.psr-peers.org) or using a **Member Information Change** form also available on our website or from our office.

Please contact us with any questions about changes to your post-retirement beneficiary designation.

### IRS 1099-R Tax Form

Your 2018 IRS Form 1099-R will also mail in January. You will need this form when filing your 2018 income tax returns. Your annual Form 1099-R shows the total funds you received from PEERS in calendar year 2018, the taxes withheld, and the dollar amounts considered taxable income. If you have a professional tax advisor, we suggest that you make this information available for his or her review.

## Working After Retirement Reminders

**A**fter retirement, you can work part-time or as a temporary-substitute for a PSRS/PEERS-covered employer for a maximum of 550 hours each school year while still receiving your retirement benefits. (Employment for employers not covered by PSRS/PEERS is unlimited).

If you chose to work as a retiree for a covered employer, you will receive correspondence from us when you are reported as working after retirement by your employer. That correspondence will include information on your work hours limit and how to track your hours to ensure you don't exceed it.

If you exceed your limit, your benefits will stop. In order for your benefits to resume, you must end all

work that counts toward the limit you exceeded. You will be required to reimburse PEERS for all retirement benefits paid while ineligible, including funds in a PLSO distribution, and pay contributions that would have been required.

The minimum amount of benefits you will forfeit is one full monthly benefit.

If you have questions about your individual situation, please do not hesitate to contact any of our trained representatives at **(800) 392-6848** or [psrpeers@psrpeers.org](mailto:psrpeers@psrpeers.org).

## Tax Time is Coming. Are You Eligible for the Missouri Public Pension Exemption?



For tax year 2018, married couples with Missouri adjusted gross income less than \$100,000 and single individuals with Missouri adjusted gross income less than \$85,000, may deduct up to 100% of their public retirement benefits (such as PEERS service retirement benefits), to the extent the amounts are included in their federal adjusted gross income.

- Married couples with Missouri adjusted gross income greater than \$100,000 and single individuals with Missouri adjusted gross income greater than \$85,000, may qualify for a partial exemption.
- There is no age requirement for eligibility.

Visit [www.dor.mo.gov](http://www.dor.mo.gov) for more information regarding eligibility or contact the Missouri Department of Revenue at **(573) 751-3505**, email [income@dor.mo.gov](mailto:income@dor.mo.gov) or consult a tax professional for more information.

## PSRS/PEERS Announces New Member Services Director, General Counsel and Director of Administrative Planning and Design

**N**icole Hamler of Jefferson City, MO has been named director of member services for PSRS/PEERS effective October 16, 2018.



Nicole Hamler

She replaces Sarah Swoboda, who held the position of staff attorney before stepping into the director of member services position on an interim basis.

A part of the PSRS/PEERS staff since 2002, Hamler joined the organization as an information center representative. Since then

she has advanced through a series of progressively more responsible positions, serving in key roles in both the Member Services department and on the executive management team.

“Nicole’s extensive experience here at PSRS/PEERS gives her a unique outlook and the knowledge necessary to be an effective leader in our Member Services department,” said Executive Director Steve Yoakum. “We are happy that she will apply her knowledge and skills to help PSRS/PEERS continue to provide our members with the highest level of member service possible.”

Hamler holds a Master of Business Administration degree from Lincoln University. She currently serves as vice president of the Missouri Association of Public Employee Retirement Systems (MAPERS) board and has previously serviced as president of the Mid-Missouri Disaster Recovery Network board.

Swoboda will take over responsibilities as the Systems’ general counsel. Current general counsel Alan Thompson will retire December 1.



Sarah Swoboda

Swoboda joined PSRS/PEERS as staff attorney in July 2017.

“Sarah has proven herself a great asset to PSRS/PEERS,” said Steve Yoakum. “In the relatively short time she has been here, she has dedicated herself to actively learning and serving our

membership. Her professional attitude, quick uptake and legal expertise make her well-suited to the role of general counsel.”

Prior to joining PSRS/PEERS, Swoboda served as deputy chief of staff for State Auditor Nicole Galloway. She has also previously served in multiple roles for the Missouri State Treasurer’s Office, including general counsel and deputy state treasurer. Prior to these positions, Swoboda practiced law in St. Louis.

She graduated with her Juris Doctorate in 2004 from the University of Missouri – Columbia School of Law. She holds undergraduate degrees in psychology and criminology from Drury University. She is a member of the Missouri Bar and the National Association of Public Pension Attorneys (NAPPA).



Stacie Verslues

Stacie Verslues took over for Hamler as director of administrative planning and design, also on October 16. Verslues, who previously served the Systems as member education supervisor, joined PSRS/PEERS as a benefits specialist in 2005.

She holds a Bachelor of Science degree in business administration from Lincoln University, the Certified Retirement Counselor (CRC) designation, and is an active member of the National Pension Education Association (NPEA).

## PSRS/PEERS Recognizes Long-Time Attorney for Dedication to the Systems

**A**t the October PSRS/PEERS Board of Trustees meeting, Executive Director Steve Yoakum presented a plaque to Mr. Allen Allred, lawyer for Thompson Coburn, PSRS/PEERS’ legal firm.

Mr. Yoakum recognized Mr. Allred for his service to the Systems, and the integral part he has played in helping the Retirement Systems advocate on behalf of members and employers. On behalf of the PSRS/PEERS management and staff, Mr. Yoakum congratulated him on his own retirement, and thanked him for his dedication to the protection of Missouri educators and their pensions.

Allred served as PSRS/PEERS outside legal counsel for the past two decades.



Yvonne Heath

## Heath Receives Honors

**T**he Missouri State Teachers Association (MSTA) presented PSRS/PEERS Trustee Yvonne Heath with the 2018 Unsung Heroes of MSTA award at their recent convention and assembly of delegates. She was chosen by the MSTA field service coordinators for the honor, which acknowledges members who have made a substantive yet unrecognized contribution to MSTA and their mission “to advocate for and empower public educators so they can teach.”

Ms. Heath was also nominated by her peers at the Lyon Elementary school in Republic, Missouri as the

Lyon Hero of the Month, an honor for outstanding certified and classified employees.

She is now a candidate to receive the district-wide honor of RepMO Hero of the month. The winner of this award will be selected by the District Committee at Republic schools and will receive \$500 cash for classroom resources.

“We congratulate Yvonne on these well-deserved awards,” said Board Chairman Aaron Zalis. “Her contribution to Missouri schools and students is evident in her work on the PSRS/PEERS Board, and every day as she serves her school, students and community. We are proud to work with someone so dedicated.”



Maria Walden

## Maria Walden receives MRTA Award

**M**aria Walden, director of legislation and policy for PSRS/PEERS, was recently named by the Missouri Retired Teachers Association (MRTA) as their 2018 Watchdog of the Year. The honor was given in recognition of her outstanding knowledge and experience with the legislative process. In a recent e-newsletter writeup, MRTA called her, “a true supporter of public education and education retirees.”

Walden has served PSRS/PEERS and its membership in a legislative role since 2007.



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## Coming Soon: More Options for Receiving Information from PEERS

To help you stay informed about your Retirement System, we are now offering you the opportunity to customize how you receive information.

Early in the coming year you will receive an email from us detailing how you can change your communications preferences and choose if you would rather receive newsletters and annual statements by mail or by email, and whether you would like to receive emailed newflashes and Board of Trustees meeting updates.

At that time, simply log in to your Web Member Services (WMS) account and let us know your preferences by selecting “My Profile” at the top of the page and then clicking “Update Communications Preferences.”

**NOTE:** It is important that you keep your email address on record with us up to date so important information about your membership and retirement benefits will continue to reach you. You can update your email address in Web Member Services.