

P.S.

# POST SCRIPT

NEWS FOR ACTIVE MEMBERS

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Opinions about whether money buys happiness are a dime a dozen, and even the published opinions of well-informed economists sometimes seem contradictory. So, how do thoughtful consumers evaluate when to open their wallets and when to keep them closed? Put simply, experts agree that being mindful of how you spend your money can increase your happiness. Here are some questions to ask yourself prior to breaking

out the Benjamins:

### 1. Why am I buying this?

When it comes to making purchases, people possess both common and unique

## Purchasing Happiness: Is It Possible?



motivations. Most of us believe that paying the rent or mortgage is necessary for survival and happiness. With other kinds of purchases, however, getting a return in happiness is less obvious and more individualized. A magazine subscription will make some people slightly poorer recipients of content they don't care about, but for someone interested in the topic of world exploration, as an example, spending money on a *National Geographic* subscription

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## YOUR SECURITY, OUR CONCERN Protecting Your Loved Ones

LACERA's mission is to produce, **protect**, and provide the promised benefits. This series of articles addresses the "protect" aspect of our mission and our commitment to your safety, security, and peace of mind.

You are probably aware that **your future retirement benefit is protected**, but what if the unthinkable happens



and you pass away before you retire? We want you to know that in addition to the security of your retirement benefit, **the security of your loved ones is important to us** and we are here to help them if you are no longer able.

If you are a member in a contributory

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## Los Angeles County Employees Retirement Association

### Board of Retirement:

**SHAWN R. KEHOE**

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Elected by Safety Members

**VIVIAN H. GRAY**

Vice Chair  
Elected by General Members

**WILLIAM DE LA GARZA**

Secretary  
Elected by Retired Members

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Appointed by Board of Supervisors

**ALAN J. BERNSTEIN**

Appointed by Board of Supervisors

**ANTHONY BRAVO**

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County Treasurer and Tax Collector  
Ex-Officio Member

**KEITH KNOX**

Chief Deputy County Treasurer  
and Tax Collector  
Alternate Ex-Officio Member

**DAVID L. MUIR**

Alternate Retired Member  
Elected by Retired Members

**RONALD A. OKUM**

Appointed by Board of Supervisors

**WILLIAM R. PRYOR**

Alternate Member  
Elected by Safety Members

### Board of Investments:

**DAVID GREEN**

Chair  
Elected by General Members

**SHAWN R. KEHOE**

Vice Chair  
Elected by Safety Members

**JOSEPH KELLY**

Secretary  
County Treasurer and Tax Collector  
Ex-Officio Member

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**WAYNE MOORE**

Appointed by Board of Supervisors

**RONALD A. OKUM**

Appointed by Board of Supervisors

**DIANE A. SANDOVAL**

Elected by Retired Members

**HERMAN B. SANTOS**

Elected by General Members

**MICHAEL SCHNEIDER**

Appointed by Board of Supervisors

**VALERIE ROSE VILLARREAL**

Appointed by Board of Supervisors

Chief Executive Officer

**GREGG RADEMACHER**

Assistant Executive Officer

**ROBERT HILL**

Assistant Executive Officer

**JJ POPOWICH**

From the **Executive Desk**

**Gregg Rademacher – CEO, LACERA**



# Strategic Plan Presented for Fiscal Years **2018-2020**

**A**t LACERA, we're always looking for ways to improve the scope and quality of our services and systems. Our vision is robust. We strive to:

- Be a premier retirement system that adheres to the values of excellence, commitment, trust, and service
- Be a retirement benefits leader in member counseling and benefits delivery

We regularly discuss strategies to strengthen and modify our approaches to meeting the tenets of this vision as we accommodate our growing membership, which is up to more than 165,000 people (compared to 162,000 last year).

On January 24–27, 2017, our Board Offsite meeting took place. This is our annual event during which members of the executive and management teams introduce a draft of our strategic plan and deliver presentations to the Boards of Retirement and Investments on the various components of the draft. The LACERA strategic plan is a three-year projection of the goals and initiatives our organization will focus on. Our robust planning process allows the strategic plan to act as a flexible, dynamic guide, with initiatives added, modified, and removed depending on circumstances and scheduling (e.g., some initiatives carry over from previous years, some are completed). Every part of the strategic plan is developed with the

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**OUR MEASURE OF BUSINESS  
SUCCESS ALWAYS COMES BACK TO  
OUR MEMBERS.**

## Executive Desk

purpose of continuing to realize our vision, and the plan is how we internally communicate ways in which to do this.

### Timeline for Developing Our Strategic Plan

Although we present the strategic plan at the beginning of each year, the process for its development starts the previous October at our Managers Offsite conference. During that conference, the executive team meets with division managers to discuss the state of LACERA and exchange ideas about where we want the association to go in the upcoming years, as well as how we propose to get it there.

Based on that feedback, our executive team structures a framework for the Board Offsite meeting. Using the feedback that takes place at the Board Offsite, our executive team updates the strategic plan. In April, the executive team presents to the boards the updated strategic plan and the budget necessary to carry out the initiatives. The boards then review and approve the plan and budget.

### Strategic Plan Highlights

Last fiscal year, one of our initiatives was to continue

modernizing information technology in a number of ways. We examined Disability Retirement's investigation and appeal processes, improved staff procedures, and developed new assistive online technology tools. These initiatives will continue in the coming fiscal years.

LACERA manages and produces a great deal of content, which requires an enterprise content management system that integrates a centralized search. Internally, implementation of a tool for staff to better access content is in the works. LACERA is focusing on taking steps to improve the content of our current website to improve the user experience and to add new information that will educate members on the retirement process in the comfort of their own homes.

Elsewhere at LACERA, such as the Retiree Healthcare division, the future will see improved document control, workflow, and technology. These are multidimensional efforts that require evaluations of board policy, staff procedures, and measurement structures. LACERA will also focus resources on expanding our ability to record and store inbound and outbound

## NEWS FOR ACTIVE MEMBERS

calls with members. This will ensure that we have an accurate record of member interactions, which improves service and can be leveraged to provide quality assurance and training to staff.

### LACERA Recognized

We're off to a great start for the coming fiscal years. In addition to developing some exciting strategies for improvement, LACERA can also boast about receiving the WorldatWork 2017 Seal of Distinction. This distinction is awarded every year to companies across North America that set the standard for employee engagement that leads to business success. Read more about this prestigious award on page 6.

Our measure of business success always comes back to our members. It is through adherence to well-organized strategies for improvement that we continue to succeed in upholding the promise first made to County employees in 1937—to produce, protect, and provide the promised benefits.



# faq's: Survivor Benefits

## 1. Q: Does LACERA pay death benefits on all active general and safety member deaths?

A: Pre-retirement (active member) death benefits are included in all LACERA contributory retirement plans (Plans A, B, C, D, and G). They are not included in LACERA's non-contributory Plan E.

## 2. Q: Does LACERA pay benefits for the death of a deferred member?

A: Yes. If a deferred member dies prior to retiring from LACERA, the member's retirement

contributions and the accumulated interest are payable in a lump sum to the named beneficiary on file or the estate.

## 3. Q: If I pass away while in active service, what should my survivor and/or beneficiary do first to initiate the process to receive benefit payments?

A: Your survivor and/or beneficiary should call 800-786-6464 and report the death to a Retirement Benefits Specialist, who will guide him or her through the process.

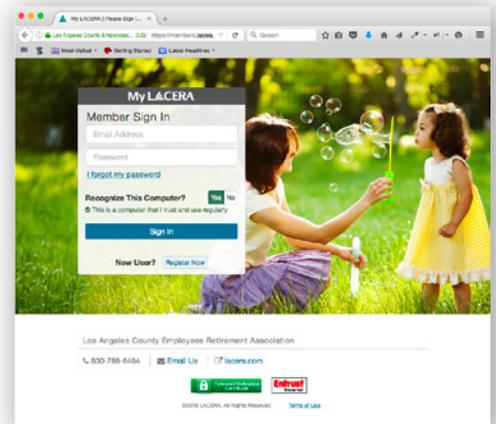
# Four Reasons to Sign In to My LACERA

My LACERA is our interactive web feature, available 24 hours a day, that connects you to your retirement account. To sign in or register, go to [lacera.com](http://lacera.com) and click on the My LACERA logo at the bottom right of the page. Once you've signed in, you can:

**1.** Update your beneficiary information. Due to life changes, such as birth, death, marriage, or divorce, you may find it necessary to designate a new beneficiary. Also, it's important to ensure that the information you've provided about your beneficiary(ies) is up to date and correct, such as the birth date, Social Security number, and address. If it's been a while since you looked, why not sign in and check for accuracy?

**2.** Send us a message. Do you have a question for us that is better explained in writing than over the phone? We now have a new feature in My LACERA called the Secure Message Center, which allows you to email Retirement Benefits Specialists.

**3.** Calculate your retirement benefit. The Retirement Benefit Estimate (RBE) within My LACERA allows you to create a personalized calculation of the benefits you will be entitled to when you retire. A valuable tool, you can use it throughout your career as you make decisions that may impact your retirement. Using your personal data



currently on file with LACERA, the RBE will show how specific retirement dates and additional service credit—whether earned or purchased—can increase your retirement allowance.

**4.** Check your account history. In My LACERA, you can access your Annual Benefit Statements from previous years and view all the previous interactions you've had with LACERA. Accessing data from the past may be useful in helping you plan for the future.

## 3 THINGS

In his book *The Blue Zones: Lessons for Living Longer from the People Who've Lived the Longest*, longevity expert Dan Buettner identifies what several of the world's regions, known as Blue Zones, have in common that promote a longer human lifespan. Here are three healthy habits to adopt.

- Eat in the company of friends. Blue Zone denizens don't regularly eat alone, but they do stay home. "In most Blue Zones," Buettner writes, "eating out is considered a celebratory field trip." Invite friends or relatives over for brunch and they'll share in the health advantage that eating with company provides.

Sources:

[latimes.com/health/la-he-blue-zone-tips-20150711-story.html](http://latimes.com/health/la-he-blue-zone-tips-20150711-story.html) • [nytimes.com/2015/08/04/fashion/dan-buettner-longevity-tips-blue-zones-solution.html?\\_r=0](http://nytimes.com/2015/08/04/fashion/dan-buettner-longevity-tips-blue-zones-solution.html?_r=0) • [npr.org/sections/thesalt/2015/04/11/398325030/eating-to-break-100-longevity-diet-tips-from-the-blue-zones](http://npr.org/sections/thesalt/2015/04/11/398325030/eating-to-break-100-longevity-diet-tips-from-the-blue-zones) • [nooga.com/155096/build-a-moai-for-better-relationships-longer-life/](http://nooga.com/155096/build-a-moai-for-better-relationships-longer-life/)

- Brew plenty of coffee and tea. Coffee, already a staple in most Americans' diets, is a major source of antioxidants. Once your latte's gone, Buettner recommends sipping tea through the day. Teas made of freshly gathered herbs, green tea, and milk thistle tea are consumed daily in Blue Zones.

- Build a "moai." The moai, an informal support group or social cooperative, originated among Okinawan farmers who would regularly meet to discuss methods for planting crops and support one another should their crops fail. Sharing a sense of social obligation takes many forms that can be applied to your life today.

## Purchasing Happiness: Is It Possible?

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might increase happiness.

Pausing to ask yourself "why?" will give you an opportunity to consciously decide—and take a moment to truly appreciate—what meaning the transaction has to you.

### 2. Will this contribute to my happiness now or sometime in the future?

Studies show that investing in experiences correlates with lasting contentment, whereas the happiness we find in buying material things is often fleeting. The novelty of owning a luxury vehicle eventually wears off, and we take our ownership for granted. Some experiences, however—exploring the country your grandparents came from, continuing your education, or competing in a triathlon—may provide a sense of achievement that's formative of a sense of identity. Additionally, experiences like these involve socializing, which tends to enhance our well-being.

As consumers, we recognize there are times when not buying can improve our prospect for happiness at a later date. Financial security increases the potential for happiness; being saddled with credit card debt does not. Be sure to take care of necessities ahead of discretionary expenditures. However, if you've

made a nonrefundable purchase and want to make the most out of buyer's remorse, consider loaning or sharing the item with someone else. Both are known to increase happiness.

### 3. Will this buy me time?

Other than purchasing service credit, there are few ways to actually buy time. Some purchases afford us time to do other things. Buying twice as many ingredients as needed and doubling a recipe, for example, may free up a couple hours to do something you enjoy more than cooking. But it's not always so straightforward. Purchases meant to save time can actually become time-consuming, often more than we notice at first. A laptop and an internet connection enable us to save untold amounts of time through electronic correspondence, online shopping, and access to search engines, but other online activities might absorb the time we had counted as saved. Evaluate the trade-off.

The point is not to discourage spending but, rather, to be mindful of it. Actor Bo Derek once quipped, "Whoever said money can't buy happiness simply didn't know where to go shopping." We all "go shopping"; let's make the most of it!

Sources:

[wsj.com/articles/can-money-buy-happiness-heres-what-science-has-to-say-1415569538](http://wsj.com/articles/can-money-buy-happiness-heres-what-science-has-to-say-1415569538)  
[time.com/money/3680465/happiness-and-money-study/](http://time.com/money/3680465/happiness-and-money-study/)

## YOUR SECURITY, OUR CONCERN Protecting Your Loved Ones

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retirement plan (Plan A, B, C, D, or G), LACERA will pay survivor benefits to your surviving spouse or registered domestic partner.\* Depending on the circumstances, the benefits may be payable as a lump-sum cash payment, a continuing monthly allowance, or a combination of the two. If you do not have a spouse or domestic partner, you may name a beneficiary who may be eligible for some of the same benefits. LACERA determines which benefits apply based on the decedent's retirement plan, length of service, and category of death (service-connected or nonservice-connected), as well as who they are being paid to.

No one likes to think about death, but it's wise to prepare for it because doing so can ease the burden of your loved ones during a difficult time. **Ensure that you have a beneficiary designation on file with LACERA that includes your beneficiary's birth date and Social Security number.** This information can be

provided to LACERA by filling out the Beneficiary Designation form found on [lacera.com](http://lacera.com), Brochures & Forms, or by signing in to My LACERA by clicking on the logo on the bottom right of the [lacera.com](http://lacera.com) homepage.

If you or your beneficiary would like to learn more about survivor benefits, visit [lacera.com](http://lacera.com), Brochures & Forms, where you can access the Survivor & Death Benefits Card and related documents.

We know that protecting your loved one is important to you. At LACERA, the relationship we build with each member is personal and enduring. It continues even after the member is gone through survivor benefits. We consider that to be part of our mission.

\* In the absence of a spouse or registered domestic partner, a child under the age of 18, or in some cases 21, is eligible to receive survivor benefits. Survivor benefits are not included in LACERA's non-contributory Plan E. The surviving spouse or registered domestic partner of an active Plan E member may be eligible to receive benefits through the Los Angeles County Long-Term Disability and Survivor Benefit Plan. For information, call 213-388-9982.

## Pre-Retirement Workshop Schedule

### March 2017

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	G-S*
5	6	S	8	9	10	11
12	13	G	15	16	17	18
19	20	G	22	23	24	25
26	H	28	29	30	31	

### April 2017

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	S	5	6	7	G-S*
9	10	G	12	13	14	15
16	17	G	19	20	21	22
23	24	G	26	27	28	29
30						

### May 2017

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	S	3	4	5	G-S*
7	8	G	10	11	12	13
14	15	G	17	18	19	20
21	22	G	24	25	26	27
28	H	G	31			

**G** = General Members  
**S** = Safety Members  
**H** = Holiday

### Call 800-786-6464 to Register

Unless otherwise indicated, workshops are held from 8:30 a.m. to noon. Most include presentations by Empower Retirement and long-term care providers.

\* LACERA's Saturday in-house workshop is from 8:00 a.m. to noon. Empower Retirement will offer a 45-minute overview of Horizons (457) and Savings (401k) plans; LACERA will give a 2.5-hour presentation. Reservations are required; access the Appointment System on [lacera.com](http://lacera.com) or call 800-786-6464 to reserve a seat.



# LACERA ACCOMPLISHMENTS

LOS ANGELES COUNTY EMPLOYEES RETIREMENT ASSOCIATION

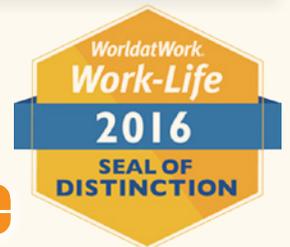
## LACERA Welcomes New Member to Board of Investments

The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors has appointed Wayne Moore to LACERA's Board of Investments. Mr. Moore



will fulfill an unscheduled vacancy on the board. Look for our introduction of Wayne Moore in a forthcoming issue of *PostScript*.

## LACERA Recognized as an Employer of Choice



On January 17, 2017, LACERA's investment in creating a positive work environment was nationally recognized with the 2017 WorldatWork Seal of Distinction. Since 2012, this prestigious distinction has been awarded every year to companies that meet a defined standard of providing a distinct, mutually beneficial workplace experience that leads to business success.

The overall strength of a company's total rewards portfolio is evaluated along with the programs, policies, and practices reflected in:

- Health & wellness
- Pay for time not worked
- Unpaid time off
- Retirement
- Perquisites
- Base pay
- Bonus programs
- Short-term incentives
- Long-term incentives
- Performance management
- Recognition
- Development opportunities
- Caring for dependents
- Culture initiatives & community involvement
- Financial wellness
- Workplace flexibility

Winning this award demonstrates LACERA's commitment to cultivating a work culture dedicated to the professional development and experience of our employees. The boards' and management's endorsement of employee programs has helped to support a highly engaged, professional workforce that shares LACERA's values and mission to produce, protect, and provide the promised benefits.

"The 2017 WorldatWork Seal of Distinction is the latest concrete evidence of LACERA's dedication to fostering a positive work environment, which allows staff to better serve our members."

—Gregg Rademacher, CEO, LACERA

To find out more about the WorldatWork Seal of Distinction, go to [www.worldatwork.org/sealofdistinction](http://www.worldatwork.org/sealofdistinction).

# You've Got Options: Retirement Options



**T**hinking about retirement? If the answer is yes, then it's time to learn about LACERA's six retirement options to determine which will work best for you and your family. Each option differs with regard to the amount of retirement allowance you will receive, which beneficiaries are eligible for a survivor allowance, and the amount beneficiaries not eligible for a survivor allowance will be paid in the event of your death.

**Unmodified.** This is the most popular option among our members, likely because it provides you, the retiree, with the highest monthly retirement allowance available. Eligible beneficiaries for a continuing survivor allowance are your spouse or registered domestic partner.\* The survivor benefit for members in Plans A, B, C, D, and G is 65 percent of your allowance. The survivor benefit for members in Plan E is 55 percent of your allowance.

**Unmodified Plus.** This option allows you to provide your survivor with a customized percentage of your reduced allowance. Eligible beneficiaries for a continuing survivor allowance are your spouse or registered domestic partner.\* The survivor benefit for members in Plans A, B, C, D, and G is a custom percentage between 66 and 100 percent of your reduced allowance. The survivor benefit for members in Plan E is a custom percentage between 56 and 100 percent of your reduced allowance.

**Option 1.** This option allows retirees in Plans A, B, C, D, and G to name any beneficiary to receive the remaining balance of accumulated contributions and interest in the event of their death. This will be in the form of a lump-sum payment, not a monthly allowance. This option is not available for members in Plan E.

**Option 2.** With this option, you receive a reduced Unmodified allowance during your lifetime, and the named beneficiary receives 100 percent of the reduced allowance in the event of your death.\*\* The beneficiary may be anyone with an insurable interest in your life.

**Option 3.** This option is identical to Option 2, except that the named beneficiary receives 50 percent of the reduced allowance in the event of your death.\*\*

**Option 4.** With this option, you receive a reduced Unmodified allowance during your lifetime, and the survivor allowance percentage can be customized to provide for one or more beneficiaries.\*\* The beneficiaries may be anyone with an insurable interest in your life.

*\* Survivor benefits terminate upon the death of the eligible surviving spouse or registered domestic partner. Surviving minor child(ren) are eligible for survivor allowances only when there is no surviving spouse or domestic partner. Survivor allowances to an eligible minor child continue until the child is 18, or in some cases 21.*

*\*\*For Options 2-4, the continuing benefit terminates upon the death of the named beneficiary.*

## Pull Up a Chair with Member Services



Allan Cochran  
Division Manager

**W**elcome to LACERA's Member Services division. With a team of about 70 knowledgeable staff members, we're LACERA's front line in serving members and their beneficiaries. We're composed of three sections: Member Service Contact Center, Outreach and the Member Service Center, and Member Service's Quality Control. We work closely with each other to serve your needs. Whether you call, correspond with us by mail, meet with a Retirement Benefits Specialist for one-on-one counseling, or visit us at the receptionist desk in LACERA's Member Service Center to drop off a document or ask a question, we're ready and available to explain retirement-related issues clearly and accurately.



**Email**  
welcome@lacera.com

**Call**  
800-786-6464

**Visit**  
300 N. Lake Ave.  
Pasadena, CA 91101

**Website**  
lacera.com

### Public Service Announcement

## Volunteer Opportunities with the Department of Children and Family Services

The DCFS Volunteer Program gives members of the community the opportunity to provide assistance and services to DCFS's workforce and, more importantly, to the children and families they serve. DCFS provides services to an ethnically, culturally, and economically diverse community of children and families through countywide

events that promote family reunification and sibling visitation. As a volunteer, you have the option to serve at regional DCFS offices and special events and programs throughout the year. Join the DCFS Volunteer Team by contacting Otho Day, Program Manager, at (213) 351-0237 or vip@dcfs.lacounty.gov.

## Upcoming Holidays

LACERA will be closed:

**Monday, March 27,**  
in observance  
of Cesar Chavez Day

**Monday, May 29,**  
in observance of Memorial Day



### Editor's Note:

*Editor's Note: PostScript is published by the staff of LACERA and is for general informational purposes only. Consult with professional advisors regarding legal, tax, and/or medical matters; LACERA does not offer legal, tax, or medical advice.*

LACERA Communications, PO Box 7060, Pasadena, CA 91109-7060 Email: welcome@lacera.com

Contributing Writers: Amanda Aguayo and Jennifer Carter Designer: Steve Salinas Editor: Amanda Aguayo