

# The Basics:

## Membership in OPERS for College Students



Many student jobs at public colleges and universities are covered by the Ohio Public Employees Retirement System, a public pension plan that provides retirement income and benefits to its members.

If you've noticed a deduction for "OPERS" on your pay stub, your job is an OPERS-covered position.

That means you've accumulated service credit with OPERS during your college career. You can find out how much by visiting [opers.org](http://opers.org) and registering for an online account.

### Leaving your money with OPERS – Why or why not?

You are not obligated to refund your account when you terminate your OPERS-covered job. You can keep your account on deposit with OPERS, as many students do who are planning a career in local, county or state government. If you think you might return to work in the public sector in the future, you should consider leaving your money on account as it represents service credit you have earned.

### Requesting a refund

You can apply for a refund any time after you terminate your OPERS-covered position. Two months must pass from the date you terminated public employment before your refund will be issued. If you refund your account, you may receive your employee contributions and interest on those contributions.

### Returning to an OPERS-covered position

If you return to an OPERS-covered position after refunding your account you'll lose the time you accrued and will start at zero service credit earned. You might be eligible to purchase this time back, but it is typically very expensive to do so.

If you keep your account on deposit with OPERS, you can pick up where you left off and continue contributing to the same retirement plan.

### What if I requested an exemption?

Students are eligible to be exempt from OPERS membership while they're taking a specific amount of classes. Before you sign a student exemption, consider that the service credit you earn while in college counts toward your retirement if you become employed in the public sector during your career.

You might have filed for a student exemption from OPERS membership when you began your job, yet still have seen money deducted from your paycheck. If you did not register for classes while working the exemption is not valid, and you must contribute to OPERS during this period.

### How to apply for a refund

You can apply for a refund through your online account. You have two options:

1. Roll over all or a portion of your account to an individual retirement account or a qualified retirement plan.
2. Have a refund sent directly to you.

### Where do I turn for help?

Refer to the "Terminating Public Employment" leaflet on [opers.org](http://opers.org).

You may contact OPERS at 800-222-7377.