

# The SamCERA Times



[www.samcera.org](http://www.samcera.org)

ACTIVE MEMBER EDITION

Fall 2014

## SamCERA's New CEO

Scott Hood has been named Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the San Mateo County Employees' Retirement Association (SamCERA), effective Nov. 9, 2014. He succeeds David Bailey, who will retire in early 2015.

Since 2002, Hood served as SamCERA's Assistant Executive Officer (AEO), managing the benefits, finance, information technology, communications and administrative staff of the association. Prior to becoming AEO, he served as SamCERA's Information Technology Manager for two years.

Hood holds a BS in Engineering from the US Military Academy and an MS in Computer Information Systems from Boston University. Last year, he completed his military career as a Colonel in the US Army Reserve after serving over 30 years of combined active and reserve service. His military career includes deployments to Bosnia, Iraq and Djibouti where he served in various leadership roles with multi-national teams working on elections, media relations and operations planning.

A nationwide recruitment for SamCERA's new CEO concluded in September when the Retirement Board chose Hood by unanimous vote.



Scott Hood

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## Investment Earnings

Following up on the prior fiscal year's double-digit returns, SamCERA's portfolio again experienced strong gains for the fiscal year ending June 2014, due mostly to robust global equity markets. The fund returned 17.3% for fiscal year 2013-2014. That number is what SamCERA earned after

investment management fees have been accounted for.

These results are above the median among large (greater than \$1 billion in assets) public plans.

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## Learn How to Manage Your Money with SamCERA's Free Classes

SamCERA is offering three of its most popular classes this December. Don't miss out on a chance to learn basic money management from the pros.

You can register for classes through the LMS My Personal and Health and Well-Being (Private) Site, or go to [www.samcera.org/FKN\\_Courses](http://www.samcera.org/FKN_Courses) for more information—including class listings and step-by-step instructions on how to register.

As always, our classes are free of charge and “conflict free,” too—this means you won't get a sales pitch from the instructors. What you will get is unbiased financial planning advice from experienced professionals.

A limited number of seats are available for each class, so hurry—because open seats won't last long.

### Class Listings

You can find a full list of classes with descriptions on the [SamCERA website](http://www.samcera.org).

#### [Organizing and Managing Your Finances](#)

December 8, 2014

Location: 455 County Center, Room 101,  
Redwood City

Time: 12:30 pm – 2:30 pm (2 hours)

#### [Successful Retirement Living \(Retirement Planning for Those Nearing or in Retirement\) -](#)

##### **Online Webinar**

December 9, 2014

Location: Online

Time: 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm (2 hours)

#### [How to Achieve Your Financial Goals](#)

December 15, 2014

Location: 455 County Center, Room 101,  
Redwood City

Time: 8:30 am – 10:30 pm (2 hours)

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## Inside Your Pension Plan: SamCERA Ranked Among the Most Conservative Funds in CA

SamCERA was pleased to be ranked 3rd most conservative fund among California retirement systems in a 2014 survey from Roeder Financial, a firm specializing in pension and benefits analysis. The survey ranks California's public pension systems from “most conservative” to “most optimistic,” on a

scale of how they chart their financial future.

SamCERA's high ranking was due mainly to its commitment to addressing pension costs over a relatively short time span, and its relatively low assumed investment earnings rate of 7.5% at the time of the survey. The earnings rate is the annual amount the fund is expected to earn through its investments in stocks, bonds, real estate, and other segments of its portfolio. In June 2014, the Board of Retirement lowered the assumed rate further to 7.25%.

For some perspective, over the last five fiscal years, SamCERA has an average annual return of 13%, exceeding its assumed annual earnings rate of 7.25%. Lowering the rate also adds to the financial strength and stability of the fund by mitigating the impacts if future returns are lower than current expectations.

Additionally, earlier this year, San Mateo County made its first lump-sum deposit of \$50 million into a side account with SamCERA. Additional lump-sum contributions of \$10 million are scheduled to be paid annually over the next nine years. The contributions to this side account will help pay down SamCERA's unfunded liability faster than with normal contributions alone.

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## Make sure SamCERA has it right -- check your Annual Member Account Statement!

The SamCERA Annual Member Account Statement mailed to members' homes in September shows the information SamCERA has on file for you. This information is used to determine the amount of money you contribute to your retirement while you're working, and the benefit amount you'll be paid when you retire. It's important for you to confirm several things:

1. **Your Date of Birth.**
2. **Your beneficiary(ies).**
3. **Your employment information and member status.**

Check all of this information carefully and let SamCERA know immediately if anything appears incorrect. Please note that members of Plans 1, 2, 4, 5, 6 and 7 should have received statements. Plan 3 members don't have member accounts and, therefore, don't receive statements.

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## (Customer) Survey Says...

The results are in from SamCERA's 2014 customer service survey, and members are resoundingly happy with SamCERA. More than 120 people took the survey, which is sent to members who visit the SamCERA office.

Among the results:

- 99 percent of respondents said that SamCERA's service met their expectations or was better than expected
- 98 percent of those surveyed said that the information they received from SamCERA was helpful
- 97 percent of those surveyed said that they were satisfied or very satisfied with their SamCERA experience
- More than 97 percent of those surveyed said that the information they received from SamCERA was easy to understand

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## Thinking about retirement? Come to SamCERA's Ready to Retire workshop to learn more!

Are you thinking of retiring within the year? If so, then come to SamCERA's Ready to Retire workshop.

During this workshop, you'll learn about your SamCERA retirement pension options and the application process.

A representative from the Benefits Department will also be present to answer any questions regarding retiree health benefits. If you are not yet ready to retire but would like to learn more about your retirement, contact SamCERA for a one-on-one informational meeting.

**Limited seating is available for this upcoming workshop, so sign up before it's too late!**

**Details:**

**Thursday, January 29, 2015**

10–11:30 am

SamCERA Office, 100 Marine Parkway, Suite 125, Redwood City, CA 94065

*How to Register*

Please send an email to [samcera@samcera.org](mailto:samcera@samcera.org) to register for the workshop. In your email please specify which date you would like to attend and your planned retirement date. Spouses and partners are welcome.

**Thinking About Retiring Soon?**

If you're nearing the end of your career, it's time to start thinking about setting your retirement date. Many employees choose to retire in early spring, which is just around the corner.

One of the reasons for spring retirements is that members who retire on or before April 1 in a given year become eligible for the annual Cost-of-Living-Adjustment (COLA) increase. Keep in mind that the COLA increase is only applied in years where the Bay Area experiences inflation—so there won't necessarily be a COLA increase every year.

If you retire after April 1, you will not be eligible for any applicable increase until April 1 of the following year.

If you're getting close to retirement, it's time to contact SamCERA and discuss your options. You can also read SamCERA's **Ready to Retire** guide, [here](#). The guide has everything you need to get you started on the road to retirement, including links to online resources and a pre-retirement checklist to help you through the process.

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## SamCERA Office Holidays

SamCERA will be closed on the following dates through next summer:

Thursday, November 27, 2014 (Thanksgiving)  
Thursday, December 25, 2014 (Christmas)  
Thursday, January 1, 2015 (New Year's)  
Monday, January 19, 2015 (Martin Luther King, Jr. Day)  
Monday, February 16, 2015 (President's Day)  
Monday, May 25, 2015 (Memorial Day)  
Monday, September 7, 2015 (Labor Day)

Additionally, SamCERA is closed every Friday.

SamCERA's normal office hours are Monday – Thursday, 7 am though 6 pm.

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